

Orienteering

An Outdoor Adventure Sport!



Orienteering is a challenging outdoor adventure sport that exercises both the mind and the body. The aim is to navigate in sequence between control points marked on a unique orienteering map and decide the best route to complete the course in the quickest time. Orienteering can take place in both rural and urban locations but is arguably at its best in countryside and forests which offer more challenging terrain.

ORIENTEERING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

By the very nature of the sport, orienteering has a close affinity with the countryside and the wildlife it supports. For many competitors a good run is made special by the fleeting glimpse of a deer or finding the forest floor covered in bluebells and made prominent by the spring sunshine. For the event officials, success is more than happy competitors, it's hearing locals enquire whether the event was cancelled as they saw and heard nothing on the given date.

To ensure any impact on the environment is kept to a minimum, event organisers and course planners turn to the sport's Environmental Guidelines, a best practice guide prepared by experienced orienteers with in depth knowledge of the issues, and available on the British Orienteering website. In addition members can call on the services of the sport's Environmental Officer who has over 40 years experience working in

the countryside managing a wide range of important habitats.

An essential part of ensuring that an event has a minimal impact on the environment is working closely with the landowner or their nominated representative. In doing so, the event officials can build a detailed knowledge of the special interest of an area and plan the courses in such a way that they avoid sensitive sites and leave quiet areas for larger animals such as deer.

As part of its quest to better understand the impact orienteering may have on the environment, British Orienteering has commissioned a number of surveys designed specifically to look at the effect large events have on deer, nesting birds and compaction of flora. Some of these surveys were undertaken by consultants who were not orienteers, and all the studies showed that any impacts were insignificant and short-term.

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LEARNING SELF-RELIANCE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Combining, as it does, exercise with mental challenge and appreciation of the countryside, orienteering is used as a valuable educational activity in schools and is included in the National Curriculum. It is also an essential part of the training of the armed forces and rescue services. As there are clubs in most parts of Britain that run regular local events, orienteering offers opportunities for people everywhere to visit their local woods and hills with a new perspective.

ORIENTEERING AND CONSERVATION

Orienteering is at its best when carried out in intricately contoured forests, woodlands and moors. British Orienteering is committed to nature conservation and welcomes legislation that has increased the protection of these places whilst enhancing responsible access.

Orienteers recognise that, whilst the sport is well organised and quiet, and involves no machines (apart from transport to the general location), our activities nevertheless have a potential impact on the land, for instance through the passage of feet or disturbance to wildlife.

We believe that by championing exemplary standards in protecting the environment during the organisation, timing and management of orienteering events, significant adverse effects can be eliminated. We are determined to further our excellent reputation by ensuring that land is left in as good a state as found, and supporting research that will help us identify any additional/ residual impacts.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

It is essential that British Orienteering recognise our responsibilities and make every effort to minimise our impact on nature whilst playing our part in improving the environment in which we run. We intend to achieve this by:

- Being committed to a healthy environment and the integration of this principle into the fundamental conduct of orienteering.
- Ensuring our Environmental Policy and the good practice guidance as included in the Rules and Guidelines are consistent with the principles of respect for the environment and the protection of our natural heritage.
- Working in partnership with landowners, government authorities and environmental organisations in defining and achieving good practice.
- Recognising the importance of nature conservation and consideration for other users in all education and training programmes for orienteers and event officials.
- Being aware of obligation on land formally designated for environmental protection, maintain the litter-free nature of orienteering and taking proper measures to avoid pollution.
- Carrying out basic monitoring of environmental performance at events and collecting the data centrally so that overall performance can be monitored and ways of improving established.

WORKING WITH CONSERVATION BODIES

We take care of all the land we use, but the most important sites for nature conservation, notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in England, Wales and Scotland, and as Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSIs) in Northern Ireland, require special consideration. Where other land is unavailable, or where SSSIs are especially suitable, careful management and planning are needed if orienteering is to take place. In seeking to integrate orienteering and nature conservation, British Orienteering maintains a dialogue with the main conservation bodies at both national and local levels, and seeks to work in partnership with them.

As part of our commitment, we undertake to:

- Maintain an awareness of the location and status of designated land when planning orienteering events at a strategic level, taking this into account when determining the timing, size and frequency of events.
- Have open and early discussions with landowners and where requested by the landowner, with the protecting body, in order to explore a mutually agreed way of working.
- Employ course-planning techniques that ensure that sensitive areas are avoided and disturbance minimised.
- Where special sensitivities exist, to schedule events so that they take place outside sensitive periods e.g. nesting birds.
- Offer to assist the relevant body with publicising the special nature of the land.
- Cooperate in research into the effect of orienteering on wildlife.



WORKING WITH LANDOWNERS

Our relationships with both public and private landowners are absolutely critical to the future of orienteering. We will:

- Plan events well in advance and contact landowners in good time.
- Cooperate with landowners and liaise fully with them in the planning of the event.
- Manage events in such a way that people understand their responsibilities and adhere to guidance.
- Always have public liability insurance in place in order to ensure that landowner liability is not increased through allowing the event to take place.
- Clear all litter and repair any damage (e.g. to boundaries) such that the area is in at least as good a condition as it was prior to the event.

WORKING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

A recent study on the economic impact of an orienteering event that took place over 6 days in Scotland found that it had contributed £2 million to the local economy. British Orienteering will:

- Show courtesy to local residents and seek to maximise the benefits to local communities in return for the occasional sharing of woods and open areas.
- Encourage competitors to use local facilities and shops so rural communities benefit from our presence.
- Confine our activities to specified areas where permission for access has been granted.
- Show consideration and courtesy to other users of the area whether on foot, horse or vehicle.

If you have any further questions please contact the National Office:

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