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UK MEETS GUIDELINES

UPDATE PAGE

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AUSTRIAN ALPINE CLUB (UK)

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MEET ORGANISERS' GUIDELINES

These guidance notes are aimed at helping new organisers for meets in the UK and to act as an aide-memoire for the more experienced hands. They attempt to provide an outline of good practice.

These guidelines are not exhaustive and the club is not responsible for any errors or omissions.

Much of this information is also applicable to overseas meets. However, a supplement providing additional information for overseas meets will be supplied later.

In this document, the word 'must' means just that. The AAC does not envisage any circumstances in which such an obligation will not be carried out. The terms 'should' and 'may' do not indicate an obligation but are indicative of good practice.

1 Liaison with UK Meets Co-ordinator

- The organiser should discuss with the UK Meets Co-ordinator the meet, its date, venue, cost, type of accommodation, the wording for the meet sheet and the means of accounting.
- Copies of feedback notes should be sent to the UK Meets Co-ordinator. See also 3 below regarding the return of accounts.

2 Budgeting

- The organiser should prepare a budget that aims to break-even or to make a small positive balance that will contribute to the AAC activities budget to cover for unavoidable losses on other meets or to support new meets. Very small profits or losses on meets may be returned to or recovered from members attending meets.
- The organiser should allow for some irrecoverable costs arising from under-occupancy in costing and not expose the club to undue risk.
- A provision for small expenses such as photocopying, stationary, telephone and post may be included in the budget.

3 Bookings, deposits, payments and return of accounts

Meets are organised on the basis of trust. It is nevertheless important to protect members, organisers and the club from suspicions or allegations of impropriety as far as reasonably possible.

- When dealing with the financial aspects of a UK meet, organisers have a choice. They can either use the AAC account, which is the preferred method, or they can make payments and take receipts in their own name. The former provides greater protection to the organiser in a number of ways and eases potential financial strain. It may nevertheless be cumbersome in some cases and the latter method is therefore permitted.
- Organisers should provide bank transfer account details and/or make it clear to whom cheques should be made payable. Receipts or email acknowledgement of receipt of funds should be provided. Where the AAC account is used, the AAC office will process cheques received in bulk.
- Where the AAC account is used, meets co-ordinators or the Social Committee chairman **must** authorise requests to the office for payments.
- Organisers should prepare and return accounts for the meet. Where the AAC account has been used organisers **must** return accounts to the Financial Organiser and the UK Meets Co-ordinator within a reasonable time after the meet. In other cases, organisers are encouraged to return accounts to the UK Meets Co-ordinator.
- A non-returnable deposit should be requested from participants where funds are needed to pay for accommodation etc. in advance, which is usually the case. Final payments should

AUSTRIAN ALPINE CLUB (UK)

be accepted on the basis that they are non-refundable, unless the meet organiser is able to find another member on the meet, or at the club's discretion.

- Bookings should not be accepted without a deposit or full payment. Acceptance **must** be after advertisement in the Newsletter. Where this is not the case, the meet should be advertised as a personal ad.
- Many huts, hostels and hotels need to be booked some time in advance (up to a year in some cases). A deposit to hold a booking can be arranged through the UK meets coordinator.
- Some venues now demand a large early deposits, or full payment on booking, and charge cancellation fees, which can be substantial. The final payment may be due some time before the meet. Where this is the case, organisers should ask for payment from members by that earlier date. Care is needed in assessing numbers likely to attend.
- On occasion it is necessary or highly desirable to have sole use of a hut or hostel which often requires that the organiser commit to about 75% of the total bed places. Organisers should not seek to have sole use where it is not necessary. Organisers should consider charging a returnable premium to cover for the possibility that the minimum is not reached. Alternatively, some organisations such as the YHA now provide a cancellation insurance that could be added to the cost of the meet.
- AAC Group Membership of YHA means that AAC members do not need to be individual members of YHA to stay.
- The AAC will only cover unavoidable losses on pre-agreed meet plans that follow the budgeting plans outlined above.
- Organisers should make themselves aware of the cancellation policy for the accommodation.

4 Accommodation, huts, hostels, food and drink

- Organisers **must** avoid arranging meets that could be construed as packages under the *Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992*¹.
- If considering a new venue factors such as accommodation size, access by public transport, and variety of walks and other activities available all need to be considered. Many venues provide details of accommodation and photographs on the Internet which may render pre-visits to the venue to check suitability unnecessary.
- Some huts and hostels (particularly the YHA) do not provide mixed dormitories, and unless organisers intervene, couples will be split up. Organisers obtaining a bed plan may deal with this. Organisers should explain to the hut or hostel that the group is likely to arrive at different times on the first day.
- Food can be provided at several levels; from self-catering to meals booked at a Youth Hostel or restaurant.
- If self-catering, a communal meal cooked by group or the organiser can be arranged or everyone can bring and prepare their own food. These arrangements should be explained in the meet sheet.

