

Relative Hills Society

Guidance for Trip and Event Coordinators

OCT2024 Version

Thanks for agreeing to be the Trip Coordinator for an RHSoc trip / event. RHSoc works because members volunteer to arrange trips or events.

This document aims to provide some guiding principles to aid the organiser of a trip with publicity, liability insurance cover by Mountaineering Scotland and other logistical support.

Although RHSoc trips and events do require some effort, the rewards are great:

- You can reduce costs e.g. for boat charters or for accommodation.
- You get to design a trip around your own bagging goals!
- Others might do the same for you; arranging trips can be reciprocal.
- All participants will be covered by Mountaineering Scotland or similar liability insurance.
- You can advertise your trip via Relative Mutters, the RHSoc website, and the rhsoc mailbox.
- You can get help and advice on trip / event arrangement.
- Trips that carry a higher level of risk have the additional support of a risk assessment process, participation forms and good practice advice.

1. Getting Started

The minimum requirement for a trip to be RHSoc supported is for the Trip Coordinator to inform the Chair of the Events and Trips sub-group of their plans via rhsoc@rhsoc.uk. These might include:

- Purpose of trip – mountain, island, hostelling, etc
- Starting point and method of transport (if relevant)
- Proposed date
- Proposed number of participants
- Cost estimate
- A simple statement indicating what if any previous experience might be necessary.

Trips that involve a higher level of risk will need to be evaluated appropriately (see Appendix 1 below)

The Society can advise further on any of these steps – direct any queries via the rhsoc@rhsoc.uk email address and you will get a reply from the Events and Trip sub Group Chair or a delegated person.

2. Publicising a trip

Once a trip has been approved in principle, it can be publicised.

- A call for interest in a trip can be made (e.g. via the Relative Hills & Island Bagging Facebook pages) that the trip you are planning is likely to be of interest and financially viable. (NB Both these FB pages are not 'owned' by RHSoc so we ask that you use the phrase 'open to Members and prospective members only' when advertising a RHSoc Event.)
- We recommend that you include date, venue and purpose of the proposed trip and advise of any special skills, experience or equipment required. If a specific route is planned, then give facts about this.

- Once some interest has been identified and the trip appears to be viable the trip should be promoted in Relative Muttters and on the website. Additionally a targeted e-mail can be sent to the membership via the rhsoc@rhsoc.uk mailbox.
- If insufficient Members / Prospective Members apply to make the trip viable, RHSoc may withdraw its sponsorship in agreement with yourself. Some trips will require the booking and reservation of services eg: hostels, boat hire etc. requiring an element of financial risk often requiring a deposit

3. Allocating Places on Trips

- Spaces on RHSoc Trips are generally restricted to our Ordinary Members. If there are insufficient Members, to fill the hostel / boat, etc, then Prospective Members (PMs) may be invited. Preference will always go to Members, but PMs will not be removed from the Trip once their application has been accepted and confirmed.
- Membership should **always** be checked with the Membership Secretary to ensure fees are up to date. Names of Prospective Members should also be checked to ensure that they have not exceeded the permitted two Trips before being required to have full membership.
- It is always worth keeping a waiting list in case people drop out. The Membership Secretary should be advised at once if there are any late changes in personnel.
- All trips are dependent on the weather particularly boat trip, and the skipper's decision will always be final, always keep an eye on the weather forecast. Even after departing a trip there may be a requirement to change the priority order, or cancel the visit to some islands. Where this happens the skipper and boat coordinator will try to offer and agree on alternate destinations. And finally there is no guarantee that there will be sufficient time to visit all the summits listed. This will depend on many factors, not least the pace of the slowest walker

