

Events and Recreation Pressure

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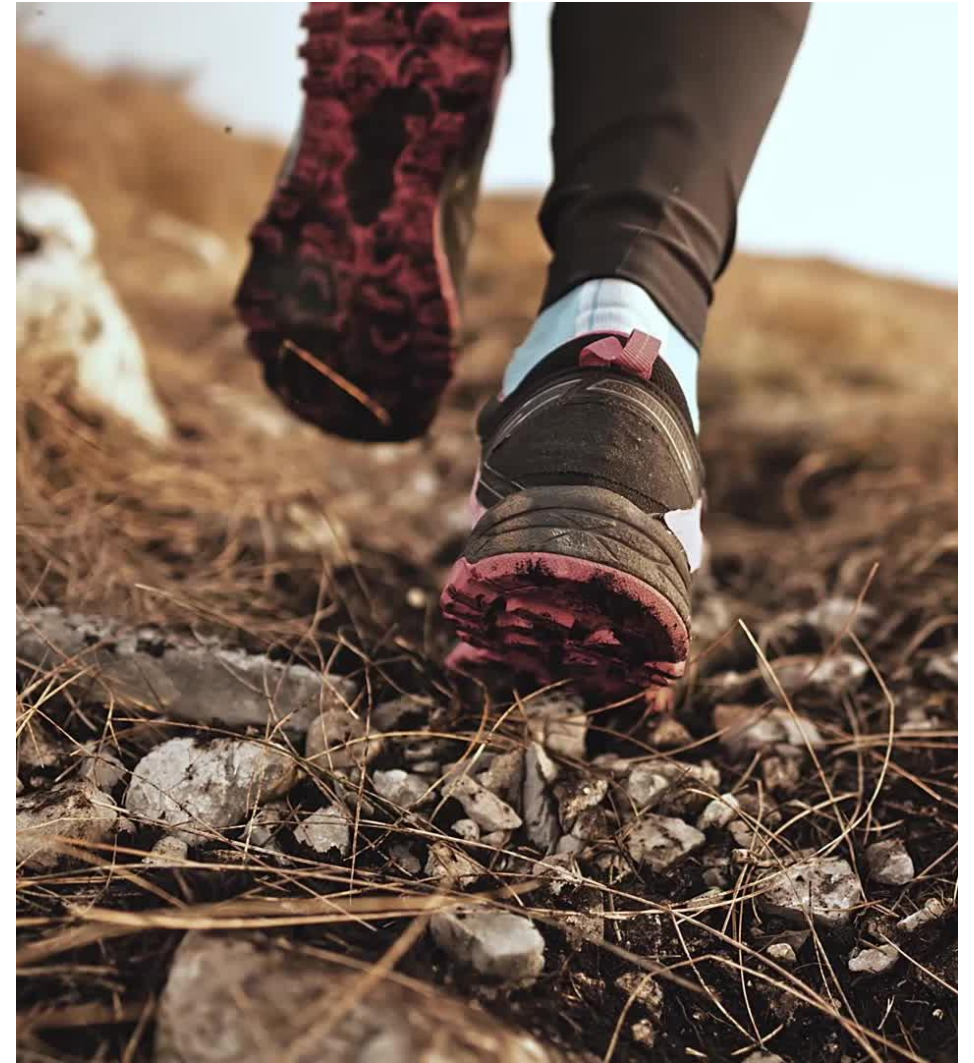
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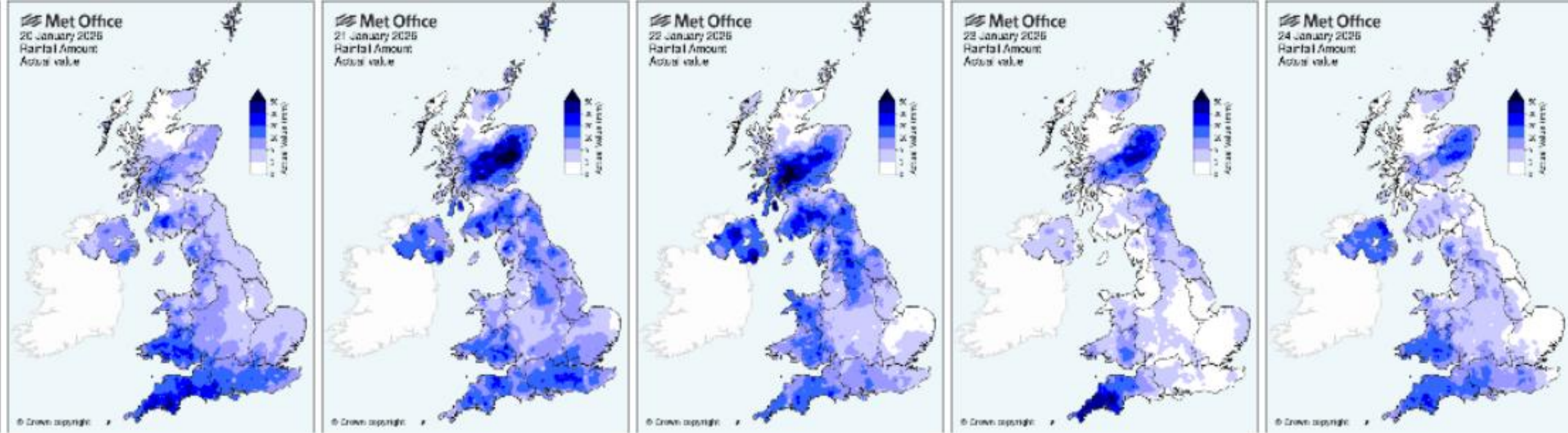
Background – Trail Running

