

GUIDANCE TO ORGANISERS OF PUBLIC EVENTS

This leaflet is intended as a guide to the organisers of public events such as marches, processions or demonstrations. Whilst there is no legal right to march or demonstrate, the freedom to do so peacefully under the law is essential to our democracy. The Police must preserve the peace but they will also do what they can to permit people to demonstrate provided there is due regard to the law and to the rights of the general public to go about its normal business

Advance Notice

Discussions between organisers and the police are desirable and discussions at as early a stage as possible can produce arrangements of great mutual benefit. By indicating the date and purpose of the event, the assembly point, anticipated number of supporters, starting time, proposed route and destination. Organisers will; enable police to make provision for the transport arrangements for supporters, both on arrival and dispersal; devise suitable traffic arrangements in negotiation with Highways agency and Police and make all other plans necessary to control the event.

Processions

In the case of processions, the route will be the subject of discussion but before it starts the organiser will be served with a written copy of the route to be followed.

If your intended procession seeks to use a carriage of the Highway, an appropriate application to the local Council Highways department should be sort, observing their time guides for road closures, as necessary. [highways@cambridge.gov.uk]

However, it must be clearly understood that as the police have a paramount duty to avoid breaches of the peace where possible, they may on occasions have to direct a procession by another route. This can happen before the march starts or while it is in progress.

Generally speaking processions should keep to the left or nearside of the roadway unless otherwise directed by the police. One associated vehicle may be allowed to head the procession and one follow at the rear but vehicles in the body of the procession can cause danger and are not allowed.

While a march will not normally be allowed to stop en route, in appropriate circumstances arrangements can be made for small deputations to leave the march and hand in letters or petitions at particular premises whilst the march is progressing. Advance notice must be given or any such intention.

Police have the power in certain circumstances to demand that marchers/protestors remove facemasks. Failure to do so in these circumstances is an arrestable offence. In certain circumstances the Environmental Authority may monitor some marches for sound effects.

Employment of Stewards

Stewards are essential in the organisation of any public event. However it must be emphasised that a steward acts as a private person and cannot acquire or be delegated police powers or authority, nor any immunity from the law.

Organisation

When preparing for an event, organisers must determine how many stewards will be necessary and for what purpose they will be used. It is imperative that organisers retain control of their event and to this end a definite chain of command must be established whereby stewards are aware to whom they are responsible and can refer matters for decisions.

Part II of the Public Order Act 1986 concerns processions and assemblies. Section 11 provides that written notice be given in advance of a public procession by the organisers in certain circumstances. It states:

11(1) written notice shall be given in accordance with this section of any proposal to hold a public procession intended:

To demonstrate support for or opposition to the views or actions of any person or body of persons
To publicise a cause or campaign or
To mark or commemorate an event

Unless it is not reasonable practicable to give any advance notice of the procession.

11(2) Subsection (1) does not apply where the procession is one commonly or customarily held in the police area (or areas) in which it is proposed to be held or is a funeral procession organised by a funeral director acting in the normal course of his business.

11(3) The notice must specify the date when it is intended to hold the procession, the time when it is intended to start, its proposed route, the name and address of the person (or one of the persons) proposing to organise it.

11(4) Notice must be delivered to a police station:

In the police area in which it is proposed the procession will start, or
Where it is proposed the procession will start in Scotland and cross into England, in the first police area in England on the proposed route.

11(5) If delivered not less than 6 clear days before the date when the procession is intended to be held, the notice may be delivered by post by the recorded delivery service; but section 7 of the Interpretation Act 1978 (under which a document sent by post is deemed to have been served when posted and to have been delivered in the ordinary course of post) does not apply.

11(6) If not delivered in accordance with subsection (5), the notice must be delivered by hand not less than 6 clear days before the date when the procession is intended to be held or, if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as delivery is reasonably practicable.

11(7) Where a public procession is held, each of the persons organising it is guilty of an offence if:

The requirements of this section as to notice have not been satisfied, or
The date when it is held, the time when it starts, or its route, differs from the date, time or route specified in the notice

Section 11 Advance notice of public processions

(1) Written notice shall be given in accordance with this section of any proposal to hold a public procession intended—

- (a) To demonstrate support for or opposition to the views or actions of any person or body of persons,
- (b) To publicise a cause or campaign, or
- (c) To mark or commemorate an event, unless it is not reasonably practicable to give any advance notice of the procession.

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply where the procession is one commonly or customarily held in the police area (or areas) in which it is proposed to be held or is a funeral procession organised by a funeral director acting in the normal course of his business.

(3) The notice must specify the date when it is intended to hold the procession, the time when it is intended to start it, its proposed route, and the name and address of the person (or of one of the persons) proposing to organise it.

(4) Notice must be delivered to a police station—

- (a) In the police area in which it is proposed the procession will start, or

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