4. Financing the Trip

- Consider the financial aspects of the trip. Money will normally be collected by the Treasurer who will then arrange to pay the hostel, boat operator etc once the trip is confirmed. There are advantages to using the Treasurer as the trip organiser will not need to process payments through their own bank account.
- Make sure you or the society do not end up out of pocket; it is always better to return money to participants than ask for more! You may wish to factor in a small contingency for unexpected minor costs. The Society expects/asks that a small surplus is made as a contribution to club funds, this helps cover occasional trips that make a small loss for example.
- It is advisable to collect a deposit at the beginning to secure places on the Trip. These deposits would be non-returnable if the Trip goes ahead in accordance with the initial plans. This helps ensure only committed participants will apply. Hostels and many boat operators do ask for a deposit well in advance to reserve the preferred date.
- Members will be advised that trip costs are subject to some change if not fully subscribed. Decisions have to be made on viability of trip in these cases.
- If the trip is high value (ie St Kilda trips cost > £300 pp) the whole amount should be collected, say, a month before departure. These monies will then be at risk if the trip goes ahead and some Members drop out. If necessary, Members should take out travel insurance to cover this risk.
- Most boat operators accept that they will not be paid if the Trip is cancelled due to weather / mechanical breakdown. Accommodation providers (SYHA, etc) are obviously not so flexible.

5. Lead-up to departure

- Monitor the weather and be prepared to cancel / modify your objectives accordingly, It may be advisable at the outset to stress the need for flexibility of dates in the event of poor conditions. This is obviously most important when boats are involved. Keep attendees posted on progress, bearing in mind they may not have good connectivity in remote areas.
- The trip/event coordinator should consider, and be aware of, any potential problems with landowners or land users, and take steps to minimise any likely areas of conflict
- Issue final instructions the day before the event. For boat trips, an exact time of departure should be issued, stressing that those arriving late may be left behind and may forfeit any monies paid.
- Phone numbers or other relevant contact details be exchanged prior to trip so that last minute arrangements can be communicated as required.
- The membership secretary should be sent a simple text or e-mail confirming those attending to meet insurance liability the evening before or on the day of departure if this is possible. Some areas have poor mobile telephone reception.

6. During the Event/ Trip

- At the start, welcome everyone, especially Prospective Members, and briefly remind everyone of the plan: times, locations, risks, and mitigations
- Boat operators will know the local conditions and may advise on necessary revisions to the intended itinerary if weather and tide dictate.
- MS recommends dividing large groups into smaller buddy groups not exceeding six people where Members can look out for each other.
- At the end of the day (each day if a multi-day event), ensure that all participants have returned safely. (NB it is not unheard of for Members to abandon Trips midway through without advising anybody – they just go home!)
- If any incident occurs on the Trip, ensure that it is recorded and reported to the Society either on your return - or immediately if there are serious injuries. The definition of an incident is broad but includes any injury requiring medical attention above basic first aid, any unplanned immersion in water, any interface with landowners where trespass or damage or similar is alleged, or anything untoward that the Trip Coordinator thinks might either lead to a future claim or constitutes a near-miss from which others might learn. The Society will advise whether a formal Report to MS is required or whether a simple in-house incident report will suffice.

7. After the Trip

- The standard Trip Report should be completed and sent to the Society at rhsoc@rhsoc.uk. This should, at the minimum, include a complete list of those attending.
- The Society will retain the trip report for 2-7 years dependent on the nature of the event, one of the insurance requirements
- Encourage one of the participants to write up an article for the website or Relative Mutters describing the event – or do it yourself.

Appendix 1 - Risk Assessment

The membership are experienced and recognise the risk of outdoor sports, if however the trip has

a relatively high level of risk which is hard to control, you are advised to undertake a risk assessment. The RHSoc Events and Trips sub-Group can help you decide if a risk assessment is needed. In most cases this will only require a few sentences describing the nature of the trip eg easy scramble, 10mile walk off the beaten track . Such 'riskier' trips include those where any of the following apply, but there is no requirement to undertake a risk assessment in these circumstances:

- The trip is more than 2 miles offshore
- It is a boat trip with a third-party operator
- The island is uninhabited
- There is no proper landing jetty/point, landing difficulties
- There is a plan to use tenders to aid landing
- Rock climbing/scrambling/abseils are necessary
- Weather /swell / tides / landing / terrain conditions make the trip challenging
- There is a large number in the party (harder to control)
- The skills/competence of those involved is uncertain
- The time of year (e.g. winter) / lack of daylight mean conditions are less predictable
- Overnight trip remote from civilisation
- A sample risk assessment is available here:
<https://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/pdf/Risk-Assessment-summer-activities-for-clubs.pdf>
- There is an optional RHSoc Trip Participant's Risk Awareness Form you can use if the trip is judged particularly risky and a risk assessment is advised. This will enable you to confirm that trip participants understand the risks involved and to advise you of any special training needs/competence/equipment needs as well as any disabilities and emergency contacts. You can edit the Trip record spreadsheet to help you manage this process, if you wish.
- Ask participants to review any risk assessment and sign the Trip Participation Risk Awareness Form (if to be used). You should be willing to answer factual questions, so they can make their own decision as to whether the trip is suitable for them.
- Be clear with all participants that you are coordinating trip arrangements, not leading or guiding the party. If participants want or need guiding, they need to book a professional Guide.
- Note that RHSoc does not accept those under 18 as members or prospective members and has not developed the required safeguarding policies. Young people interested in the outdoors can be directed via the Management Committee or MS to other clubs which have full youth programmes.
- The following MS webpage gives additional helpful guidance on safety and liability on trips and is worth reading: <https://www.mountaineering.scot/clubs/advice-and-resources/safety-and-liability-guidance>
- The leader assists with the administration of the trip and will advise on potential difficulties. Individuals should be aware of their own abilities and only proceed where they feel comfortable.

Appendix 2 : What is the difference between a RHSoc supported trip/ event and any other trip /event?

RHSoc Supported Trip/ Event	Any other Trip or Event
All participants covered by MS/ similar liability cover, including prospective members	Liability cover will be limited to those attendees who happen to hold liability insurance, potentially leaving all members of the trip exposed to claims, even if they are baseless.

Can be promoted/ advertised in Relative Muttters, regular all member e mail communication and RHSoc website	Cannot be promoted via RHSoc routes -but can be promoted on an individual's Facebook page, RHB, email, etc
Advice and support available on risk assessment etc from RHSoc committee members and ensuring party are fully briefed and prepared	Advice / preparation not so readily available
If it is agreed with the RHSoc Committee that this is to be a RHSoc trip, in advance, then the simple Trip/Event Record form is completed both before and after the trip and sent to the RHSoc committee.	No advance or retrospective discussion with RHSoc Committee.

RHSoc Events and trips template

Purpose

To be completed by events and trips co-ordinators to provide information in a standard format on the website to help members decide on trips.

Process

Please complete as much information as possible to be reviewed by Events and Trips Committee and it will then be passed on to Webmaster who will create a separate page / card for each trip to make it easier for members to decide on trips.

Information needed

These fields are essential *

To get an idea of the type of info to provide see the current cards for trips available from:

Name and time of trip*

For the headline, e.g. Isle of Skye Islands – May 2022, Isle of Mull – Spring Bagger Rambles: March 2023

Trip summary *

A one or two sentence summary of the area or islands where the trip will visit and the benefits, e.g. types of hills or islands to be visited.

Photo

Provide a photo by attaching it, or adding a link here, if not, I will source an open source photo.

Itinerary details *

More specific details, ideally with bullet list with details of islands to be visited and hills, types of hills to be climbed – Marylins, Humps, Tumps, etc

Trip dates *

Start and finish date if known, alternatively a month or season.

Please let the webmaster know when dates are finalised.

Trip co-ordinator(s) *

Who is arranging trip? Provide Email address for last section.

Places available *

Number of places with details of numbers of boats or rooms.

NB. Please update the webmaster when this is changes or trip becomes full.

Departure or meeting place

Name of place departing from if relevant. Provide grid reference or Postcode if not obvious.

Challenges and competence needed

Only needed where climbing or boat access needed. Amend the below.

A degree of experience of climbing with ropes and tender landing experience is essential.

or

To land on the islands you will need to be able to exit and return to a moving boat.

Accommodation

Details of rooms, etc

Operators used

Name of companies used for transport or accommodation. If not relevant, add N/A

Trip cost*

Reserve or enquire about trip *

Details of who to contact by when if interested. Give your email address as name AT address, so it won't be used for Spam.

