

Advice on Writing to Land Owners re Access for Orienteering Events

Requests for permission for access for an orienteering event should be made as early as possible. Try and give at least 6 months prior to the proposed date of the event, especially if this is the first time the area is being used for orienteering.

Before requesting permission for a specific date, check whether the area is used for a land management operation which might result in permission being refused for part of the year, eg lambing, and avoid asking for permission at this time.

Consider setting up an access agreement with the land owner for each area being used by your club so you know the issues regarding access and when access is not possible to all or part of the area for events. A sample access agreement, approved by the SOA and the SRPBA (Scottish Rural Property & Business Association) is available on the SOA web-site. Even if it isn't used, it is a useful guide to the issues which arise in discussions with land owners on access.

Always enclose a copy of the OS map with a request for access showing the exact boundary of the area you are proposing to use along with other information if known such as the location of the car park, start, assembly and finish. If possible mark on the area you understand that they own and also the whole area you wish to use. Land owners generally do not understand orienteering maps.

Remember that under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and Clause 3.60 of the accompanying Scottish Outdoor Access Code you have to get the land owner's permission for organised events. All access to the countryside is covered by this Act and Code. See the article in the July / August 2006 Score on when permission for access for orienteering is required. A copy is also available on the SOA web-site.

Make sure that you try and meet any land owner whose land you are requesting to use for the first time as they will probably not fully understand what the sport involves. This gives you the chance to explain everything in detail and visit any locations to discuss matters which might arise.

Give an indication of the expected number of competitors likely to attend, and the time the event will be taking place.

Ensure you mention that no litter will be left, any requests regarding the exclusion of dogs will be adhered to, toilets will be provided if required, fences and walls will be crossed via stiles or gates if requested, public liability insurance will be provided via BOF, etc.

Make it clear that you can be flexible with the date of your event if the proposed date is unsuitable.

Remember that your officials will require occasional access into the area before and possibly after the event. Check whether they require to give notice that they are accessing the area.

Make it clear that the courses can be planned to avoid any sensitive nature conservation sites such as marshes.

Are you also requesting permission to park vehicles on the land, eg a field or private car park.

A letter to a land manager might look like this –

National Orienteering Centre
c/o Glenmore Lodge
Aviemore
Inverness-shire
PH22 1QU
Tel: 01479 861374
E-mail: nationalocentre@scottish-orienteering.org
Date: 11th November 2005

Dear Sir

Proposed Orienteering Event; xxxxxxx Estate, 4th June 2006

I am writing to you on behalf of the local orienteering club, xxxxx OC, to ask for your permission to hold an orienteering event on the area outlined on the enclosed copy of the OS map on Sunday 4th June 2006. If this date is unsuitable we would be happy to discuss an alternative.

We are aware of our responsibilities under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and Scottish Outdoor Access Code and will ensure that all walls and fences are only crossed via stiles or gates, we will provide the necessary toilets for the day, and will abide by any special requests you may have. We will also ensure the event is registered with the British Orienteering Federation so their public liability insurance will cover the event. A copy of the policy is available if you require.

The event is part of the South of Scotland Orienteering League and we expect there to be around 150 competitors attending of all ages. The competition will run from 10.00am to 4.00pm on the day, although we will require occasional access to the area for our officials prior to the event to prepare the map and courses.

We are also looking for a suitable car park for around 50 vehicles. I have marked a possible location on the map as well.

If you are able to help us by giving your permission, we would be interested in setting up an access agreement for future use of the area. The Scottish Orienteering Association and SRPBA have collaborated in the production of a sample agreement which could be used for this purpose. A copy is available on both organisations' web-sites.

I would like to meet you to discuss the event in detail and answer any questions you might have.

Many thanks for your anticipated help and co-operation.

Yours etc