

THE FUTURE OF ORIENTEERING

By Mike Hamilton, Chief Executive

In the 2009/13 Strategic Plan to develop orienteering, the approach British Orienteering adopted to growing participation was via the Community O initiative which provides local and frequent orienteering opportunities from a fixed venue. Although Community O has been a success it has not produced the significant growth that had been planned. Three years' experience of delivering Community O has provided insight and a better understanding of growing participation and this learning is the basis on which the 2013/17 plan is built.

British Orienteering has communicated widely with members via Focus and the website about the Strategic Plan. We have published several articles about the Whole Sport Plan, Competitions Review, Talent and Development Programmes and Strategic and Governance issues via the Chief Executive Summaries. These articles were used to both inform members and to request feedback in order to shape British Orienteering programmes in the future.

OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL

From these insights we have concluded that the most significant opportunities to increase participation and develop talent in orienteering include:

a) Target markets: British Orienteering has consulted widely, undertaking market research via questionnaires and focus groups. We have also used our experience of delivering Community O and traditional orienteering to gain insights into our current and potential target markets. Thanks to the market segmentation research completed by Sport England (www.sportengland.org/research/market_segmentation.aspx) and the kind offer of Experian, British Orienteering has also been able to analyse the entire English membership of British Orienteering. With this information it was possible to deduce which market profiles are most attracted to the current orienteering offer and form the majority of our current membership. If orienteering is to grow and increase participation it is essential to not only retain members but to also make orienteering more attractive to other market profiles and deliver orienteering in a format that meets their needs. Based on the market segmentation and our experience of delivering orienteering, the following target groups have been identified as good investments:

- Singles/couples aged 16-30
- Families with children up to 14
- Students aged 16-25
- Recreational runners
- School aged children: aged 7-11, 11-14, 14-16

Orienteering is a 'sport for all'; with the age range of current participants from 5 to 95. This is both a strength and weakness. Research and experience has demonstrated that creating a product and promoting this product to 'all' is incredibly difficult if not impossible. The needs and aspirations of different target groups will vary and consequently how these target groups are marketed to will need to be customised. For example

young people want to take part in activities that are social and enable them to meet up with their peers. They prefer digital communication methods and are responsive to innovative and entertaining messages. Families with young children want social activities that cater for their children's needs and prefer more traditional communication methods with practical, family orientated messages.

Orienteering may be a sport for all, but the ways in which orienteering is promoted and delivered to groups needs to be different. Promoting and delivering orienteering that caters specifically for target groups will increase the number of people willing to try orienteering and the numbers that are retained.

Additional research into promoting orienteering to retirees is currently being conducted. Retirees are a group of considerable interest to orienteering as many current members fall into this category. However until further market insight is researched to ascertain how orienteering may target retirees they will not be added to the initial target markets.

b) Running+: Active People (AP) show almost 2,000,000 people taking part in running weekly. British Orienteering views orienteering as 'Running+' which can be described as an activity that is attractive to many established runners and adds variety to their running. If 10% of these runners can be encouraged to try orienteering once or more it would significantly increase the footfall of orienteering; if 10% of those that try it continue that is 20,000 more participants. Orienteering already forms a large part of some established activities that are based on Running+ e.g. the Rat Race and Adventure Racing both successfully combine running with simplified orienteering. Park Run is also a successful series of social running events. Through the analysis of the market segmentation profiles we believe that Running+ is a particularly attractive offering to young people. For instance young women often already take part in sport on a regular basis with 28%

attending the gym and 14% running. 70% would still like to do more sport with 8% wanting to do more running.

The World Orienteering Championships (WOC) 2015 will be held in Scotland and this will enable British Orienteering to promote orienteering as a competitive running sport, which may attract more of this target group.

c) Orienteering on Demand: Currently, orienteering is predominantly a competitive sport with participation based on events. Anecdotally there is a huge market to deliver orienteering to as an 'anytime, anyplace' activity for individuals or small groups of participants. Marketing orienteering as an activity to participate in during lunch breaks and after work will be a new approach and has the potential to raise participation significantly. One of the main reasons that people find gyms an attractive way to keep fit is that they can choose on what day and time they attend. It is fitness on demand. Research on young men shows that 24% go to the gym and 15% run. 62% of this target would like to do more activity and this includes 6% specifically wanting to do more running.

d) School Participation: Success in introducing orienteering in primary schools during the period 2002 onwards has created a market that is familiar with orienteering and if presented with activities that meet their social needs, is receptive to taking part in the sport. It is estimated that over 3 million people have experienced orienteering in the 14-20 age group (extrapolated from the PESSYP survey and Office of National Statistics stating orienteering is delivered in 59% of all schools, 57% of primary and 71% of secondary). Many of these people enjoyed orienteering and are happy to try orienteering again if the activity meets their needs and the opportunities are provided. From the research, charity events come across as an excellent way in which to initially engage with this age group. Major charities such as Breast Cancer Care

have already shown an interest in a mass participation charity orienteering event.

