



Navigating to the Future

Scottish Orienteering Strategic Plan
2025-2029



Photo Credit: Michael Philp Photos

Orienteering — a sport for all generations



Orienteering....

is an exciting outdoor sport for people of all ages and abilities. It provides both physical and mental challenges with clear benefits for health and wellbeing. The aim is to navigate between checkpoints marked on a special orienteering map. There is no set route and so the skill and fun come from trying to find the best way to go! Its flexible format enables it to be relevant across a wide range of people and places.



Photo Credit: Rob Lines

In Scotland

there is a strong and vibrant orienteering community with a track record of staging world class events (including the World Championships in 2024 and the renowned Scottish 6 Days event every 2 years since 1977). Our clubs stage over 800 events and activities a year from local to national level with recorded participation figures of over 40,000 annually, and we have active competitors of all ages (under 5s through to over 85) and abilities.



Who are we?

The Scottish Orienteering Association (SOA) is the Sports Governing Body for orienteering in Scotland and a registered charity. We are responsible for the governance, development and promotion of sport in Scotland, mainly through the network of clubs, support of junior and elite squads, the coordination of competitions and development of coaches.

We are one of 12 constituent associations of the British Orienteering Federation (BOF) which maintains the rules and guidance for orienteering in the UK and is a member of the International Orienteering Federation.

The 24 orienteering clubs in Scotland are members of both BOF and SOA. All Scottish orienteers are expected to become members of SOA and two thirds are members of BOF as well.

The SOA is currently overseen by a Board of directors, a small staff team with a part time Chief Operating Officer plus 6 other part time staff, and a large number of volunteers. It is currently funded by **sportscotland**, member fees, event levies, surplus income from the Scottish 6 Days (S6D) Company Ltd (which is wholly owned by the SOA) and occasional other grants and donations.



Why This New Strategy Matters

This new strategy represents a collective vision for the future of orienteering in Scotland, developed through an extensive listening process, and intended to give our community a common direction.

At its heart, it is about our shared aspirations to develop orienteering as an inclusive and accessible activity that brings people together in the great outdoors. Whether you're a seasoned competitor, a weekend enthusiast, or a newcomer seeking something fun outdoors, our forward strategy underlines our commitment to creating opportunities for everyone to experience the joy of orienteering.

With its content shaped by listening to members, it builds on the strengths of our community, addressing challenges and identifying opportunities to grow and thrive. From fostering grassroots participation to supporting elite athletes, from promoting diversity and inclusion to enhancing our impact on local communities, this plan aims to set a clear direction of travel for the future.

The past four years have seen us weather the challenges of Covid, and then deliver a successful World Championships in July 2024. We want to move now into a new phase of development for orienteering focused on delivering our collective community vision that

“Orienteering is a thriving sport for all generations”.



Our Strategic Aims for 2025-2029

To support our vision of “**Orienteering is a thriving sport for all generations**” we have identified four aims for 2025-2029:

- **Changing Perceptions** – this recognises the need to improve the marketing of our sport to all non-orienteurs and raise awareness of the opportunities in the sport;
- **Engaging Experiences** – this recognises the need to provide competitive and social and experiences which persuade newcomers to adopt the sport, and which retain experienced orienteurs;
- **Lifelong Pathways** – in parallel with providing Engaging Experiences we also recognise the need to provide structured pathways for recreational orienteurs, performance athletes and to develop volunteers. These are necessary to get newcomers to adopt orienteering (they see a future in the sport) and for retention of existing orienteurs (they continue to have opportunities for progression);
- **Foundations for Success** – we have to do the basics well, providing good governance at a national level and supporting clubs with guidance and support on an ongoing basis including equality, diversity and inclusivity.



Clubs as the Essential Backbone of our Sport

The activities that will underpin delivery on our strategic themes are now being developed into detailed projects with clear accountabilities. These projects will sometimes be led by the SOA, but in many cases will be club-led with SOA support.

Our clubs and volunteer networks are the backbone of our sport. Implementing this strategy to achieve our shared vision of orienteering as a thriving sport for all will be a team effort across the Scottish orienteering community, with everyone contributing, whether as a participant, a club volunteer, or involved in national level delivery through SOA or the Scottish Six Days.

The SOA development focus will be on connecting and supporting clubs, with SOA-led development activities linked to local clubs. The SOA's core purpose will be to lead on (a) leveraging best practice by connecting partners, clubs and members, (b) setting consistently high national standards (c) providing excellent support to our clubs and members and (d) promoting orienteering and in particular renewing the focus on promoting orienteering within the education sector.



Photo credit: Rob Lines



Our Values will underpin everything we do:

- **Welcoming** - ensuring a positive experience to those who wish to participate in our sport.
- **Inclusive** - offering a range of experiences and entry points within our sport to enable everyone from all sectors of society to participate regardless of age, gender, sexuality, race or physical ability. Identifying and removing conscious and unconscious barriers to participation in the sport.
- **Dynamic** - continuing to offer new experiences and development opportunities for all our members, clubs and volunteers. Developing new approaches and ideas to appeal to those in the identified “demographic participation gap”.
- **Rewarding** - recognising those who make our sport happen through valuing our volunteers. Ensuring everyone’s experience of orienteering is rewarding in some form.
- **Respectful** - of our environment and communities, and to our clubs, members and volunteers.



Photo Credit: Wendy Carlyle

Core activities to deliver on these aims over the coming four years will include:

Changing Perceptions

- focusing on younger adults to address the 20-40 age gap, particularly through building partnerships with clubs and organisations
- developing initiatives to encourage families and young people to take up orienteering

Engaging Experiences

- supporting clubs with high quality resources to engage local audiences, and to ensure good newcomer experiences
- delivering top-level events such as the 6 Days multi-day event, and JK 2026

Lifelong Pathways

- developing and promoting clear pathways for the core groups of orienteers: performance athletes; recreational orienteers and volunteers
- delivering training for the development of our volunteers and recreational orienteers and supporting our performance athletes

Foundations for Success

- supporting clubs around managing access and compliance with legal requirements especially safeguarding
- co-ordinating a balanced annual programme and ensuring high quality national level competitions
- helping with the management of map stock which is a major asset for the sport.

Please talk to us to see how **you** can help to deliver this vision of **orienteering as a thriving sport**. Get in touch all via info@scottish-orienteering.org



Scottish Orienteering Association, www.scottish-orienteering.org

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