

Best Practice Agreement - Orienteering Responsibly

Introduction

This document sets out the general principles of how Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Scottish Orienteering Association (SOA) will work together towards an environmentally sustainable approach to orienteering. We aim to ensure that orienteering events organised by the SOA and its affiliated clubs are appropriately sited, timed, planned and implemented to provide suitable orienteering opportunities whilst protecting the natural heritage and land management issues and also facilitating enjoyment of the countryside. We will work in accordance with the principles of responsible management and enjoyment set out in the draft Scottish Outdoor Access Code. An orienteering Code of Practice detailing specific targets and milestones will follow on from this general approach.

SNH is a Non-Departmental Government Body answerable to the responsible Minister and First Minister, and through them to the Scottish Parliament. Our aim is to promote the care and improvement of our natural heritage, its responsible enjoyment, its greater understanding and appreciation and its sustainable use now and for future generations. We work in partnership, by co-operation, negotiation and consensus, where possible with all relevant interests in Scotland.

SOA is the Governing Body for the sport in Scotland operating within the Rules and Guidelines of the British Orienteering Federation (BOF). BOF has an Environmental Policy and associated Rules and Guidelines which are fully endorsed by SOA. In addition, SOA will develop its own detailed Code of Practice specifically related to the Scottish environment and to the draft Scottish Outdoor Access Code and Land Reform (Scotland) Act.

The nature of orienteering makes responsible access to woods, forests, dunes and open moor vital to its continuing success. SOA appreciates the importance of a healthy natural environment and is committed to the protection of important wildlife features when organising orienteering events. An essential feature of well-managed events will be that any environmental damage is minimised and that temporary marks, such as flattened vegetation, are no longer discernible by the next growing season. Our goal is to leave the countryside after each event as rich and diverse in wildlife as it was before the event.

Best Practice

SNH and SOA will work together to promote and encourage responsible, quality orienteering. To do this we will develop and use a Code of Practice and practical measures to protect the natural heritage, and will only exclude or restrict events as a last resort where this may be necessary to protect important conservation interests. Wherever possible, such restrictions on events should be limited in time and/or area, and we will jointly seek solutions

which are acceptable to both parties. We will work towards a common basis for policies and practice relating to orienteering and ensure that staff and members of both organisations are made aware of this approach.

Guidelines

SNH & SOA will promote care, improvement and sustainable use of the natural environment by working together to facilitate orienteering in areas and in ways that ensure that the natural heritage is appropriately protected and obligations fulfilled.

Communication

SNH & SOA will establish good communication between SNH Area Officers, SOA orienteers/club officials and land managers, involving all relevant parties in the decision-making process.

Land Management Interests

SNH & SOA recognise that orienteering often takes place on land managed for a range of land management purposes, as well as on land managed primarily for recreation. Where appropriate SOA will approach land managers to seek advice on how to orienteer responsibly, taking into account land management operations, etc.

Education/Promotion

SNH & SOA will ensure that the detailed code of responsible orienteering is well-publicised, understood and supported by SNH staff, SOA orienteers and landowners, and that this code will link to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Event Management

SNH & SOA will work to develop best practice guidelines for orienteering event planning and management to minimise impacts on the environment and other land management operations, and to promote sustainable use of the countryside.

Monitoring & Research

SNH & SOA will co-operate in the monitoring of environmental impacts at orienteering events, to assess the overall impact and implement improvements when areas are next used for orienteering.

Liaison

SNH & SOA will meet at least once per year nationally to review the effectiveness of this agreement, amend if required and determine any actions arising.