With 57% of primary schools teaching orienteering, this has raised awareness of orienteering within thousands of families. Many families start a new activity after a request from their children via 'pester power' but it has to be an attractive activity for their parents if they are going to become participants. There is a need to create an orienteering offer that meets the needs of young mothers. They are 'forever taking the children to one activity or another both during the week and at weekends' but 67% of this segment would still like to do more sport. The main motivators for young mothers are keeping fit (39%), enjoyment (36%), taking the children (25%) and losing weight (12%). Therefore, if we can create an offering that would meet the requirements of the whole family and be a fun and

enjoyable way to keep fit, then this would increase the number of participants in these target segments.

Additionally, many children now aspire to become elite athletes particularly with the London Olympics emphasising the success of British athletes. WOC 2015 provides British Orienteering with an opportunity to promote orienteering as an international elite sport and reinforces the need to maintain a talent pathway that will move these school children from school orienteering activities to WOC athletes in the future.

e) First Impressions: Research demonstrated that first impression is critical; therefore there is a need to establish a delivery mechanism that is capable of managing first impressions far more rigorously. Creating a good first impression



will increase participation both in attracting newcomers and in retaining them.

f) Talented: There are currently 50 participants within the nationally managed Talent Pathway, with a further 180 athletes who receive coaching through their regions. Evidence for 2011 demonstrates that when open access is provided to athletes wishing to try orienteering and be considered for intensive development, it is appreciated. A series of open access Talent ID days were staged in 2011 and over 30 athletes engaged with the process. This was British Orienteering's first attempt at staging such a programme and the event was promoted through a few channels such as British Orienteering's Performance Newsletter and Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) website. However, hindsight suggests that this event should have been promoted more widely.

The annual WOC is the competition that all elite athletes should be striving to perform at and win medals. With WOC 2015 being held in the UK it provides an additional focus for our young talented athletes to work towards and we hope will be a catalyst to inspire more young people to work towards becoming an elite orienteer. This should create a larger pool of talented orienteers from which to select athletes to the annual WOC and this should consequently improve performance standards and results.

g) Delivery: The internal resource pool of club volunteers who have delivered Community O is at the limits of its capacity. Research has shown that there is a market of Local Authorities, commercial and other organisations who want to become involved in the delivery of a targeted approach to orienteering. These potential partners have already demonstrated that they are prepared to supply a workforce given that British Orienteering is willing to provide a product and train the workforce.

THE KNOWN GAPS IN CUSTOMER INSIGHT REMAINING ARE:

- Data or information that will enable estimates to be made on the number of runner/joggers that can be encouraged to try orienteering across all of the offers but particularly across 'Orienteering on Demand'. This work is on-going.
- The views of retirees that are currently non-participants and will be willing to try orienteering. This particularly applies to the manner in which orienteering might be delivered to retirees. This work is on-going.
- Marketing best practice, particular in regard to digital marketing aimed at young people. Expertise and resource will need to be sought in this area.

CHALLENGES

Experience of delivering programmes during the period 2009/13 combined with the review process has enabled a reasonably clear picture to be built of the challenges and barriers facing increasing participation and talent in orienteering.



The significant challenges for British Orienteering are:

a) Culture Change: Orienteering, like many sports, has a strong background of traditions and habits. There are a series of ways in which orienteering is delivered that could be modernised:

i. Currently, orienteering is predominately event based and club training and activities need to be more widely embraced. The opportunities to orienteer 'on demand' also need to be explored to make the sport more attractive to today's modern lifestyles. This is probably the biggest challenge orienteering faces.

