



**Minutes of the Northern Ireland Orienteering Association AGM
held at Kilmeggan Centre, Castlewellan, Co Down
on 15 February 2025**

The meeting commenced at 16:10.

24 members attended:

2 FermO: Raymond & Teresa Finlay.

18 LVO: Cecil Armstrong, Carol Black, Heather Cairns, Geoffrey & Alison Collins, Rosemary Croley, James Ewart, Ric Gamble, Stephen Gilmore, Fred & Daphne Hamond, Joe McClure, Mark Pruzina, Stephanie Pruzina, Norma Rea, Ann Savage, Gordon, Marlene & Mark Stephens.

4 NWOC: David Blair, Ruth Blair, Des Fletcher, Anthony McGonigle.

Apologies

Philip Baxter, Anne Bell, Robbie Bryson, Gavin Cairns, Mark Earnshaw, Wilbert Hollinger, Moire O'Sullivan, Stephanie Pruzina, Ross Walker.

Welcome

Chairman David Blair welcomed members, with the meeting following the 2024 prize-giving and thanked Ann Savage for her work preparing the trophies.

Previous Minutes

The minutes of the last AGM held on 1 June 2024 and EGM on 24 September 2024 were accepted on the proposal of Anthony McGonigle, seconded by Raymond Finlay.

Chairman's Report.

David Blair presented the Chairman's report noting that it was not 12 months since the previous AGM as the EGM in September had agreed to change the financial year end to 31 December.

David reported that 2024 was a bumper year for orienteering in Northern Ireland with competitions held from Crossmurrin in Fermanagh to Carneany and Glenariff in Antrim, Moydamlaght and Gortin in the Sperrins and Slieve Martin in the Mourne. The usual Score, Night, Sprint and Middle championships were held, but also two long distance championships as the 2023 event on Slieve Croob was postponed to March 2024. The Colour Series League comprised of 7 events with the Urban League 5 events. Revisiting Moydamlaght and Glenariff had been highlights of the Series. In addition there were club events and activities held by all 3 clubs, with many members also competing throughout Ireland, Great Britain and overseas.

All the events required planning, controlling and organizing with gratitude expressed to all officials and helpers and all members were encouraged to be involved by officiating or even collecting controls as a way to build up experience.

Members who worked behind the scenes to keep NI Orienteering strong where noted, including committee members and fellow officers Philip Baxter and Stephen

Gilmore, IT experts, mappers, coaches, Lyle Fleming as membership secretary, Ann Savage coordinating trophies and Alan Gartside compiling the league were all a vital part of the team.

David concluded by noting a memorable early morning start to travel to a FermO Frostbite event at Callow Hill as an anticipation of a full year of orienteering ahead for 2025.

Financial Report.

Stephen Gilmore reported on behalf of Hon Treasurer Philip Baxter presented the financial report for the 9 month period from 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024, with draft accounts (appended below) and make several observations:

- Expenditure had exceeded income by £4,3338 reducing the fund to £29,804. However there were several mitigating factors in this unusual 9 month reporting period.
- Membership income was well reduced to only £57, as the majority of membership income is received via British Orienteering in the first quarter of the year.
- The levies which clubs pay to NIOA based on competitive runs had been paid by LVO for the period, but had not been received from FermO and NWOC by year end.
- Figures relating to the British Sprint and Middles from May 2023 had slightly skewed figures.
- A total of £3,000 had been paid by mapping grants of £1,000 to FermO for the 2024 NI Champs at Gortin and “2,000 in advance to NWOC for the 2025 IOC maps.

Subject to minor adjustments and the normal independent inspection, Stephen Gilmore proposed the adoption of the accounts. This was seconded David Blair and agreed.

Development Report

Ric Gamble presented the Development report.

Ric reported that it has now been 18 months since he took up the NI Development Officer post, so at the end of March, he will have completed my first full year/funding cycle (April 24-March 25). The position is funded by SportNI and the last two years we have been awarded £55k, which includes salary, supporting costs/expenses with the rest of the fund being put into programmes and clubs. There is an expected SportNI 4-year (2024-28) funding/development package. We have been told the annual funding is set to reduce by 10-20% each year, however, it is hoped that we can secure a similar amount of funding.