- Significant increase in UK recreational running participation
- Trail running in UK growing 18% from 2022 to 2024 (RunBritain)
- Number of sanctioned trail events doubled since 2018 (ITRA)
- Surge attributed to factors such as social media influence, the proliferation of running clubs, and the positive correlation between recreational running and improved mental health outcomes
- Weather Pride – running through rain, wind and darkness is a badge of honour
- The UK running market—including footwear, apparel, accessories, events and services—was estimated at £2.5 billion in 2025



Background - The Arc of Attrition

- Started in 2015 with 50 participants,
- 2020 started to Gain traction and sponsors.
- 2024 – 750 Participants
- UTMB purchased the event in 2024 for UK component of their world series with event backed by ‘UTMB for the planet’
- 2024 – SWCP and NT discussions with UTMB and ambition to make this a sustainable event which benefits everyone involved
- 2025 - 1599 UTMB (delivered) – Signed up as Coast Path Friendly
- 2026 - 2500 – Signed up as Coast Path Friendly



Weather

- Event occurs in January following another early Jan, mass participation (2026 - 340), multi race ultra event
- Wet Autumn 2025 in addition to Storm Goretti 8 and 9th January bringing strong winds, rain and snow to the UK, with peak winds hitting Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.
- 23rd/24th January, Storm Ingrid brought strong winds and high sea / storm surges to the southwest coastline. Yellow weather warning for Wind and rain.

Impacts

Community

- Damage to path stopping people using the path
- Risk of slipping due to mud and wear
- Residents disturbances
- Access to and from properties obstructed
- Too many vehicles in too small an area

Services

- Who will fix the paths, SWCP, CC or landowner, and how?
- Escalation to Safety Authorities
- Participants feedback around route and safety, weather conditions. A lot of runners had a great experience

Impacts - Landscape

Before



After





Challenges

- Increasing frequency of mild, wet winters
- Land Managers – limited/no power to enforce mitigations / reduce impacts. Liability for SSSI damage. Left to deal with the issues and communications once the event has been completed
- Natural England – Help needed to protect the SSSI and landscapes but need support and information sharing from NE
- Cornwall Council – PRow legislation does not address the issues & impacts. Event licensing minimal power to limit numbers and reduce impacts
- Transparency of participation numbers – drop outs / volunteer supporters / spectators. Need for a consistent approach/value
- Carrying capacity and evidence – How can this be worked out and what does it look like?
- Event organisers comms / messaging and evidence i.e. £2million going to local economy so if the event stops that financial value is being removed

Communications

- Organiser tried to speak with stakeholders individually rather than in a group discussion
- Event Organiser took one phone call conversation as full support for their event plan
- Communication worked well in the group discussions
- Event Organiser feedback – 2.2million back to local economy. No major complaints received. Participant feedback good.
- Disputed that damage was done to the path
- LiveTrack App, will indicate where participants are straying from the path creating braided paths and where penalties can be applied.

