

# Taking part: a step by step guide

Timeline	
March	Registration opens
1 May	Early bird registration deadline to maximise your promotional support
Mid-July	Event directory goes live
1 August	Final registration deadline
6-9 & 13-16 September 2018	<b>The big event!</b>
1 October	Evaluation deadline to feed in to the national impact report

## Note on timescales

Top tips always start with leave lots of time for planning BUT it is possible to put together an event in 6 weeks, if you keep it simple, play to your strengths, and ask for help.

## Getting started

### 1. Have an idea of a story to share

### 2. Discuss with your committee

Things to think about:

- How could you tell the story? (perhaps a talk, walk, exhibition, family fun day?)
- Where could you best tell this story?
- When would be best? (remember it has to happen at some point over the festival dates!)

### 3. Request a login from Heritage Open Days (HODs)

This gives you access to resources that could help inspire your planning including:

- Registration form (the questions can act as prompts)
- Template letters and posters
- The HODs network! Search for previous events and connect with other organisers

Here's the link to the request form: <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/portal/login-request>

### 4. Do a stock take!

What do you have? / what do you need? / who do you know that could help?

- Venue – capacity (do you need to limit numbers?), parking, public transport connections
- People! – to help plan / speak / steward etc.
- Accessibility – places to sit / well-made paths or uneven ground / sound levels etc.
- Refreshments – always a welcome bonus!
- Funding – do you need some extra pennies to cover printing / venue hire or anything?
- Insurance



## Making it happen – in the run up

### I. Get your ducks in a row!

- a. Place:
  - Get permission from the owners of the site/venue
  - Check the routes for accessibility and hazards
  - Check for nearby connections – is somewhere else running a HODs event, if so great, you're creating a cluster of activity, which is more attractive to visitors! Have a chat with them, you could swap ideas, share resources, and cross promote your events
- b. People:
  - Recruit volunteers
  - Do a test run or offer some training to make sure everyone is comfortable with what they will be doing
  - Look for partners – to help fund or provide and manage refreshments / steward parking / print flyers
- c. Particulars :
  - Interpretation – HODs visitors are keen to know more, it helps to have somewhere to direct them for further information; about the site, the story, your organisation, and ways they could potentially get involved
  - Refreshments – source and plan where to have them on site, or you could direct people to local facilities (could a local café offer a discount?)
  - Set up a booking system if necessary – email account / online site like Eventbrite / telephone number / perhaps a local Tourist Information Centre or theatre box office could help?
  - Check there is insurance to cover the event – HODs offer free public liability insurance if needed
  - Think about how to record your event – from photographs to visitor numbers and feedback quotes. They all help you understand what works and what could work better, and will come in handy for future promotion and when talking to potential sponsors

### 2. Register the details with the national team

- WHY do you need to do this?
  - So you have access to the bunting and the media profile through the website etc
  - The event is trademarked and it's confusing for people who ask about what's on to have conflicting information
- HOW do you do this? Please see appendix for step by step guidance!

### 3. Shout about it – let people know it is happening.

So you've planned the most amazing event, fantastic! But hang on – people can't come if they don't know it's happening; so don't be shy, go get the word out!

- a. Create a fabulous flyer. Have it in paper and electronic form, this is a good foundation stone for your promotional activities
- b. Now send these out:
  - Drop through local letterboxes
  - Leave them with your local Tourist Information Centre / library / hotels and b'n'bs / community groups / in café's and hairdressers – places people linger!
  - Ask in local shops / bus stations / libraries if there's a noticeboard / window you could pin it to
- c. Email to the local newspaper or radio, with a press release, maybe offer a preview?!
- d. Post on social media
- e. Tell everyone you know, and get them to tell all their friends!

## Making it happen – on the day!

### 1. Signpost it – help people find you

- Put up the bunting, use the template posters and open signs. Leave a breadcrumb trail of posters to help people find you and make them feel welcome and confident when they arrive
- Tell local business owners and taxi drivers who could direct their customers

### 2. Check the set...

- Hazards defeated as best as possible? Any valuables locked away?
- Stewards badged and prepped?
- Kettle ready and tea laid out?
- Donation box out?
- Sign-up sheets for those interested in more?
- Evaluation forms / comment cards / visitor book out?
- Do the pens work? Are there spares?!

