

Board of Directors

Minutes

Monday 8th December 2025 11:00-16:00



In Person meeting at Bird & Bird, London

Board attendees: Rob Woods, Alison Howe, Justine Albert, Duncan Birtwhistle (part online), Peter Brooke, Zac Randell, Andy Robinson (online), David Rosen, Pauline Tryner, Keith Willdig.

Invited guests: Howard Blackman, Gregg Peers, Jeanette Downing, Josh Wright, Gracie Grant.

Apologies:

Minute taker: Peter Brooke

1. Meeting Administration

1.1. Welcome and introduction.

The Chair informed the meeting that a recording of the meeting would be held on Peter Brooke's computer on a personal drive and would be deleted when the minutes were approved. It was agreed for the meeting to be recorded.

1.2 Any other business

1. To discuss Board support for committees and groups
2. PT raised for discussion the price of BOF only membership.

No other items of business were received.

1.3 Declaration of interest

Alison Howe declared an interest in the Insurance agenda item.

2. Meet the Team

The CEO introduced the three new members of the British Orienteering team who had joined in the last six months. Each provided an overview of their work to date and important work areas for 2026.

Jeanette Downing (Safeguarding and Development Officer)

Highlights include:

- Expanding the Case Management Group, bringing in additional members with a broad range of experience.
- Refreshing the various Codes of Conduct.
- Engaged with and observed juniors to ensure their voices are represented and heard.
- Reviewing training standards for various safeguarding-related roles.
- Increased support for welfare officers through introduction of a Club Welfare Officer newsletter and improved several resources.
- Developing new skill-based awards to support orienteers in building the right competencies.
- Enhancing the Club Health Checker and identifying ways for clubs to be able to share more best practice.

Planned Work for 2026

Work in 2026 will include delivering an orienteering-focused *Time to Listen* course and developing guidance in key areas such as social media use, managing trips away, and supporting members with dementia.

***Josh Wright* (Events Development Officer)**

Highlights include:

- Speaking with a variety of clubs and members to understand their operations, goals, and aspirations.
- Researching different events and working specifically with the London City Race to gather insight into participant experiences and motivations, helping to identify wider recommendations.
- Reviewing and analysing participation data to identify clubs where additional support may be beneficial.
- Strengthening communication with clubs by sharing examples of best practice and emerging opportunities for growth.

Planned Work for 2026

Work in 2026 will include collaborating with clubs to develop pilot scheme ideas aimed at attracting newcomers, as well as reviewing and exploring opportunities to further enhance major events.

***Gracie Grant* (Access & University Officer)**

Highlights include:

- Strengthened relationships with landowners and producing an orienteering-specific landowner information leaflet.
- Published an Access newsletter for permissions officers, highlighting new resources and launching the new landowners' page on the website.
- Conducted university-focused research by engaging with universities, existing university clubs, and members, and gathering insight into current mapped campuses. A report has been produced identifying opportunities for growth.

Planned Work for 2026

Work in 2026 will include continued engagement with national landowners to enhance their understanding of the sport through dedicated orienteering sessions. Discussions with the National Trust will progress to deliver “come and try it” orienteering courses alongside their existing running events.

Within the university sector, efforts will focus on engaging directly with institutions to establish student-targeted events on campuses. Additional initiatives include creating a University Orienteering Club Growth Pack and developing a resource for universities and staff to improve their understanding of the sport and the opportunities it offers.

The Chair thanked Jeanette, Josh and Gracie for their work and efforts so far.

Jeanette, Josh and Gracie left the meeting.

3. Independent Director Recruitment

3.1. Recruitment

The Chair welcomed Gregg Peers as the proposed new Independent Director. Gregg provided an overview of his experiences to the Board in areas such as governance and safeguarding.

Gregg Peers left the meeting

The Chair discussed the recruitment and interview process earlier this year. Following this, Greg Peers had been recommended as a new Independent Director for the Board and provided essential experience required by the Board.

Gregg Peers was confirmed as the new Independent Director. 8 in favour and 1 against.

