

A Season of Growth and Gratitude: Welcoming New Faces and Celebrating Our Volunteers

As the heather begins to bloom and the Scottish orienteering calendar hits its stride, it is worth acknowledging the amazing efforts of our community as we anticipate the Scottish Orienteering Championship weekend on 23rd/24th May and remember that the strength of our sport remains rooted in its people.

A Warm Welcome to Judy Bell

First and foremost, I am delighted to welcome Judy Bell to the team as our new Coaching and Volunteer Officer.

Coaching and volunteering are the twin engines of Scottish Orienteering; they ensure our participants and members of all ages reach their potential both as athletes and as the volunteers who ensure we actually have a sport to enjoy. Judy's role will be central to supporting our clubs in nurturing talent and, crucially, making sure our volunteers feel valued, trained, and supported. If you see her at an event over the coming months, please do give her a warm welcome!

The first two Scottish Orienteering League events of 2026: Dunachton and Glen Dye

Thank you to BASOC and GRAMP for their stellar work in hosting the recent Scottish Orienteering League (SOL) events which provided very different areas to test our skills.

- Dunachton (BASOC): This area provided a lovely mix of birch woodland, grazed farm land and open moorland with areas of intricate contour detail, crags and boulders, dense juniper and ruins to test our concentration. Despite being the weekend after the JK the organization was seamless.
- Glen Dye (GRAMP): Another fantastic day in the woods, proving once again that the North East boasts some of the finest orienteering terrain in the country which has the power to test our navigation and fitness.

Events of this scale don't just happen. They are the result of hundreds of hours—mapping, planning, controlling, and hauling stakes through the forest. To every volunteer who stood in the Sun/rain/sleet, chased tents in the case of Dunachton, patiently parked up some tricky forestry tracks in Glen Dye or sat behind a computer screen: thank you.

Looking Ahead: The Scottish Individual and Relay Championships at Grandtully and Scottish Sprint Championships among others

The excitement is now building for next weekend as we head to Grandtully for the Scottish Orienteering Championships Weekend.

The West Region clubs and in particular Terry O'Brien as Coordinator have put in an incredible shift to bring this together, including delivering orienteering sessions to the local primary school. Grandtully should provide us with a contrasting challenge of birch and plantation woodland for both the Individual and Relay events. Located in the same arena as the last Day of the Scottish 6 Days in 2019 it should be a great weekend of orienteering

Don't forget to enter the Scottish Sprint Championships the following weekend in Cumbernauld being hosted by St Andrew Orienteering Club of Glasgow (STAG). Entries via SI Entries close next week so don't miss out in what is a really complex and fun area with the club hosting a Scottish Orienteering Urban League (SOUL) event the next day so you can make a weekend of it.

Now is also the time for parents and club coaches to be mobilising our school communities to enter the Scottish Schools Orienteering Festival on Thursday 4th June at Beecraigs Country Park - all the entry details are at www.ssoa.org.uk and this is a fantastic way to introduce school pupils to our sport.

With the focus still on our Juniors, clubs will be seeking entries for the Jamie Stevenson Trophy on 21st June at the Hermitage Woods in Stirling. The Jamie Stevenson Trophy provides an opportunity for all Scottish junior orienteers to come together and compete for their club whilst also providing another opportunity in the year to meet juniors from other clubs. It is a fun and inclusive day which allows club friendships to blossom and generally everyone ends up hoarse cheering their team mates.

Investing in the Future: "Summer of Sport"

Behind the scenes, our Development Team has been working alongside clubs the applications to sportscotland for the Additional Monies allocated in the recent budget.

These applications are hoping to tap into:

- Summer of Sport activities: Helping us bring orienteering to children and young people whilst developing young coaches and helping them build resources to use in the future.
- Club Support Officers: Working with clubs who are interested in employing someone to support their volunteers develop the clubs.

It is a busy, vibrant time to be part of the orienteering community. Whether you are organising or planning an event, helping a newcomer read their first map, parking cars in a field or are one of those hidden volunteers who sit on a committee/ act as

welfare officers - your volunteer contribution is what makes Scottish Orienteering thrive.

Volunteer Week is the first week in June so if you would like to highlight anyone from your club get in touch with Judy Bell.

See you in the forest!

Jonathan Molloy

Chair of SOA