### 3. Enjoy it! Enthusiasm is infectious; your visitors will have more fun if you are too!

- Stay hydrated, and take breaks if you can
- Keep an eye on the level of those all-important refreshments and any interpretative leaflets or sign-up sheets, do they need re-stocking?
- Check in with your fellow volunteers, is everyone ok?

### 4. Record it - capture the moment!

- Take photos if you can for future promotional use (get permission!)
- Don't forget to encourage people to leave feedback where possible
  - WHY? So you have a record of how it went, to give the whole team a reassuring boost / To provide evidence of its value to supporters current and future! / To help you learn what works and what you might be able to make better
  - HOW? Feedback forms / visitor book / comment cards / pin board / luggage labels tied to a tree / bean counters / number clicker – you can get them from newsagents or office supply stores

## Taking it further - what next?!

### 1. Tidy up and pack away

- Take down the signs - all the signs (helps to have made a list of where you put them all so you don't forget a spot!)
- Pack away any bunting and signage that you could use again

### 2. Take stock and pass on the feedback

- Collate the feedback and write it up
- Report to your group and say thank you to all those who helped – from volunteers to site owners, sponsors and local visitors. Checking in helps strengthen your relationship now, and build it for your future plans by demonstrating their contribution was appreciated and made a difference
- Send it to the teams at The Gardens Trust and Heritage Open Days to feed in to the wider picture (and potentially lead to you being featured in future media!)
- Write up a news story for your local press, and again, send this to your national teams too, they might be able to feature it on their sites

### 3. Take a break – recharge your batteries!

### 4. Build on it! So that went well, what could you do next?!

## Some top tips

Over the years local organisers for Heritage Open Days have shared many top tips for their events. Here are some as a taster, and watch this space for a new Top Tops collection –if you have any to add do let us know!

- **Funding:**
  - Check local businesses for their corporate social responsibility policy, they may be looking for community activities to support
  - Although the event must be free there are still fundraising opportunities – put out a donations box / charge for refreshments and leaflets / try an activity – encourage visitors to lay a penny trail to outline the park or a particular shape
- **Raising the profile of your organisation:**
  - Add your logo and web links to your event directory entry - include these in all your publicity!
  - Add a label with your logo and details to a donation box
- **Standing out from a crowded directory:**
  - Include a BRILIANT image, preferably landscape as it will look better on the website
  - Keep the details as short, clear and simple as possible to maximise readability
  - Use questions, alliteration and imaginative description to capture and hold attention
- **Details to include for a fabulous flyer:**
  - Sparky blurb about your offer: what can visitors see/do
  - A BIG note that it is FREE!
  - Practical details: location / time / booking
  - Contact or link for further info
  - Picture (worth 1000 words!)
  - Logos – yours and ours to give it authority and connect it to the bigger picture
- **Potential Partners:**
  - Local societies: history / preservation trusts / Arts Society (previously known as NADFAS) / friends groups
  - Council departments
  - BIDs (Business Improvement Districts)
  - Local businesses
  - Schools and colleges – nb. Students are often keen for volunteer experience to add to their cvs
  - Scouts / Guides
  - Faith groups
  - Local choirs / musicians could be happy to have a platform to perform and add some extra atmosphere
  - Talk to local pubs / cafes about refreshments and potential discounts
  - WI

## Extra resources to help

In the Organiser area of the Heritage Open Days website is a special section called 'Useful Stuff' where there are lots of extra resources to help you:

- **Registration pack**
  - Registration roadmap and tips – a flow chart of the registration process, and some step by step instructions for online registration

- Risk assessment fact file
- Risk assessment template form
- Template letter to private home owners
  
- **Marketing Pack**
  - Poster template – can also be used for flyers and as headed paper!
  - Leaflet template
  - National poster
  
- **Media Toolkit**
  - Press release template
  - Media tips
  - Social media tips
  
- **Evaluation**
  - Visitor book template
  - Organiser feedback form
  - Visitor feedback form
  
- **Template letter to sponsors**

## Other help at hand

- The Capability Brown Festival produced detailed manuals for much more guidance and template resources:  
<http://www.capabilitybrown.org/resources-sites>