



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Guidance for Beacon events

Introduction

Britain has a long history of celebrating Royal Jubilees, Weddings and Coronations with the lighting of beacons, whether on mountain tops, town and village greens, country parks and estates, or on our beaches. In 2015, beacons were lit across the nation in a shared moment of celebration for the VE Day 70th Anniversary, and over 420 were lit for the Queens 60th Jubilee celebrations.

If your event includes inviting the public, or is at a third-party venue then where applicable, the following advice should be heeded to ensure a safe and enjoyable event for everyone involved.

Location

Make sure you have permission from the landowners: these may be private, local authorities or others such as the National Trust. It is important you speak to the landowners as early as possible and it may be helpful to have a plan for the event, how you will manage it and the clean up afterwards. Your local authority may take the rubbish away but there may be a cost, so check well in advance.

Event management

Make sure you have planned your event well and involve the local authority, police or fire service where appropriate. You will need to consider health and safety, numbers in attendance, disabled access, first aid, stewards and cleaning up afterwards.

How many people you invite or allow into the site of the beacon will depend on the size of the beacon itself and the space in which you are lighting this. It is important to make sure you get good advice on safety and hazards so do speak with your local fire service as they may be able to help.

Providing food and drink

Basic food hygiene guidelines should be followed if you are providing food and drink. Caterers must have food hygiene certificates. Advice on this subject can be obtained from your local council environmental health officer.

If you want to sell alcohol you will need to secure a licence. From February 2005, licences are granted by the local authority rather than the Magistrates Court. You should therefore contact your local authority licensing section and seek information from them on how to apply. During 2005 all existing licences have to be renewed and this will inevitably lead to long lead-in times. Please apply as early as possible.

Licensing

Generally, all public entertainment has to be licensed by the local authority. The law on this aims to ensure the safety of the public and performers. Local authorities treat each event individually, and what one will allow another will not.

The licensing officer's job is to advise the local authority's licensing committee on the granting of public entertainment licences. For small scale events he or she, in effect, makes the decisions. Only if your event is contentious will the licensing committee decide to consider the application in detail. Talk to the licensing officer as soon as possible. In Northern Ireland, if you plan to sell alcohol at an event, you will need to apply for an occasional liquor licence from the Northern Ireland Court Service.

Specialist insurance

Whether you're holding an event on your own premises or someone else's, Beacon events require specialist public liability cover. If you hire a park or venue or use land owned by a third party for your event, they are likely to require you to have your own suitable insurance to cover your liability for any injury to the public or damage to other people's land or property.

If hiring equipment for the event, you may need to insure these items; you may also need to consider cover for loss of any financial outlay you incur if the event has to be cancelled.

Standard Public Liability insurance policies may not provide adequate cover for beacons or bonfire events, nor cover your costs if you're forced to cancel the event for any reason, so you may need to source specialist cover.

If you are inviting personal guests to your home it is worth checking with your household insurer that you are covered in the unfortunate circumstance that there should be an accident.

Involving the emergency services

Tell the police well in advance about the type of event you are planning and get in touch with your local community police officer. Contact your local fire and rescue service for fire safety advice and write to them and the ambulance service to make them aware of your event, particularly if you are planning to have a beacon, fireworks, or an event that will attract large crowds.