Gregg Peers rejoined the meeting

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

4.1 The minutes of the 25th September meeting of the Board were approved without any changes.

4.2 Actions from previous meetings. The actions update paper was provided to the Board in advance. Two areas were raised for highlight within the meeting:

- **Heat Policy update/ Safety Advisory Group**

Heat Policy

- The IOF have confirmed a full Heat policy will be published, date to be confirmed.
- Feedback was provided from BOF to the IOF who confirmed that a hard stop would be included in the final policy but that it would also include mitigating factors to enable events taking place.
- The Board agreed that BO is not restricted to the limits imposed the IOF policy, and should the SAG recommend additional safeguards then the Board should consider these for implementation in the UK and potentially for British athletes competing overseas too

Safety Advisory Group (SAG)

- The new Safety Advisory Group chaired by Karen Ashworth met for the first time on 3rd November. It was a productive meeting and the group are looking forward to having a positive impact.
- The SAG are aware of the Interim Heat Policy and await the final policy when they will consider the implications to UK events. They will provide recommendations to the Board and others.
- The SAG has requested a Board member to support their work. (*Highlighted later in the minutes, this will be Zac Randell, Gregg Peers and Rob Woods*)
- Two webinars have been delivered in the autumn on the subject of Safety. One specifically on heat and another on safety at major events.

- **JK 2028**

- Phone calls have been held with Christine Vince (SWOA Chair) and Mike Forest (BOK) to understand challenges and work on a potential solution moving forward.
- The Forest of Dean has been identified as a potential venue, discussions are to be held with NGOC and Forestry England. There are access issues which have been highlighted by Christine and Mike but are worth exploring.
- It was also advised that it would be sensible to form a small group to consider contingency plans should the JK in the South West not be possible.

5. 2026 Insurance

Insurance renewal

The Board reviewed the costs for the 2026 main public liability insurance policy, including a comparison of premiums with and without cover for non-members attending events. This was the first opportunity to assess accurate financial data related to this element of the policy.

The Board noted the significant cost saving associated with removing this cover and approved the premium for 2026 on that basis.

Duncan Birtwistle joined the meeting

6 British Orienteering Strategy 2027 & beyond

The Board engaged in an extensive discussion covering the organisation's core values, the current strategy, and a broad exploration of ideas for shaping the strategy for 2027 and beyond

Values

The Board discussed the organisation's current Values, considering whether they remain appropriate, relevant, and actively lived across British Orienteering.

The existing BOF Values are: **Respect, Fairness, Collaboration, Integrity, Excellence, Diversity & Inclusiveness, and Transparency.**

The Board also reviewed the IOF Values, which are: **Sustainable, Inclusive, Ethical.**

In addition, a list of ten proposed Values created by the Operations Team was examined, with *Passion, Innovation and openness* noted as particularly relevant and resonant.

It was agreed that providing a short summary for each Value, similar to the IOF's approach and explaining how it applies specifically to orienteering would help clarify their meaning and relevance.

Action: The Operations Team will continue reviewing the Values and will present a recommended set of Values to the Board for inclusion in the new strategy.

Current and future strategy discussion

Prior to further discussions, the CEO provided the latest membership and participation figures and how these compared to the proceeding years.

Membership

	2025	2024	2023	2022
Total members (end of year)	8923 est	8963	9055	8971

- The gender split is 62% male and 38% female
- 82% are seniors and 18% juniors

These figures are consistent when compared to previous years.

Participation

	2025 current Estimate	2025 End of Year Estimate	2024	2023
Total runs	145,863	154,900	149,294	150,708
Major events	10,492	10,492	10,460	10,726
Free runs	5,500	5,500	5,734	5,723
Non-member runs	24,500	24,500	24,337	23,860

The Board considered the key membership and participation metrics and discussed the importance of ensuring that the membership model remains appropriate for both current and future members. It emphasised the critical role British Orienteering plays in working collaboratively with clubs, recognising that a joined-up approach is essential to delivering a successful strategy. The Board acknowledged that the primary capacity to develop members and engage newcomers sits within the clubs, while the governing body's role is to inspire, promote, and provide the tools and training required to enable success.

The Board agreed that close collaboration between British Orienteering, clubs, and members will be vital to the success of the 2027 strategy. Bringing the strategy to life and building on the British Orienteering strategy webinar held in October, will be key steps in achieving this.

The Board also recognised that increased use of data, including identifying membership and participation trends at a regional level, will help highlight areas of strong growth as well as areas where additional support may be needed. The draft data dashboard will play an important role in strengthening this understanding.

In addition to attracting newcomers to the sport, the Board discussed several areas for further focus within the plan, including:

- Retaining experienced orienteers, including current and former elites, as future planners, organisers, and key officials.
- Supporting the development and growth of volunteers within clubs.
- Increasing awareness of the sport in new markets.
- Reviewing approaches to engagement within education settings.