The British Orienteering line manager is Howard Blackman, who meets personally for progress meetings about 6 times per year. Ric also attends weekly online Development Team meetings with the rest of the BO team. With the resignation of Mike McClure the interim SportNI officer is David Smyth, who meets 2-4 times annually to set targets and review. The management structure of SportNI is being reviewed, so changes are anticipated. The business case for 2025-26 investment is also being reviewed, so this may affect funding.

The focus of the SportNI 5-year plan (2021-2026) is The Power of Sport which aims to address inequalities within the sports sector and maximise the power of sport to

change lives for everyone in society. This compares with British Orienteering Vision – To Create Thriving Clubs for a New Generation and British Orienteering Mission – Clubs are at the heart and soul of our sport, to ensure clubs have the support to maintain, develop and grow and to welcome a new generation of orienteers to an inclusive adventure sport in remarkable venues.

The four British Orienteering Strategic Themes are

1. Change the perception – inclusive, fun, exciting
2. Create engaging experiences – high quality activities and events
3. Strengthen lifelong pathways – CATI/Schools/youth programmes.
Club coaching. Training and qualifications of membership and partners.
4. Provide foundations for success – good governance and finances.
Succession planning. Up to date policies and procedures.

The emphasis on inclusion from both SportNI and British Orienteering means my targets include encouraging more females in participation, volunteering and leadership roles and reaching a more diverse group of people – location, ethnicity, background etc. Some individuals or clubs may not see the immediate benefits of this work, or it may not fit in perfectly with their priorities/strategy. These are areas which will be measured on, so to protect funding it is necessary to support these areas.

Ric noted that the job title suggests it is wider than a ‘Club’ development officer role, however it is my hope that clubs and members do see and experience the benefits of this work, if not immediately, in time.

2024 has been another busy year with plenty of events and activities put on which have been well supported. Event/Activity and Participation figures for Jan-Dec 2024 were summarized as:

- Clubs/hubs and development programmes hosted 108 events/activities.
- Fermo x11, NWOC x6, LVO x56, Dev x35.
- NI total = 5556 participant runs.
- 62% of participant runs are adults and 38% U18s.
- Average participation runs = 463 per month. This is up 16% from the last report. (Note this does not include what happens outside club/development activities, e.g. Permanent Orienteering Courses; individual MapRuns; schools and outdoor activity providers.)

Club participation/runs figures were summarized as:

- Fermo: 609 (11%, last report 9%)
- LVO: 2839 (51%, last report 60%)
- NWOC: 324 (6%, last report 7%)
- NI Development: 1764 (32%, last report 24%)
- OCO hub: 681 (12%) - Graeme’s work supported both LVO and Development programmes, contributing to their percentages.

Examples of funding areas included:

- Equipping Teachers/Leaders Course - training with FODC Community Wellbeing Coordinators and Lorne Girl Guiding Centre Staff.
- British Orienteering Instructor Qualification Course – TNOC/EA staff and trainees
- REC1/2 First Aid course – NIOA members.
- SI kit/first aid kit/gazebo/banners for LVO Club Development Officer
- First aid kit and gazebo for Orchard County - Schools programme in ABC area – Graeme Francis has continued to support schools in this area develop an

orienteering programme. The school's event/competition is attracting greater numbers each year.

- Orienteering Foundation Volunteer Questionnaire.
- Mapping support.
- Volunteer time/expenses for development activities.
- Council/community programmes – MEA CATI (x4), AND/NT Summer of Fun (x4). FODC, Gortin and Castle Archdale (x3). NMD, FOOT Series (x6).
- Development of links with Schools/GCSE PE exam board – Further Schools Competitions in planning stage

Ric expressed thanks for your support and the cooperation from the NIOA committee and the three clubs. This work is certainly not a one-person job and relies heavily on the advice and support of many members, in planning and supporting programmes. Ric indicated an excitement in continuing the work in developing our great sport, reaching out to new groups of people, allowing them to experience and become increasingly involved, with the support of our fantastic members and clubs.

