

Fixtures Secretary's Report for 2020 AGM

My job as SWOA fixtures secretary is to develop an orderly programme of orienteering across the region and to assign major competitions. I do this by frequent liaison with club fixtures secretaries and by representing SWOA on the national Event Scheduling Group. My intention is always to give equal opportunity to SW clubs to bid for major competitions and to find space in the fixtures calendar.

This is a very different report from previous years because of Covid-19. British Orienteering announced a suspension of orienteering on 17th March, mid-way through our season. So it is convenient to split the year in two at that date. I'll also take a tentative look at the future.

Year up to 17th March

Over the 6½ months from 1st September up to 17th March, the year's programme was like any other year. The following table lists the numbers of events by each club:

Club	Number of events and activities from 1st Sept 2019 to 17th March 2020					
	Major	National	Regional	Local	Activities	Total
BOK	1	0	1	9	29	40
DEVON	0	2	4	5	12	23
KERNO	0	0	5	4	0	9
NGOC	0	3	3	21	2	29
NWO	0	0	2	5	4	11
QO	0	0	0	10	22	32
SARUM	0	0	1	4	10	15
WIM	0	0	1	9	4	14
WSX	0	0	2	4	28	34
TOTAL	1	5	19	72	123	220

We'd normally have about 400 events and activities in a year, so as you might expect we had just over half the number we would normally see in a year. It is an average of 8 events and activities per week so it represents a phenomenal effort. My thanks to all those volunteering to help at activities and events at all levels.

The major event was the Southern Championships which BOK hosted in the Forest of Dean in December, making a weekend with BAOC Southern Night Championships and a NGOC middle distance race. The National events were the 2-day Caddihoe Chase hosted by Devon at a soggy Burrator, and NGOC's 50th anniversary weekend in the Forest of Dean in January. NGOC completed a busy winter with their hosting of our Compass Sport Cup qualifier heat at Coopers Hill just days before lockdown.

Year since 17th March

British Orienteering decreed that all events and activities had to be cancelled when we entered lockdown. This covered a 4½ month period from mid-March until the end of July.

Despite British Orienteering announcing in July that orienteering could resume from 1st August, there were no orienteering events at all in our region from mid-March to the end of August, and only a handful of local events in September. Traditionally there would be few events in August anyway, and it takes time to get events organised. But this small number is primarily due to the fact we're finding it difficult to get permissions for events as major landowners are taking a cautious approach to Covid-19 risks.

It is worth noting that although BAOC events do not feature on our fixtures lists, a stand-out success with re-starting traditional events was BAOC whose mid-week military league is thriving. Unfortunately these events

are no longer open to civilians in order to safeguard the military, but the league demonstrates that it is possible to hold large events with social distancing. The other success to note is the abundance of virtual orienteering, such as MapRun. Many clubs have had well supported virtual orienteering series, and we are fortunate to have had this technology available. I am impressed that clubs have adapted to the changes and found ways to continue the sport during this difficult time.

I would also like to acknowledge the events that got cancelled. Some clubs have been hit harder than others. Many individuals will have invested considerable time into events that could not take place during lockdown. My thanks to all for your efforts, and I hope your work can be used at some time in the future. Major events that have fallen victim to lockdown are the BOK Trot, the Tamar Triple, the Yvette Baker Trophy final and this year's Caddihoe. I know the last two will on that list are now re-scheduled for next year. Other cancellations curtailed the South West Orienteering League, we lost the South West Sprint Championships at an exciting new venue, and the entire South West relay series was abandoned.

The future

As I am sure you all know the JK festival due to take place in our region next year has had to be cancelled, this is covered in a separate report.

However we still proceed with plans for other major events. NGOC are still expecting to host the British Night Championships this coming February. Further ahead, Devon & BOK are hosting the British Championships in spring 2022, WIM have offered to host the British Night Championships in early 2023 and BOK to do the Compass Sport Cup Final in summer 2023.

Regarding regional events, you may also be aware the South West Orienteering League is suspended for this season. This decision was taken in the summer when it looked very uncertain what events could take place, and relaxing the requirements was intended to give clubs more freedom to adapt to a changing situation. Subsequent developments have justified this decision, as event permissions remain difficult, and there seems no chance of an early end to current restrictions. It looks likely we will have to continue with more virtual orienteering and fewer traditional events than we are used to for several months to come. However we continue to plan for the future and hope for a return to normal next winter.

Richard Sansbury

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