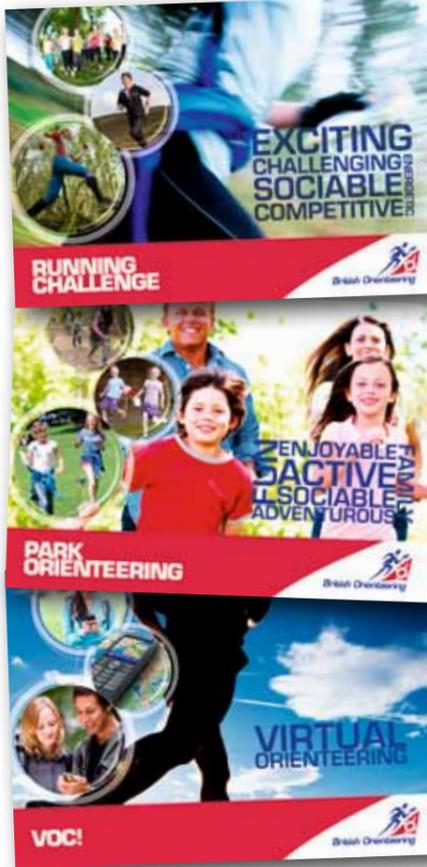
ii. Organisers of orienteering events often complicate orienteering, making it harder for new participants to understand and get involved. In its basic form orienteering only requires a simple map and basic skills and can take place in school grounds or local parks. Simplification is key to enable orienteering to be delivered more easily and cost effectively. Demanding and challenging events have their place within orienteering and they remain significant motivators for the elite and experienced club members, however introduction to them needs to be more gradual for newcomers and less experienced members.

iii. Orienteering is traditionally a 'sport for all' and has tried to attract 'people for life'. This has led to events being organised that try to cater for all demographics and all of these people's needs. This has arguably led to events that do not fulfil the aspirations of any demographic and make increasing participation more challenging.

iv. Orienteering clubs in the UK are not clubs in the way they are in most sports. Rather, the orienteering club is an event organising body that has no club house or, in many cases, no significant social role. Encouraging clubs to operate in a more social way and think about social activities is key

to attracting new participants.

v. British Orienteering and the Board of British Orienteering is aware that there is a need to operate effectively in the market place and this requires the NGB to consider the needs of potential participants in addition to the needs of current members. There is unfortunately a degree of conflict



between these needs and the Board is seeking to operate more effectively as a body taking market place decisions in a more business-like manner.

b) Orienteering opportunities: Traditionally orienteering clubs have offered a number of local activities/

events and one or two larger events throughout the year. In trying to deliver more frequent orienteering opportunities at a local level, club volunteers have been considerably overstretched and clubs have to rethink how they are organised and operate.

c) Social Media: Promoting orienteering to young adults in particular requires greater social media awareness. The governing body currently has neither the expertise nor the resource to explore these lines of communication. With over 30.7million users of Facebook in the UK it is clear that social media must be at the forefront of any future marketing strategy.

d) Workforce: Volunteer capacity is overstretched at the current time and a new workforce is required to bolster the significant expertise currently held by the volunteer workforce. There is also a mismatch between what is being asked of the workforce and what they have been trained to deliver.

e) Talent Programme: British Orienteering is encouraged by the number of qualified volunteer coaches. However to meet the proposed needs of the programme which includes increasing the numbers of quality athletes at each level of the pathway there is a challenge in recruiting coaches with the appropriate skills. We need to understand whether there are any gaps in their knowledge and provide a coach education and development programme to meet those needs.

f) Performance Programme: The pending loss of UK Sport Funding which underpins British Orienteering preparing for and competing in the annual World Foot Orienteering Championships (WOC) has left a significant gap in the budget, and despite the Board trying to fill this gap, there is as yet no solution to this challenge. This is disappointing especially as WOC 2015 is being hosted in Scotland. Without funding, supporting our 'top end' athletes to achieve podiums will be challenging.