¹ The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 indicate that for services covering a period of more than twenty-four hours or including overnight accommodation, where a pre-arranged combination of two or more of; transport, accommodation and other tourist services (e.g. guiding) and which account for a significant part of an inclusive package then several obligations are imposed on the organisers regarding aspects of the package e.g. financial indemnity. For further details see Regulation 2 (Interpretation) on the following Website: [Office of Public Sector Information](#) SI 1992 No. 3288

AUSTRIAN ALPINE CLUB (UK)

- It is usually best to charge upfront for any food provided. Alcohol may be brought to meets at the discretion of the organiser but some venues such as certain Youth Hostels or hotels may not permit this.

5 Transport

- Transport **must** not be included in the overall meet cost, as it is very likely to lead to the meet being construed as a package, unless travel is the only cost.
- Many members will use their own transport (some may like to car share) to get to meets but where possible access by train, bus or ferry should be considered and some information provided in the meet sheet.

6 Who may attend and participate in AAC meets and walks

- Organisers **must** make it clear to non-members attending any meet or walk that they do so entirely at their own risk, and that they are not covered by the OeAV AWS insurance.
- Non-members attending any meet or walk should be encouraged to become members should they wish to take part in further club activities. It is recommended that meet organisers who are aware of any such non-members taking part in further activities should make enquiries about whether such non-members have insurance appropriate to the activities being undertaken. It is recommended that any such non-members taking part in further activities, who are known or believed to be without appropriate insurance be excluded from regular participation in club meets and activities.
- Partners and other guests who are not AAC members and who wish to take part in AAC activities should be encouraged to become members, unless they only attend events of a purely social nature or those parts events that are of a purely social nature.
- Members attending UK weekend meets may be accompanied by non-member partners or other guests at the discretion of organisers and should be encouraged to become members.
- Members accompanied by partners or other guests at walks or meets are responsible for the conduct of such partners or guests.
- In exceptional circumstances, organisers may consider that members or non-members are clearly unfit to participate in any particular AAC activity, for a variety of reasons. In such circumstances, they should make their opinion clear to such members or non-members and advise them that they should not participate in the activity.

7 Meet sheets and booking forms

- Organisers should handle all aspects of meets sheets and booking forms. The AAC office only provides assistance with these for AGMs, anniversary and similar meets.
- Meet sheets and booking forms should show: dates and times of the meet, the location (address and GR and sometimes a sketch map) and the organiser's name, address, phone and email address.² They should also provide an option for members to participate in car-sharing arrangements and provide appropriate details on available public transport.
- Car-sharing and the use of public transport are to be encouraged. Information obtained from those who wish to participate in car-sharing **must** be limited that which is necessary for the purposes of car-sharing, such as name, town, phone number and/or email address and such information should only be provided to others who wish to car-share, in order to comply with data protection legislation. Information on car sharing should be obtained and circulated on a timely basis so that advantage can be taken of early booking savings on public transport if necessary.

² If organisers do not use email, no email address is required. The absence of email may affect take-up of a meet.

AUSTRIAN ALPINE CLUB (UK)

- The booking form should require participants to provide contact details including membership numbers and an emergency contact name and number, and overnight and meal choices if appropriate. If a deposit is payable this should be stated along with date by which the balance is due. Booking forms returned without membership numbers should not be accepted.
- Meet sheets should provide instructions on access, any specialised equipment suggested such as ice axes, crampons or ropes, and on equipment such as sleeping bags or mats as may be necessary, together with program plans if any.
- Meets sheets should contain cautions regarding the inherent risks of any activities, attention should be drawn to the rubric in the newsletter on risk and all participants should be required to consider the adequacy of their insurance arrangements and the special considerations applicable to children (see 10, below).
- Organisers may ask or require members to sign a disclaimer to sign (see 10, below).

8 Advertising in the AAC Newsletter and Website

- The advert should be placed in two newsletters before the meet. Copy should be submitted to the UK meets Co-ordinator with enough time for liaison before the newsletter copy deadline. The current dates are shown below. These dates may be varied according to circumstances.

