

SOUTH WEST ORIENTEERING ASSOCIATION

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MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday 6th January 2026

PRESENT:

Christine Vince KERNO (chairman); Helen Kelsey BOK (secretary); Steve Robertson QO (treasurer); Rob Mills WIM (fixtures); Pete Maliphant BOK (cttee and SWJOS); Arthur Vince KERNO (cttee); Julie Astin WSX (cttee); Neil Fraser NWO;(cttee); Roger Hargreaves KERNO; Liz Yeadon SARUM.

1. Apologies. Steve Robertson QO (treasurer); Kevin Pickering WIM (cttee); Rich Jackson (cttee); Richard Rossington BOK; David Faulkner BOK.
2. Chairman's update. – Peter Brett of WIM died a few weeks ago. Although he hadn't orienteered recently Christine noted what an asset he had been as part of the organising team for the JK in 2010
3. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 21st October 2025. Roger Hargreaves noted that he had been missed from the list of those present, with that amendment the minutes were approved by the meeting.
4. Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda. - none
5. Treasurer and Membership Secretary's report. –(see *appendix 1*) Steve Robertson reported present situation as predicted, ongoing levies have returned total funds to over £10,000.
6. Fixture's secretaries report
 - Richard Hudson (BOK) reported progress with the British Sprint Championships in June: entries will go live in June, UWE has been quite easy to deal with and everything seems to have been agreed, whilst there are still some ongoing negotiations with Bath University particularly in terms of parking which need confirming in the next few weeks as details need to be issued soon.
 - Rob Mills reported on some of the discussions about JK 2028, there has been no feedback from Peter Brooke since he said that BOF are currently in discussions with Forestry England to promote orienteering, and his suggestion that he raise the possibility of using the Forest of Dean for JK2028, as a matter of importance. (see *appendix 2*).
 - Steve Robertson reported that the plan to have the Southern Champs in the Quantocks in January 2027 has had to be revised following withdrawal of permissions and QO is now looking at DEVON's Branton Burrows for the weekend of 11/12th April (though the usual embargo time will have to be waived as Branton was used in December 2025). (see *appendix 3*)
 - Rob suggested that the committee should consider whether the SWOL should include a Very Short Green in the course requirements as this would be in line with BOF guidelines and the demographic of orienteers indicates this would be popular. Arthur commented that adding a Very Short Green to the courses shouldn't be much extra work for the planner as it is usually a shorter variant of the Short Green. Liz commented that the Very Short Green at the army events was always very popular. It was proposed that we include the suggestion in the report to clubs asking for

comments and then discuss at the next meeting with a view to introducing it for the 2026/7 season. **ACTION: HK to add to report to clubs and add to next agenda**

7. SWJOS report. Pete Maliphant reported that the squad currently has 25 members from all SW clubs except currently DEVON. 7 of the squad members have been selected for the Talent South Squad. SWJOS works closely with Mark Saunders and the Talent South squad and recently shared a Christmas training weekend. The squad is encouraging the involvement of the younger coaches and some of the parents are now working towards their Level 2 coaching qualification. Pete alerted the committee to the fact that the squad has been run for the past two decades by 3 longstanding orienteers. 20 years ago Jeff Butt did a brilliant job in setting up the squad in its current format and it has gone from strength to strength. The SWJOS is noted for the experience that it gives the juniors, their success and team spirit (and of course the iconic O tops). Pete and Dave Hanstock have led the squad since 2020 but are now M70s. Whilst many of the parents are willing to help with training days/weekends and some are becoming coaches, we are now thinking about succession planning for the lead team, which organises the training sessions, deals with all the admin and generally runs the squad.
CV thanked Pete for all the hard work that he and the rest of his team have put into making SWJOS such a success over the years.
8. Recorder of Controllers' report Arthur reported that there have been no changes to the controllers since the last meeting and that the region in general is short of controllers and could particularly benefit from more grade B controllers. Clubs need to identify any of their members who have the right sort of experience and encourage them to apply to become controllers. Courses can be arranged through SWOA.
9. AOB
 - Christine noted that we have had very few courses running in the SW in recent years and we should be looking to encourage more courses for organisers, controllers and planners. She had received correspondence from someone who is putting on some online courses and this will need to be circulated to all clubs. **ACTION: CV to circulate information about online courses.**
 - Neil commented that clubs are getting increasingly concerned with the deterioration of orienteering's relationship with Forestry England, the new liaison officer is really struggling, contact is very difficult, phone calls and emails not responded to. Length of time in advance for applications increasing. Ian Jones commented that it is a concatenation of two issues – the time it takes for permissions to be agreed and the environmental issues such as nesting birds, ash dieback etc which cause restrictions on orienteering, despite there being no restrictions on the use of these areas by the general public (which arguably could have much more environmental impact)
ACTION: CV to investigate with BOF the outcome of their negotiations with FE.
10. Club reps report to clubs
 - Need for more controllers – ask clubs to identify suitable candidates
 - Succession planning for running of SWJOS

11. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 3rd March 2026

Appendices

Appendix 1 Treasurer and Membership Secretary's report

Financial Status January 2026

	Year to Date Jan 3rd <u>2025-26</u>	Versus October <u>Status</u>
Levies	£ 3,295	£ 2,274
Grants	(1,945)	(250)
Courses	0	0
English OC	(887)	0
Other Income/Expense	(435)	(137)
Total	£ 28	£ 1,887
Total Funds	£ 10,475	£ 1,887

Explanation of Change versus 2024-25 Year End

Levies

We maintained the SWOA levy fees at the same level as 2024-25 and levy income has continued at a steady level, an additional £2,274 since the October report.

Grants

2025 calendar year grant payments have been spread equally between 2024-25 and 2025-26 financial years.

As expected, few grant requests were received at the end of 2025 and they will recommence towards the end of the 2025-26 financial year. As expected few grant requests were received at the end of 2025 and will recommence towards the end of the 2025-26 financial year.

English Orienteering Council

The timing of the EOC AGM and request to the Regions for Interland and Home International support resulted in the 2025 payment falling in 2025-26 financial year.

Other Income / Expense

Primarily represents Website and Southern & SWOL Competition Trophies & Certificates.

Summary

The financial situation is as expected with levy payments recovering total funds to over £10,000.

ACCOUNT DETAIL

				<u>Income/Expenditure</u> <u>Detail</u>	<u>Summary</u> <u>Level</u>
<u>INCOME</u>					
Levies	BOK DEVON KERNO NGOC N WO QO SARUM WIM WSX Other			£ 556.37	
				645.15	
				88.32	
				679.65	
				186.30	
				254.15	
				201.25	
				329.82	
				354.89	
				<u>0.00</u>	
				£ 3,295.90	3,295.90
Other Income	Interest			£ <u>21.47</u>	21.47
Total				£ 3,317.37	3,317.37
<u>EXPENSE</u>					
Grants	Junior Squad Representation	Junior		£ 0.00	
				(300.00)	
				0.00	
	Tours/Training	Junior		(1,645.00)	
				0.00	
					(1,945.00)
Courses	Individuals Clubs Other			0.00	
				0.00	
				0.00	0.00
English OC				(887.00)	(887.00)
Website				(165.40)	
Expenses	Committee Competition			0.00	
				(286.81)	(452.21)
Misc.				(4.99)	(4.99)
Total				£ (3,289.20)	(3,289.20)

SUMMARY

				<u>Income/Expenditure</u>	
	Levies			£ 3,295.90	
	Grants			(1,945.00)	
	Courses			0.00	
	English OC			(887.00)	
	Other Income / Misc.			(435.73)	
	Total			£ 28.17	

CASH BALANCES

		Current	Deposit		
		Account	Account	Total	
Opening Balances		5,335.48	5,111.81	£	10,447.29
Transfers	Deposit	0.00	0.00		0.00
	Current	0.00	0.00		0.00
Transacts	Credit	3,295.90	21.47		3,317.37
	Debit	(3,289.20)	n/a		(3,289.20)
Closing Balances		5,342.18	5,133.28	£	10,475.46
Period Change		6.70	21.47	£	28.17

SWOA Financial Status -- Year to Date 2025-26 Jan-26

January 3, 2026
Steve Robertson

Appendix 2 Report of discussions on JK2028

SWOA meeting, 6th January 2026

Chairman's Notes

JK2028

Email sent by me to SWOA committee and club reps on 05-11-2025:

Folks – I've had a long conversation with Peter Brooke about locations for JK2028.

I'm afraid that things have changed since 1997, and not in our favour.

Peter told me that BOF are currently in discussions with Forestry England to promote orienteering.

He suggested that he raise the possibility of using the Forest of Dean for JK2028, as a matter of importance, with which I agreed.

(I did point out that the views of top management and the views of grassroots staff could show a marked difference.)

So now we await developments.

Rob Mills has provided some information re future BOK events including JK 2028:

Dated 17-11-2025, from Rob to CV:

Fyi re some further information on the constraints in Forest of Dean from BOK & NGOC as part of on-going discussions on whether BOK could host CSC Final in 2027 and of the back of myself keep both BOK & NGOC sighted that BOF intends to engage FE directly re the possibility of using Forest of Dean for JK 2028.

Re the latter, it will not surprise you that BOF is unlikely to make any progress with FE unless BOF is willing to move JK to the back end of the year.

Greg however does make a few other suggestions re JK below that I had not heard raised previously and that might be worthy of further investigation or is it best just to wait until you hear back from Peter Brooke?

Dated 14-11-2025, from Matthew Owen BOK to Rob:

Jo Foster (copied) handles our permissions so I don't speak from a position of great authority. But I don't get the impression that FE are fundamentally anti-orienteeing - although of course if we all just went to their pay & display car parks, ran in their 10k races, drank at their coffee shops and played at their Go Ape concessions they might be a lot happier!

I think they are understaffed and operating within a conservative culture that encourages the least-risk approach when dealing with public access. So we face slow processing times for applications, limits on competitor numbers and restrictions on parking. But as far as BOK is concerned (and echoing what Greg has said), the most punitive constraint is the 'traffic light' system, introduced originally to protect nesting goshawks. I don't know if this is country-wide or confined to SW England.

Like NGOC, we can now only get into FE areas from September to mid-Jan:

(table deleted)

I've never quite understood this limitation, as goshawks are not ground-nesting birds so the level of threat from people is unclear. I would assume that a dog off a lead is going to present a significantly greater risk to any bird than a human. But organised events are obviously easier targets than the general public.

So in Peter Brooke's negotiations with FE, I feel like encouraging them to do more to 'promote orienteeing' at a national level is only part of the challenge. Arguably more important are their locally driven management rules. For us in SW England, it's goshawks and the traffic light system that he should have in his sights if he wants to secure access at Easter.

At our committee meeting on Monday we will discuss any other potential areas that may be suitable for a JK. I suspect there are none within BOK's territory, but that doesn't rule out us running one or more days at other clubs' venues - if they exist.

Dated 14-11-2025, from Greg Best NGOC to Rob:

Thanks for letting me know about this. However, I doubt that Forestry England would permit access at Easter. They certainly don't allow us to hold any events at that time of year any longer - no events between mid Jan and end of June.

There may be more joy to be had by talking to the privately owned Lydney Park Estate in the Forest of Dean, an extensive area with good terrain. We struggle to get regular access to it, but with a significant payment from a large event, the estate may be more interested. We also do have a couple of other good areas that are usually available at that time of year. In particular, I am thinking about the extensive May Hill/Newent Woods/Huntley Estate area and also Cleeve Hill.

Dated 12-11-2025, from Rob to Matthew Owen BOK:

That's absolutely fine, fully understood and Mike Cope is already aware but I will ensure his expectations are managed accordingly.

On your wider point, BOK and SWOA are sadly not unique. Myself and the other regional fixture secretaries regularly feedback and discuss the challenges with access/permissions with FE to Mike Cope who chairs the Event Scheduling Group and he in turn feeds back into BOF.

Fyi, following a recent discussion between the SWOA Chair & Peter Brooke, CEO of BOF re JK 2028, Peter told Christine that BOF are currently in discussions with Forestry England to promote orienteering. He suggested that he raise the possibility of using the Forest of Dean for JK 2028, as a matter of importance, with which she agreed.

There is no action on BOK or NGOC on JK 2028 at this time but I wanted both clubs to be aware so you are not blindsided if this is raised by FE to you at a local level. Given this, I have copied Greg Best in on this reply. I will of course let you know if I hear anything more on this.

Dated 12-11-2025, from Matthew Owen BOK to Rob:

We have a committee meeting next Monday at which the CSC final will be on the agenda again. As you have pointed out in your latest Fixtures Bulletin, the issue is not so much the level of willingness on the part of the club, it's more the access constraints at Forestry England. For recent events they have been imposing a limit of 300 competitors. And they have been giving final permission to NGOC and ourselves extremely late in the day, sometimes in the week before the event. They just don't have the staff to deal with the number of applications they receive.

So without pre-empting what our committee is going to say, I think it highly likely that they will not agree to host this event, on the basis that we can't guarantee access this far in advance for that many people (800-1,000?). You will know that the access issue was also partly behind SWOA's decision not to host the JK in Devon in 2028.

This needs high-level intervention by BOF in negotiation with major landowners like FE, the National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts. Otherwise these organisations will continue to defer to their foot soldiers at each location, who have a tendency to say no in the name of nesting goshawks, ash dieback or unspecified 'environmental damage', with little hard evidence of actual risk that exceeds any form of other public access (often involving dogs, bikes and horses!).

Appendix 3 report from QO on Southern Championships 2027

2027 Southern Championships Update

QO volunteered to organise the 2027 Southern Championships on January 24, 2027.

Location: Great Wood plus ancient oak woodland and moorland to the north of Great Wood. Great Wood was used for the Compass Sport Regional Heat in 2022.

Provisional permissions were obtained from Forestry England, British Landscapes, Natural England, and other landowners. Car parking on forest roads, the assembly area and facilities agreed with Forestry England.

All officials had been appointed, and map updating had commenced.

In late November Forestry England withdrew permission for use of the Great Wood area. Timber contract tendering date had slipped and FE considered the risk of forestry operations continuing through January 2027 was too great and they did not want to be in the situation of withdrawing permission at the last minute. Also, ongoing forest operations would limit the forest tracks/roads that could be used for car parking.

Regrettably the QO team decided that the area north of Great Wood could not support the event and other QO areas were not sufficiently large or of the appropriate technical standard.

However, informal discussions with DEVON identified that they were not planning to use Branton Burrows during 2026 and this raised the possibility of QO 'borrowing' Branton for the 2027 championships.

The area is technical and the car parking could be managed to handle the number of competitors expected to travel to North Devon (DEVON believe up to 350 cars could be accommodated).

Initial discussions with DEVON have been positive and we have approached them formally to gain their agreement.

Landowners will be approached in the New Year to gain permission including moving the event to later in 2027 – provisionally to April 11th, one of the first weekends in 2027 when there is not a national level event elsewhere in the South. This later date is preferred by DEVON since they have offered their assistance with the event and the April timing distances it from the DEVON SWOL event presently planned for January 17, 2027, plus later in the year increases the probability of warmer, drier weather on an exposed area.

Moving event location, and the Controller moving out of the area, has resulted in a change of officials and QO are still seeking an appropriate level Controller.

Steve Robertson, QO