Juniors Report

Stephen Gilmore presented the report on behalf of Stephanie Pruzina.

The Junior Inter Regional Championships or JIRCs are a competition between the UK's twelve junior regional orienteering squads held in the autumn. NIOA can send a team of 24 (8 under 14s, 8 under 16s, 8 under 18s) to this annual competition. In 2024, our NI squad was entirely composed of junior members of LVO. We managed to bring everyone who wanted the opportunity, with 10 out of the 24 places taken. Only two girls, who were both W18, applied and there were gaps also at M16 and M18, meaning the squad was unfortunately very unbalanced. With so many classes in which we could not score, our aim was for each athlete to run their best race and in debriefing we think we achieved this. Our best scorer in the individual at Mallard's Pike was Adam Martin who finished 15th overall at M14. James Ewart was not medically permitted to compete, but 'walked' non-competitively to a fourth-place time! We had only one competitive team for the combined relay, but this year for the first time, ad-hoc teams could be made from the same squad with each participant running on the correct map for their age category. This worked really well, and our juniors enjoyed the improved camaraderie from competing together.

The Junior Home Internationals or JHI is an annual competition between teams representing England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, with the Northern Ireland team extending its invite to include all of Ireland. There are again 24 places available, but only one junior, James Ewart, was selected from Northern Ireland this year. Taking place in East Anglia two weeks after the JIRCs, James was able to run competitively and repeated his 4th place result as part of the Irish team. This helped them retain the Judith Wingham Trophy in the Wales-Ireland sub-competition. It is important to note that many of the Irish juniors who were on the team are training together and travelling and competing abroad, which gives them the depth of experience needed for such competitions.

The annual Hawkshead M/W16 coaching weekend at the end of November 2024 was the usual highlight, and four LVO juniors together with five from Orienteering Ireland formed the Irish contingent. This was the first year in which sessions were called off because of weather, due to overnight snow making us hostel-bound on Saturday morning. Fortunately a wealth of games and tuition was produced by the expert UK coaches and we were able to get outside for the rest of the weekend.

From a club perspective, LVO has a small but dedicated group of juniors keen to train and compete. The juniors have been attending monthly Club Meet coaching and, in preparation for the JIRCs, we held several extra coaching sessions over the summer, which were very well attended and in which we revised all of the basic skills of orienteering. James Ewart was selected to attend the JROS training camp at Lagganlia due to his superb results in the previous two JKs. Despite a serious lower leg injury sustained in May, he managed to attend the camp, walking the exercises and adding depth to his already excellent technical skills.

LVO has taken major steps this year to address the low numbers of juniors within its club and within the region. With the support of the Orienteering Foundation, it has begun monthly coaching sessions on the last Sunday of the month in Tollymore aimed at new beginner families with children aged 8 and upwards. It has taken over the former Tollymore Orienteers hub FB page and has restarted the Running Wild brand. It seems to be proving popular with families with parents who are mountain runners, with an average of 16 children attending per session so far. To improve synergy, we have also started monthly coaching at the same time and place for the older juniors, so the newcomers can see what they are aiming for. LVO knows that it will take time for the families to start entering events and to become club members, but it is committed to this long-term process.

The other two main clubs from NIOA have had a quiet year, but both FERMO and NWOC have some outreach events planned which they hope will appeal to families and potentially bring more young people into the sport. As Development Officer, Ric Gamble is working closely with FERMO and NWOC and supporting them with this effort.

There has been no report from OCO, but an active schools league in the ABC area has provided high quality orienteering to GCSE level once again for a large number of young athletes.

Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults.

Stephen Gilmore reported on behalf of Safeguarding officer Chloe Reed who had updated the committee in late Nov 2024. There were no incidents to report.

Chloe had met with the NSPCC representative to overview safeguarding. It was recommended to hold a focus session with juniors to discuss safeguarding, which Chloe would arrange.

The British Orienteering CEO had not realized that Orienteering Ireland juniors formed part of the JHI team and had questioned if the policies and procedures of Orienteering Ireland were compatible with the BOF policies and procedures. It was thought that they were almost identical, however a conversation between BOF and OI was to be arranged to confirm this.

Some of the coaches safeguarding qualifications which are only valid for 3 years had expired were required to be renewed, which was an issue being addressed.

Presentation of the Colin Henderson Trophy

Chairman David Blair announced that Teresa Finlay was the recipient of the Colin Henderson Trophy for Services to NI Orienteering. David commented that Teresa had given much to the sport of orienteering and presented the trophy to a surprised Teresa.

Elections of Committee and Officers

Cecil Armstrong kindly took the chair for the elections and reminded the meeting that David Blair had completed the customary term of 3 years as Chairman:

Chairman. Gordon Stephens was proposed as Chairman by Stephen Gilmore, seconded by David Blair and agreed.

Vice Chairman. Robbie Bryson was proposed as Vice Chairman by Stephen Gilmore, seconded by Raymond Finlay and agreed.

Honorary Secretary. Stephen Gilmore was proposed as Honorary Secretary by Gordon Stephens, seconded by Ric Gamble and agreed.

Honorary Treasurer. Philip Baxter was proposed as Honorary Treasurer by Ann Savage, seconded by Ruth Blair and agreed.

A minimum of 12 committee members were required. The outgoing committee was Philip Baxter, David Blair, Robbie Bryson, Michael Burton, Heather Cairns, Raymond Finlay, Teresa Finlay, Lyle Fleming, Des Fletcher, Wilbert Hollinger, Stephen Gilmore, Declan Logue, Anthony McGonigle, Moire O'Sullivan, Gordon Stephens and Ross Walker. Moire O'Sullivan wished to step down.

The reappointment of the committee with the exception of Moire O'Sullivan was proposed by Ruth Blair, seconded by Daphne Hamond and agreed.

Gordon Stephens took the chair and noted the challenges to be navigated ahead including demographics of participants, access to terrain and damage to forests following the recent Storm Éowyn, the latter being potentially more challenging than the Foot and Mouth and Covid-19 restrictions.

Any Other Business

Anthony McGonigle reminded the meeting that the first Colour Series at Learmont on 1 March was going ahead as storm damage had been minimal.

Ric Gamble noted that Sport NI were requesting a survey of storm damaged and requested that clubs feedback damage to forests. LVO had already begun this process.

The Chairman thanked all those present for attending.

The meeting ended at 16:50.

G Stephens 21/02/2026

Northern Ireland Orienteering Income & Expenditure Account
 1st April 2024 - 31st December 2024

Registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC100711

	Income	Expenditure	Net 23-24
Membership	57.00		957.50
Levies 2024	948.03		1222.50
Development BSM	306.35		-690.98
Development Team			
Courses & events run by team	3,436.10	1,668.45	-182.38
Equipment	157.8	149.83	-105.44
VHI 2024			
SHI Kit	3,401.00	3,536.58	-588.75
SHI 2024	407.54		-639.54
	178.74	403.74	
Junior Support			
Mapping	590.00	1,183.20	-2227.40
Publicity		3,000.00	
Trophies		249.99	-291.98
Administration costs		307.00	-291.24
Bank interest & charges	255.99	408.57	-408.57
		49.80	227.51
Grand Total	9,738.55	14,077.16	

Most membership income arrives Jan - Mar
 FERMO and NWOC not yet received
 Main expenditure post event

£1k 2023 deferred and £2k IOC 25

Fund as at 1st April 2023	34,143.17	
Income	9,738.55	
Expenditure	14,077.16	
Net increase / (decrease) in fund	(4,338.61)	
Fund as at 31st December 2024	29,804.56	

To be verified (close but not quite right!!)