April Update

April brings with it the showers of spring, we can reflect on a busy March filled with lots of local events, the first Scottish Orienteering League (SOL) event of the 2024 season and ending for many Scottish orienteering members at the Jan Kjellström International Festival of Orienteering (the JK) which this year was held in the Midlands of England.

Thanks to Masterplan Adventure some of our orienteering fraternity travelled to Kintyre in the middle of the month where they had the opportunity to enjoy some sprint orienteering and then some of the special ancient oak forests of the West coast over the course of the weekend. The results from the first SOL of the season can be found here together with details of the remaining SOL events of the season. The SOL calendar allows members of clubs from through the country to challenge themselves against other member from other clubs throughout of Scotland as well as having the opportunity to experience some of the best areas Scotland has to offer. It is an excellent way to explore in the different parts of Scotland, provides a great way to meet new orienteers whilst experiencing a step up from a local or regional events.

The JK saw the award of the British Orienteering Club, Coach, Volunteer and Mapping Awards of 2023. Congratulations to St Andrew's Orienteering Club of Glasgow (STAG) who received the Respect the Environment Award, Kirsty Ryman of Clydeside Orienteers who received the Young Volunteer of the Year Award, Jon Cross who received the Silva Award for contribution to the development of orienteering, Graham Gristwood who received the Silva Trophy for Professional Maps and Alasdair Pedley who received the Walsh Trophy for the best urban or sprint map.

Well done to all those Scottish Orienteering members who travelled for the JK 2024 which this year included a urban event at Loughborough University followed by middle and long distance events at Cannock Chase and a relay in the delights of Derbyshire on Stanton Moor. It was great to see so many Scottish Clubs represented on the podiums and especially the Scottish dominance on the younger podiums providing encouragement that the hard work of the Scottish clubs in developing young talent continues to bring new blood into the sport.

Ensuring the future was at the forefront of the minds of the SOA Board when they met in March to consider the development of the strategy for Scottish Orienteering from 2025 to 2029. The keen eyed amongst you will have noticed that this strategy is not just laying out what the SOA should be doing over the next four years but looking at the larger picture of what is required for Scottish Orienteering as a whole going forward. The SOA, British Orienteering, clubs and members together with SportScotland all have a part to play to ensure our sport thrives.

Our sport is an inclusive, dynamic sport but like all sports it has challenges with the volunteer load required, the need to expand awareness of the sport beyond our existing participants,

retain our existing members as well as being aware of environmental impacts of our sport. However we believe that with us all working together we can develop and grow our sport. On that basis we have drafted an outline strategy which looks at the pathways within our sport and the actions which we believe should be taken over the next four years.

Before the detail is added to the strategy we are giving all our members the opportunity to provide us with their thoughts on the draft strategy proposed for Scottish Orienteering by the SOA Board at two online sessions on Tuesday 16th April and Thursday 18th April at 7pm. We will also be circulating a google form for those unable to attend the meeting to provide their thoughts. Please come and join us.

Finally April also sees another busy month for orienteers throughout Scotland with some travelling to the British Long Distance and Relay Championships in Yorkshire or the British Middle Championships near Leeds and hopefully many of you considering entering the Scottish Middle Championships being hosted by Tayside Orienteering Club (TAY) at Hill of Alyth and the 2nd SOL of 2024 being hosted by Mar Orienteering Club (MAROC) at Balfour on Deeside the next day (entries via SI Entries Here) but plenty of other exciting local events and series filling the calendar so make sure to check out the SOA Calendar for all the exciting activities happening in your local area .