**‘OPEN MEETING’ REPORT**

**SATURDAY 22ND AUGUST 2015**

**Venue: Nottinghamshire Scout Headquarters, Linby**

Some twenty members of the club met for nearly three hours to discuss ways by which NOC could move forward and develop. Contributions by e-mail were also received from six other members. That’s probably just over 10% of the total membership and more like 25% of those who either compete or contribute on a regular basis. People think we’re a big club, the reality is rather different, as some of those who attended found out for the first time.

Our task was to think about the future, because it’s becoming quite clear that there are a number of challenges that we all need to address imminently if we are to maintain our reputation, develop our participation levels and continue to play a full part in the development of our sport locally, regionally and nationally.

The activities of the morning were divided into three parts, considering first the nature of the Orienteering experience, secondly the offer we make to both existing members and newcomers and then thirdly, the actions we need to take in order to change the dynamics of the club. These discussions were firstly held in small groups addressing a number of tasks defined by a facilitator. As the morning progressed the discussions became open ended, less task orientated and more discursive.

The first task was to think about why each of us has chosen to Orienteer. There was a surprising unanimity about our choices and most people recorded the physical and mental challenges in a competitive environment as being primary drivers for their participation. The second most noted motivation was the activity being outdoors in pleasing countryside and the third most notable choice was concerned with the sociability of the sport.

The groups were then asked to consider what might be the primary functions of the club for firstly newcomers and then more experienced Orienteers. This was an ordering exercise that created some fierce debate. Conclusions to be drawn from this activity were that the was a tension between the needs of the experienced orienteer and that of the newcomer, that technical development was an important issue, that social opportunities were significant for some and that our sport is not just a ‘cheap day out’.

This activity was followed by an analysis of the present features of the club by considering the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with which we have to contend. This paper exercise had been carried out by a number of participants prior to the meeting and we considered the collated version and amended it within the overall discussion (see below). Arising from this debate came a number of ‘action points’ also delineated below. We were fortunate that in Orienteering Focus (Summer 2015) there was also an article about the development strategies of South Yorkshire Orienteers. This provided a concise series of references to inform our deliberations.

As you’ll see from the ‘Actions’ list there are a number of ‘quick wins’ that we’ve identified and some more long term challenges, not the least of which is how your club committee, concerned as it must be with the provision of events, might find time and energy to undertake those tasks. Significantly, for me, is the idea from SYO of a partly paid post of ‘Development Officer’ who would recruit a specific, time limited, sub-committee just concerned with addressing these issues. Perhaps this matter could be an item for debate at the forthcoming AGM?

I hope that you, as a club member, will find matters in this report upon which you can reflect, then question our findings and join the debate via the web site, Black & Green or through a committee member. There are real and present dangers for the future of our club that need all of us, to consider and then act together if NOC is to maintain its reputation, its skill base and the provision of Orienteering experiences to the standard that we all expect and enjoy.

Andrew Breakwell

NOC Chair

September 2015

**ACTIONS**

* Review nature of events and social activities
* Encourage membership to attend ‘training courses’
* Establish a dialogue with Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
* Develop a sense of club identity
* Upgrade web site and develop use of social media
* Develop maps for new areas of competition and/or training
* Create a ‘Welcome Pack’ for new members
* Target Junior development and participation
* Include ‘Next Event’ notifications on all event maps

**NOC AWAY DAY - SWOT ANALYSIS**

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| **Strengths:**  Many members who are experienced event officials at all levels and a keen team manager  Good reputation for organising events  System of helper teams aids event organisation  Many up-to-date mapped areas – forests, parks, urban  Keen club coaches (approx. 3-4) able to put on activities for membership  Good county coverage so access to large number of areas  Inexpensive event fees for participants and/or members  Healthy finances  IT resources  Wide range of equipment and ‘kit’  Some strength in ‘male elite’ classes  Two active ‘hub’ clubs | **Opportunities:**  Make better use of web site and social media  Two well established community clubs  Enough parks mapped in Nottingham for promotional events  50th Anniversary and staging Midland Champs Feb 2016 a way of improving club cohesion and sense of belonging?  New club jackets & hats  Membership fees which include some free event entry or vouchers for club clothing to help develop feeling of ‘belonging’  New members for helper groups, introduce a ‘buddy’ system?  Split some committee jobs and/or hold an annual open meeting to help membership feel involved and responsible for volunteering  Club members on EMOA training courses  POC’s |
| **Weaknesses:**  Disparity in membership profile (very few junior members) raises questions about long-term viability of club  Competition programme does not  promote interaction between members  No social programme  Newcomers not being nurtured as helpers  Level C and D events too similar and lack of competitions at national level  Web site promotion & lack of social media  Covers the county so not a ‘local’ club  Lack of membership fee suggests a ‘pay and play’ sport  Low profile in education sector | **Threats:**  Membership could drift away to other clubs  Insufficient volunteers to maintain club infrastructure and organise events  Inability to maintain ‘club mark’ status  Volunteer mapper ‘burn-out’ and need to  use paid mappers – threat to financial stability  Younger people may be put off by numbers of over 55/60s  Sport of orienteering has become very complicated to organise and administer  Officials ageing & not able to be replaced  Withdrawal of Sport England grant to BOF  Forest Access and Nottingham Wildlife Trust  Event fatigue? |