Summary & actions

The Board affirmed that the current strategy is comprehensive and largely fit-for-purpose and requires only minor adjustments. The updated strategy should build on this foundation, with a renewed focus on:

- **Enacting the strategy:** ensuring it comes to life for everyone involved in orienteering.
- **Reviewing organisational Values:** considering how effectively the current Values serve British Orienteering.
- **Enhancing the use of data:** improving how data is collected, interpreted, and used to inform decisions.
- **A focused newcomer demographic:** identifying and targeting priority newcomer groups to strengthen recruitment efforts.
- **Retention and development of experienced orienteers:** recognising that, alongside attracting newcomers, it is essential to retain and nurture experienced participants to become future planners, organisers, and take on other key roles.

The Board also highlighted the importance of hosting a series of focus sessions as the 2027 strategy develops, to share progress and gather feedback from members and clubs.

Action for Directors

Directors are asked to reflect on the following and provide feedback to the Chair and CEO:

- Are there any additional Values that should be considered?
- Are there specific areas within the current or future strategy that should be prioritised?
- Are there any areas that should be discontinued or scaled back?

7 Finance

7.1 & 7.2 Budget 2026 and end of year forecast

The Board reviewed the proposed 2026 Budget, noting a forecast small deficit, which aligns with the Board's aspiration to gradually reduce the organisation's excess reserves.

The Board also recognised that the Sport England funding award runs until the end of March 2027, and that this will have a significant bearing on the 2027 budget and future financial planning. The CEO informed the Board that Sport England will be conducting a series of sessions in early 2026 to shape the application process for the next funding cycle. It is anticipated that an indicative funding figure will be available by mid-2026.

The CEO intends to produce a 2027 budget in mid 2026 should an indicative award figure from Sport England be known to provide stability for all departments and staff moving forwards.

The Board approved the 2026 Budget, subject to clarification of the commercial income line.

Action: The CEO will investigate and report back to the Treasurer.

It was requested that the Board reviews the reserves policy in 2026.

Action: The CEO will review and share the reserves policy with the Board.

Duncan Birtwistle left the meeting

7.3 Reserves Projects

The Board noted the budget considerations and impact this has had on the excess over reserves and the reserves policy. Board members had the opportunity to write proposals ahead of the Board meeting for consideration of the use of the reserves into significant projects.

It was noted that there would be some requirement to fund the outstanding complaint due to shared costs of the investigation with the Scottish Orienteering Association.

Due to the Sport England funding award expiring in March 2027, funding for projects was only possible for one year until any future award was confirmed.

Project summaries

JEC Support

For 2026, the viability of supporting the Junior European Cup (JEC) within the Performance Programme plans have been under review due to financial constraints and limited staffing capacity within the Performance Team.

To ensure continued GB participation at future JEC competitions, a group operating on behalf of the Performance Pathway Steering Group (PPSG) has been formed and led by Pauline Tryner. This group, referred to in the proposal as the JEC Management Group, includes senior coaches, athletes and volunteers with specific experience in developing junior athletes. Their remit is to propose a sustainable process for junior participation in JEC events outside current Performance Programme structures.

The proposal requested £4,000 to fund 12 athletes and three volunteer staff members to attend the competition in 2026. The money will fund the elements that British Orienteering usually funds for international events including the entry fees and volunteer costs. Accommodation, food and transport will continue to be funded by the athletes.

Should a full team of 24 be selected, the costs of those, plus additional volunteer staff is to be funded from other sources.

The Board recognised the importance of the junior pathway, the JEC competition and the challenges of the financial constraints and available time within the performance team in 2026.

The Board agreed to fund up to £4,000 to JEC for 2026.

Competition Group Coordinator

A proposal was presented to introduce a funded role to coordinate a training system for athletes competing at a national level but operating outside the current performance pathway.

The proposal highlighted the value of establishing such a system to:

- Retain athletes in the **21–40 age group**, which is essential to the long-term sustainability of the sport.
- Maintain a strong and competitive domestic senior scene, creating a platform that supports future international success.
- Encourage and train the next generation of organisers, planners, controllers, and mappers.
- Maximise the effectiveness of complementary activities such as Quid Games and the UK Elite Orienteering League, helping to build a more robust and connected orienteering community.

The Board acknowledged the importance and potential impact of the proposal but felt that additional detail was required before funding could be approved, given the scale of the investment.