A brief overview of each segment of the pathway

	Participation Pathway	Function regarding participation	Target Market	What is it?
1	National Competitions (Levels A & B)	To retain participants	All or as targeted	Level A competitions are British Orienteering's most prestigious events intended to provide opportunities for competitors to take part in the ultimate orienteering challenges in the UK and support a programme of Major Competitions. Level B events provide opportunities for more experienced competitors seeking a wider variety of terrain, challenging courses and competition, and who are prepared to travel longer distances for this.
2	Regional Competitions (Level C)	To retain participants	All or as targeted	Level C competitions provide opportunities for participants seeking competition at a wider variety of venues and against a varied group of competitors but without wishing to travel great distances.
3	Local Competitions (Level D)	Gateway into 'proper' orienteering: to acquire & retain	All or as targeted	Level D competitions encompass the wide range of events that clubs in the UK wish to put on in order to provide opportunities for participants to orienteer at a venue near to them and at relatively low cost. Events are aimed at providing local competition and increasing participation.
4	Club nights & Activity sessions	Gateway into 'proper' orienteering: to acquire & retain	All or as targeted	Sessions at which training takes place to improve the ability of participants to orienteer.
5	Park Orienteering	To acquire new participants, retain & provide a gateway into other forms of orienteering	Families with children 14 and under; Disabled	The format will be a 45 minute score event. Options of working in teams/groups will be encouraged. The map will be designed to provide the appropriate level of challenge to meet the needs of the target participants. In the longer term the potential to use maps downloaded to a smart phone will be investigated. Motivators: For parents to get or stay fit and healthy in an activity the whole family can take part in and enjoy. Some participants saw managed adventure in the 'countryside' as an attraction. Incentive schemes via 'collector' cards were an added motivator with trophies for participants completing all events and small incentives for those completing fewer. The activity has to be welcoming, accommodating and social. Importance is placed on the 'non-orienteering' presence at the activity and social activities and facilities have to be accentuated (for example cafes, play areas, etc.).
6	Running Challenge	To acquire new participants, retain & provide a gateway into other forms of orienteering	Singles/ couples 16-30; runners	The format will be a 45 minute score event, similar to the Park Orienteering event. Motivators: To meet up with friends/meet new people; the social aspects of the offer is the key driver whilst challenge, fitness and trying something new also scored highly. The activities must be welcoming, accommodating and social.
7	Student Starter	To acquire new participants, retain & provide a gateway into other forms of orienteering	Students 16-25	The format will be a 45 minute score event, similar to the Park Orienteering event. Motivators: To raise funds for a charity and meet up with friends/meet new people. The social aspects of the offer are the key driver whilst challenge, fitness and trying something new also scored highly. The activities must be welcoming, accommodating and social. Market research found that around 70% of students would be encouraged to try orienteering if it culminated in a charity event as part of a 'feel good factor'.
8	Virtual Orienteering	To acquire new participants, retain & provide a gateway into other forms of orienteering	Singles/ couples 16-30; runners	This provides orienteering opportunities wherever and whenever the participant wants and is of interest to those people who are looking for activities for; early morning exercise; commuting into work; seeking lunchtime activity; wanting release after work, seeking an interesting route through a town/city, in addition to exercise or escape as a leisure activity. The offers are based on the use of a smart phone containing an application that will either be used as a navigation and monitoring device around a fixed pre-determined course (iPOC) or with the ability to overlay a bespoke course of any length or time onto a map with a series of points to visit (VOCI). The user will be able to choose the start, end, distance, time and whether they wish to publish their time for others to try to beat or to keep it private. Social media and web based technology will be used to generate an interactive leader board for the courses and any comments and feedback.
9	How to O	To acquire new & gateway	Newcomers	This is for people wishing to learn the introductory skills of orienteering. Participants may be total newcomers or those that have tried Park Orienteering, Running Challenge or Virtual Orienteering. Motivators: Demand for this type of product is evidenced by the increase in adventure racing which requires orienteering or navigational skills and the figures for mountaineering which includes hillwalking.
10	School Orienteering: Primary, 11 to 14; 14 to 18	To acquire new participants, retain & provide a gateway into other forms of orienteering	Pupils Primary; 11-14; 14-18; disabled	Orienteering is taught as a part of the curriculum or provided as a club for extra curricula activities.

RESPONDING TO MARKET NEEDS

The market insight developed and outlined above has enabled us to develop types of 'recreational orienteering' that could meet the needs of potential participants within the target markets. These are shown in the diagram below and the table opposite. The current participation pathway is essentially the blue squares with Community O being 'Club nights'. The programmes for which funding is being sought from Sport England are the red squares. School orienteering during curriculum time continues in partnership with schools, Youth Sport Trust, British Schools Orienteering and British Orienteering. Additional orienteering for pupils aged 14+ is being offered out of curriculum time as part of Community O+.



There will be further information regarding our plans to increase participation and develop the talent pathway in the next edition of Focus. Further items may also be published on the British Orienteering website under News>Hot Topics.