Edition	Copy Delivered to Meet Coordinator	Copy day for date-dependent material to Editor	Delivered to members
Spring	2 nd January	14 th January	1 st March
Summer	2 nd April	16 th April	1 st June
Autumn	3 rd July	17 th July	1 st September
Winter	2 nd October	16 th October	1 st December

- Organisers should check the copy dates and whether the text needs changing between successive issues. The wording should be agreed in the first instance with the UK meets Co-ordinator who then forwards it to the Newsletter/Website Events Coordinator for further processing and collation before submission to the Newsletter Editor.
- The text for the newsletter and the members-only area of the web-site should include the organiser's name, address, phone number or email address (where applicable), so that members can request a meet sheet and booking information, either by email or by sending an SAE. In order to comply with the Data Protection Act (DPA), permission **must** be obtained from the organiser for this information to appear. The organiser may choose to withhold one or more of these details. Also the details permitted may differ between the printed newsletter and the website. Generally, once granted, these permissions will be taken to apply to any subsequent events unless otherwise directed.

9 AAC Website Only

Event information for the Members-only pages of the website is handled within the Social Committee in two stages as described below.

AUSTRIAN ALPINE CLUB (UK)

9.1 Before Newsletter Issue

Event information will be passed to the webmaster at, or shortly after copy is submitted to the newsletter editor. However, the event entry, if it is appearing for the first time, will have contact details and possibly some other information deleted so that it is rendered un-bookable. This is in order to comply with AAC policy.

9.2 After Newsletter Issue

- Contact details and other booking information will be restored.
- Because the website does not suffer from the same space limitations as the newsletter, additional event information, small pictures of the venue and links to the meet sheet may be provided on the web page. The Meets Coordinator will ask if the organiser agrees to this. If so, the latter will supply suitable material to the coordinator who will make it available for transmission to the webmaster.

10 Insurance, disclaimers and caveats

- AAC Members benefit from OeAV “Alpine Association Worldwide Service” (AWS) insurance cover for some personal risks and liabilities. Details of cover can be found in the AWS insurance documentation. Non-members on meets are not covered by this insurance.
- OeAV AWS insurance affords some indemnity for UK meet organisers but there are some restrictions regarding types of activity, hence organisers may wish to consider individual 3rd party liability insurance.
- For family events additional precautions and considerations may be needed concerning any children present. Persons aged less than 18 years **must** be accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- Organisers should take reasonable steps to ensure that all participants are aware there is an element of risk in every activity and that participation implies acceptance of and responsibility for these risks. Examples of wording that may be used in meet sheets to make participants aware of risks and of disclaimers that may be used in booking forms are included in the appendix to this document. **Organisers asking applicants to sign such disclaimers must recognise that such disclaimers may not prevent legal action being taken against them.**
- Organisers should be familiar with the AAC guidance on mountaineering safety which can be found on the club’s web-site at http://www.aacuk.org.uk/Risk_and_Safety.aspx
- In the absence of a hut book, organisers **must** provide a log sheet and require all participants to provide details of their intended route for each day, including car registration numbers and intended parking places.

11 Feedback

- A short note including the number and names of people attending, good and bad findings should be returned to the UK meets Co-coordinator for information.
- A brief report **must** be made to the UK Meets Co-ordinator of any serious accidents or incidents, such as those requiring the involvement of professional services on a timely basis.

12 Contacts

Contact details for the UK meets Coordinator and the Foreign Meets Coordinator can be found in the members-only website and in the newsletter.

AUSTRIAN ALPINE CLUB (UK)

APPENDIX

ORGANISING WALKS

Those organising walks should normally:

1. Appoint back markers, particularly on difficult terrain or in bad weather.
2. Consider the need for the group to carry a first aid kit.
3. Arrange for details for who has gone where, including car registration numbers and intended parking places, to be recorded in an appropriate manner in order to facilitate search and rescue should it be necessary.

Example wording to make participants aware of risks

Participants should recognise that hill-walking, mountaineering and climbing are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. They should be aware of and accept the risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement. Participants should therefore take care to only participate in activities that are within their abilities and experience.

During the meet a sheet or hut book will be made available, in which you must log yourself in and out and record your intended route each day, including car registration numbers and intended parking places.

Example disclaimer that may be used in booking forms

The use of the wording below may not prevent legal action being taken against organisers

I/we understand and accept that:

1. Hill-walking, mountaineering and climbing are activities with a danger of personal injury or death.
2. I/we are aware of, and accept the risks and shall be responsible for my/our own actions and involvement.
3. I/we shall only take part in activities which are within my/our abilities and experience.
4. I/we will log my/ourselves in and out and record my/our intended route each day, including car registration numbers and intended parking places.

Signed:

Date: