



Department for
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Media & Sport

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All MPs in England

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Dear Colleague,

The Return of ParkRun

Sport and physical activity are vital to the nation's mental and physical health, now more than ever as we recover from the pandemic. The Government is clear that initiatives such as ParkRun play a vital role in helping people, particularly those from under-represented groups, to be more physically active. ParkRun is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people each weekend and these hugely popular free events are much loved by communities up and down the country.

The Government has prioritised the safe return of sport and exercise through its Covid-19 Roadmap. Organised outdoor sport is exempt from legal gathering limits and can take place with any number of participants, as long as it is undertaken in line with published COVID-secure guidance. Organised sport participation events such as ParkRun have been allowed from 29 March as part of Step 1 of the Government's Roadmap.

Public concern in the last couple of weeks about the delay to ParkRun's return highlights how important these events are to people across the country, and the Government is particularly keen to see these important local events back up and running. We appreciate the pressures that local authorities are under in ensuring requests for organised outdoor sports, such as ParkRun, are carefully considered and run safely. I met with ParkRun on 21 April to discuss this and subsequently wrote a letter of support to ParkRun confirming that their plans meet all relevant requirements and that these events can now legally take place.

Building on this, the Secretary of State wrote in conjunction with the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to all local authorities last week urging them to support the return of ParkRun.


However, despite the Government's interventions, I understand that some landowners, including some local authorities, are still withholding permissions from ParkRuns restarting. We are happy to hear ParkRun have received permission from approximately 330 landowners and are working through the process of 130 applications with other landowners. Yet, there are approximately 140 landowners, including a number of local authorities, who have not allowed the events to return or have not yet replied to ParkRun's communications. ParkRun needs approximately 80% of ParkRuns to be allowed to go ahead to prevent people travelling across the country from areas without a ParkRun operating, to ones which are.

The Government has been clear that ParkRun events are legally able to take place. However, the organisation has said that it will have to postpone recommencing events until 26th June because of the delay in receiving permission. We are strongly urging local authorities to ensure that they are applying their powers in a consistent and proportionate manner and progressing ParkRun's applications at pace in order to allow these events to return as soon as possible, and welcome your support in encouraging them to do so.

The success of the recent Reunion 5km which took place as part of the Government's Event Research Programme show that events like ParkRun, as well as other outdoor events such as marathons, sportives and fun runs, can take place safely, and in the interests of public health they should now restart.

I know this issue commands support across the House and we would be grateful for your support in ensuring these important local events can return.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Huddleston', written in a cursive style.

Nigel Huddleston MP
Minister for Sport and Tourism