Participant Numbers v Community concerns

Year	Number of Participants	Race Distances	Time dealing with Complaints	Communications - Shared communication plan for general comments and concerns - Continue throughout the year in terms of how this event should be managed to protect the trail - Increasingly require a more specific charity response
2017	120	100 mile	Ok	
2018	164	100 mile	Ok	
2019	304	100 & 50 mile	Ok	
2020	367	100 & 50 mile	Ok	
2021	Cancelled			
2022	427	100 & 50 mile	Ok	Operational teams - Increase in participation numbers and frequency of autumn/winter events causing a significant increase in time assessing and managing impact Insufficient regeneration occurring along habitat corridors and landscapes
2023	650	100 & 50 mile	Reached capacity	
2024	750	100 & 50 mile	Reached capacity	
2025	1599	100, 50 & 25 mile	Over capacity costing charity £'s in staff time	
2026	2509	100, 50, 25 & 12 mile	Maxed out - costing charity £'s in staff time	
2027	2700?	100, 50,25 & 12 mile	Parish Councils	

Post Event – Reactive Comms



We understand that this year's Arc of Attrition event has had a real impact on communities, as well as on people who use and care for the South West Coast Path.

The South West Coast Path and the landscapes it passes through are precious, working places, supporting wildlife, local communities and thousands of people who enjoy them every year.

While the route follows public rights of way, we take our role as a landowner and custodian seriously and are very concerned by reports of damage, safety issues and disruption linked to this year's event.

We are working closely with the South West Coast Path Association, Cornwall Council and other partners to fully understand the impacts and to review what changes are needed for the future. Our priority is to ensure that nature, local communities and public access are protected.



On January 23-25, the Arc of Attrition UTMB World Series trail-running event was held in Cornwall. A challenging endurance race that sees the Arc 100 runners start at Coverack on the South coast and finish at Porthtowan on the North coast. The race is non-stop with checkpoints staged along the 100-mile route along the South West Coast Path, as participants run through the night with head torches to guide them.

This year, saw additional races added to the original Arc 100, with the Arc 50, Arc 25 and Arc 12. This encouraged more people to take part than in previous years.

The Arc event this year had 2,500 entries, although not all started or completed their races. The Arc 100 set-off as Storm Ingrid arrived. Combined with the heavy rainfall we had experienced in the lead-up to the event, we anticipated a detrimental impact on the Path.

This year's Arc of Attrition signed up to our Coast Path Friendly scheme and has committed to donate £1.50 per participant.



We are currently assessing the damage on the SWCP as a direct result of the event, and working with our partners, the National Trust and Cornwall Council, to assess the repair costs.

To help us in our assessment, we are putting a **CALL OUT** to our members and supporters who live in the region to provide feedback on the Path conditions following the event. If you ran the Arc, we'd also be interested in your feedback and how you felt the experience was as a participant.

Send feedback and images to:

hello@southwestcoastpath.org.uk

Your valuable feedback will help us as we work with UTMB and our partners to ensure that any future event is sustainable and has a low impact on the Path.

Thank you for your support.

Trail Partners 2027 Proposals

- Reduce numbers of runners to 1000
- Only offer the 100mile and 50mile distances
- £20,000 damage deposit to rectify any issues and to cover time taken by organisations responding to issues

Sustainability – event benefits all

- Local community is supportive of the event
- Event gives back to the area and supports the infrastructure it passes over and through
- The area is improved for landscape and habitats and not detrimentally damaged
- Event ownership of any problems or damaged caused
- Participants are engaged and connected with nature and wider landscapes, making better choices as to the balance of an event and landscape/nature impact.