



FAQs

Q.1 What are the benefits to Clubs and members of the proposed changes?

A. In summary, as follows:

- Faster and more effective decision-making with less bureaucracy and cost
- Clearer authority for those individuals and groups taking decisions, improving accountability and transparency of decision-making
- Clearer decision-making routes, enabling Clubs and members to take ideas or issues easily and directly to the responsible individual or group
- A more effective system of communication between Clubs/Associations and the highest decision-making body below a General Meeting, now to be a Board of Directors
- The governing body of British Orienteering (being more streamlined) will be able to attract more of our highly capable members to develop and oversee its strategy
- Greater motivation for the role of Committee members because of the clearer authority and responsibilities.

Q.2 What do you mean by "governance"?

A. Governance can be defined as "the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organisation".

In the case of British Orienteering, governance covers the roles, responsibilities and composition of Council, Management Committee, and the other Committees, together with the role of Councillors, paid staff, etc. Any review of governance must also look at effectiveness and accountability.

Q.3 Why is British Orienteering reviewing governance now when there are more urgent issues to be dealt with?

A. Good governance is very important – it provides the means by which all issues (urgent or otherwise) can be dealt with speedily and effectively. Any well-run organisation should continually review its governance.

In British Orienteering's case, a number of problems were highlighted about our current governance, and a governance review group was established to investigate further. A review of governance and taking action to improve it can also be done in parallel with other work to develop the sport. There is a very good argument that ineffective governance arrangements are in fact hampering British Orienteering's efforts to tackle other issues.

British Orienteering is also expected by funding partners to demonstrate good practice in governance; feedback from 2006 requires British Orienteering to modify governance policies and procedures found wanting.

Q.4 What did the governance review group find?

A. That British Orienteering's governance deviated significantly from best practice, eg that publicised by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, an organisation for bodies similar to British Orienteering, and which has considerable experience of promoting good governance. This was reinforced by the feedback report from funding partners mentioned previously.

Q.5 What particular governance defects were found?

A. Some examples were:

- lack of clarity in authority and accountability (ie who is responsible for certain decisions?);
- decision-making considerably slower than desirable; undefined roles (eg of Councillors and Officers);
- committees/people often feeling they do not have the authority to make decisions or take action; and
- the authority of the Directors of British Orienteering Federation under Company law in conflict with the role held by Council, yet the current Directors (the four Officers) are not seen as having that authority by the members.

In addition, since the governance review was started, there have been changes to Company Law which require alterations to British Orienteering's Memorandum & Articles. The alterations are needed to ensure that all members on the highest decision-making body have the interests of the Federation as a whole uppermost, rather than the current situation where many members are representatives of specific sections or constituencies.

Q.6 How is British Orienteering currently governed?

A. Council currently meets three times per year and consists of 4 Officers, 4 Councillors (all 8 being directly elected by the members annually for a one year term of office each), and 13 representatives appointed by the Constituent Associations of British Orienteering, ie the 3 National Associations (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), the 9 English Regional Associations and the British Schools Orienteering Association. Management Committee meets five times per year and consists of the 8 directly elected members of Council.

In addition there are a range of Committees and Work Groups who deal with specialist areas including Coaching, International, Rules, Fixtures, Development, Mapping, etc.

Were we not proposing to change the governance, the respective roles and authorities of Council and Management Committee would need clarification to speed up decision-making, eliminate duplication, and comply with the Companies Act 2006.

Q.7 What changes are being proposed?

A. In summary, that the existing Council and Management Committee be replaced by a Board of 10 Directors directly elected by the members. Each Director will be elected for a term of office of three years, and no-one may serve for more than nine consecutive years on the Board.

Q.8 Why have 10 Directors been proposed, rather than say 8 or 12?

A. There need to be sufficient Directors to have a spread of experience and skills and to ensure that decisions are not taken by a limited number of individuals, but at the same time ensuring that meetings are manageable and costs are kept to a minimum. Ten was seen as a compromise between the extremes.

Q.9 Will having no representatives from the Constituent Associations sever the communication chain between Council and the Associations?

A. It will change the communication chain as currently constructed. However, there are significant advantages of the new decision-making board, and the Associations will have enhanced input to the decisions of British Orienteering, eg as follows.

The current Committees (eg Fixtures, Coaching, Rules) will have enhanced and clearer authority and the Associations are represented (or have the right of representation) on many of these. Most operational matters will be (and should be) dealt with at Committee level, not by Council, or the proposed Board of Directors.

The proposed new Board, as part of its commitment to good governance, will form strong links to the Associations, and will of course act on behalf of British Orienteering as a whole rather than from a narrower representational viewpoint. Some Directors will be specifically allocated Association liaison roles and will have a duty to maintain close contact with the Associations they liaise with. It is also envisaged that there will be an annual "meet the Directors" event or even several events of that type, where policies and plans will be open to discussion and clubs and members can make their ideas, views and concerns known. This will be augmented by an annual Club Delegate Conference.

When an Association has an issue that it wishes to raise, it should do so as now, via their Association, who can then take it forward, if it wishes, as an Association issue. It can do this by contacting their liaison Director, or by contacting the Chairman, if it is not timely or appropriate to do so at one of the liaison events already referred to.

Q.10 What timetable is being followed to propose, and if accepted, implement the new governance structure?

A. Provided that it is felt that a sufficient period of consultation has been achieved and that the detailed Article amendments required can be prepared in time, it is intended to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting of British Orienteering Federation Ltd in the 4th quarter of 2007. The details of the amendments to the British Orienteering Memorandum & Articles will form proposals to that meeting. If this timetable is followed, it will enable the new structure to be implemented at the AGM on 22 March 2008, with the nomination and election of new Board members.

Q.11 How will a changeover to the new structure be effected?

A. Full details will be in the EGM proposals, but in summary, it is envisaged that at the AGM in 2008, 7 of the 8 Council members elected at the 2007 AGM will stay on as Directors, to be joined by 3 newly elected Directors. At the 2009 AGM, 3 of the 7 will stand down (but be eligible for re-election) and be replaced by a further 3 newly elected Directors. Finally, at the 2010 AGM, the last 4 of those elected at the 2007 AGM will stand down and be replaced by 4 newly elected Directors. Thereafter, 3, 3 and 4 Directors will be elected in consecutive years.

There will be provision for election of a replacement Director should one resign during his/her three year term of office.