Areas Requiring Further Detail

The Board requested that the updated proposal include:

1. **Clarification of the target age group:** Should the focus remain on ages 21–40, or could the range be expanded to 21–50?
2. **A clearer set of metrics**, including:
 1. Estimated programme engagement numbers.
 2. What success looks like—short, medium, and long-term.
 3. An estimated national and regional reach.
 4. The number of proposed collaborative initiatives, including which events or series the programme intends to link with (e.g., JK Festival, British Championships, UK Elite Orienteering League, London City Race, and key regional series).
3. **A profile of the ideal programme lead**, including essential skills, experience, and capacity expectations.
4. **A more detailed cost breakdown**, including whether funding is solely for the coordinator or if additional programme costs are anticipated. (It was noted that the programme should not deliver funded training unavailable to the GB team.)
5. **Consideration of regional links:** How the role might collaborate with regional associations and whether these bodies could support training financially or through accessible regional delivery.

The Board also noted that the role may be more effective as a consultancy contract rather than the proposed 0.2 FTE position.

The Board expressed interest in reviewing a revised proposal at its February meeting.

Action:

Feedback to be provided, and the proposal to be further developed and resubmitted.

Media & Publicity at Major Events

This proposal considered funding professional photography at major events for British Orienteering to use in publicity and for members to share across their social media platforms.

It was noted that there are currently volunteers who provide excellent footage of our major events and their images are available online.

It was agreed not to fund this specific proposal, but to encourage the development team to consider areas where additional funding could support new imagery and footage of new participation initiatives such as footage of a new university event. There may still be a role for funding enhanced action footage at major events and this is not to be discounted.

8 Matters of significance

8.1 Board metrics and data

The CEO referred to the previously circulated paper to improve the database and provide a more comprehensive data dashboard for Board and general review. Minor feedback had been received offline and the CEO will progress this forward with ZYGO.

8.2 Welfare Matters

The CEO referred to the paper on this section which had also been covered by Jeanette Downing in her earlier presentation. No further questions were raised.

8.3 Complaint Update

The Chair updated the Board that an independent investigator had been commissioned by the Scottish Orienteering Association and was now working their way through the case and speaking to the relevant people involved.

There will be a cost to both SOA and British Orienteering. The exact amount is to be confirmed.

9 International Matters

9.1 IOF Heat Policy update

This was discussed earlier in the agenda within 4.2 of the action points.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Board Representation on Committees

The Board reviewed its current representation across both existing and planned committees and groups to enhance the range of skills and support available, and to strengthen the connection between these groups and the Board. All groups were appointed at least one Board representative.

The proposed representatives are:

Group/ Committee	BOF staff rep	Board rep
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Events & Competitions committee	Josh Wright TBC	Justine Albert/ Andy Robinson
Rules group	CEO/ Howard Blackman	David Rosen
Event scheduling	CEO	Pauline Tryner
Performance pathway steering group	Pippa Archer	Duncan Birtwistle
Anti-Doping Leads	Joe Fermor-Worrell	Duncan Birtwistle/ Zac Randell
Coaching Advisory group	Howard Blackman	Alison Howe
Trail-O		Keith Willdig
Officials Training and accreditation	Howard Blackman	Keith Willdig
Safeguarding and Welfare (<i>under development</i>)	Jeanette Downing	Gregg Peers
Safety Advisory Group	Joe Fermor-Worrell	Zac Randell/ Gregg Peers/ Rob Woods
Mapping Group		David Rosen
Home nations group (<i>under development</i>)	CEO	Alison Howe
Youth advisory panel (<i>under development</i>)	Jeanette Downing	Pauline Tryner

10.2 New Mapping Group Chair

The Board noted that Dan Parker had taken over as the new Chair of the mapping group.

10.3 Price of BOF only membership

This will be discussed at a later date due to time constraints in this meeting.

11. Future meetings (11:00 to 16:00 unless stated)

Key Dates	Venue
Monday, 9 February 2026	Birmingham, the Studio TBC
Monday, 11 May 2026	Birmingham, the Studio TBC
Saturday 27 June 2026 - AGM	South West TBC
Monday 13 July 2026	Birmingham, the Studio TBC
Saturday 12 September 2026	Online (9:00 – 12:00)
Monday 7 December 2026	London Bird & Bird TBC

Further Conference calls to be organised as required.

Meeting finished at 16:20