

Competition Authorisation Office

Some Notes for Guidance on Organising Treasure Hunts

The Competition Authorisation Office (CAO) of the Royal Automobile Club Motor Sports Association Ltd is the Authorising body for all motoring events held on the Public Highway in England and Wales, and operates the Motor Vehicles (Competitions and Trials) Regulations 1969 on behalf of the Department for Transport. A guide to this legislation is set out in 'The Guide to Motor Vehicles (Competitions and Trials) Regulations 1969 and available from www.legislation.gov.uk. This function in Scotland is undertaken by the Royal Scottish Automobile Club.

Treasure Hunts which have a set route on the Public Highway will need Authorisation through the CAO unless there are **less than 13** competing vehicles. CAO Authorisation for a standard sized event will cost £3.50 per starter. Most events requiring Authorisation have between 30 and 35 miles. Cars competing on treasure hunts are generally required to average about 10 mph, so making the event about two hours in length. Further information on the Route Authorisation process and be found on our website at the following link: -

<https://www.motorsportuk.org/Resource-Centre/Route-Authorisation>

Running a "Twelve-Car" treasure hunt to avoid the need for formal Authorisation can often be just as much fun, with the added bonus for the organiser of not having so many sets of answers to make! However, be sure to check the legislation to ensure that you remain legal.

Navigational Scatter Events are a form of event that are considered automatically authorised under Regulation 5(b) of the legislation, by virtue of the fact that they have no set route and there is no competition on the Public Highway. It is important that they are run to the following conditions: -

- Places to be visited must be detailed to the competitors in the form of points on (say a map reference) described in no fixed order (not the Standard Treasure Hunt format of one point leading to the next).
- Competitors should be given a random choice of points to visit, and not be required to visit more than 75% of them. The point should be safely located, and competitors be free to visit them in any order.
- Competitors should be required to leave the car to reach the points (using maps for example). The car is only a form of transport to get close to the points.
- No form of timing should be employed on the Public Highway sections, although a finish time may be specified providing it gives reasonably adequate time to visit the required number of points.

These events are regularly run by local motor clubs, but may be of little interest to members of the general public running an event.

The event could be thought of as orienteering without the strain. Advice should be sought from CAO before undertaking such a venture if you are unsure.

Points to remember when planning your event

- If you are applying for Authorisation through the CAO, you are required to sign a declaration to say that the event will comply with the standard conditions of the legislation with which you should be familiar before you start, (conditions 5, 6, 8, 10, 14, 16 and 17 particularly concern just treasure-hunt organisers).
- Have an incentive to get competitors to finish, e.g. a barbecue, or a nice country location. You could include the price of a meal at the finish in the entry fee to stop teams who get lost from going home halfway through.
- Issue Teams with a sealed emergency envelope giving details of the finish venue and maybe a 'phone number to ring if they break down; if the envelope is opened, then points can be deducted from the score (at least half-marks).
- Consider where most of the Teams live before you decide on a finish venue miles out into the countryside from which they will have a long drive home afterwards.
- Consider setting the route in a figure-of-eight pattern which enables you to check up on the Teams at about halfway, without having to travel too far from the starting point.
- Don't start your Teams all together, or at short intervals - you need a good few minutes between each starter, otherwise bunching will occur on the route.
- Don't position clue points
 - In a churchyard anywhere that a service might be disrupted (unless you have permission from the vicar);
 - on a busy main road where an accident could be caused by a car stopping suddenly to catch a clue point;
 - anywhere where Teams will have to obstruct the passage of other traffic to answer the clue.
 - Think about what would happen if three or four cars all arrive at the location at once;
 - on private land, or anywhere that might cause your Teams to trespass.
- Don't set unreasonable speeds, 10 mph is quite fast enough, any higher and some cars start breaking speed limits.
- Always emphasise that competitions on the Public Highway are only allowed within the confines of standard Road Traffic Law.
- Don't leave too long a distance between clues as Teams will get bored. On the other hand, the odd longer stretch will cause mild panic in the car if there has been some five minutes or so since the last clue point!
- Try making anagrams or other cryptic clues out of road signs, to give directions at a junction. This is more taxing than just saying "turn left at the traffic lights". However, don't make them too difficult and cause hold-ups to other traffic.

- Marking - you should try and obtain a good selection of easy and hard questions, marked on a scale of 1 to 5 points (say), tailored to give a total out of 100 if possible. For a thirty-mile route you would be looking at between 50 and 70 questions, but this largely depends on the features of the area in which you are running your event.
- Time penalties - once you have finalised your route, get someone who will not be taking part to run the route before-hand to test the route and the questions in order to get some clue as to how long you should expect Teams to take. One point per minute late is a common figure, and easily workable. Make sure you always refer to the same timepiece at start and finish, and have a back-up watch in case of malfunction.
- Teams can be of any size, but obviously a four-man Team will have a four-eye advantage over a two-man Team. You might wish to consider a handicap of a few points for over manned Teams, but you should make this handicap quite clear to everybody before they enter.
- Don't get your clue sheets made up too early, because it is not unknown for a clue to disappear between the setting and the running of the event. Check the whole route no more than a week beforehand.
- What sort of clues should I have? The majority of treasure-hunt questions revolve around extracts from the following list: -

Churches

Name of rector
Times of services
Dates on gravestones

Pubs

Name of licensee
Opening times
Names of beers sold
Pub sign

Post Offices

Name of owner
Opening times
Post-box collection times

Telephone Box Numbers

Local codes
Next meeting Cost of entry

Houses

Number of chimneypots
Colour of door
Something unusual about house name

National Trust Land

Byelaws
Any notices thereon

Farms

Name of farmer
Price of manure etc.

Road Signs

Adding up mileage's
Deciphering anagrams of places

Sports Venues

Next match

Country Houses

Opening times
Cost of entry

Railway Stations

Train times

Ticket prices

Rivers and Canals

Boat names

Depth of/number of locks Bathing restrictions

To name but a few!

It is important to ensure that your event does not unduly disrupt residents living along the route or disrupt any of their normal daily business. Remember that it is all too easy to provide enjoyment for some at the expense of others' livelihood, and peace and quiet. When setting up clue points you should, as a matter of courtesy, ensure that any residents likely to be disturbed are informed of the event and precautions taken to minimise disturbance to them. This is particularly important when such items as house names or garden furniture are used as clues.

Suggested Further Reading

How to Organise (and Win!) Car Treasure Hunts by Alan Frost

Published by AJF Paperback Originals

ISBN 0 9538085 0 5