



**Minutes of the Northern Ireland Orienteering Association AGM
held at Mahon's Hotel, Irvinestown, Co Fermanagh
on 21 February 2025**

The meeting commenced at 14:15.

34 members attended:

7 FermO: Robbie Bryson, Raymond & Teresa Finlay, Billy Fyffe, Sean Magee, Sara Mason, Rachel Montgomery.

22 LVO: Philip, Helen & Olivia Baxter, Michael Burton, Carol Black, Heather Cairns, Chloé Campbell, Sharon Dickenson, Alan Elwood, Ric Gamble, Stephen Gilmore, Fred & Daphne Hamond, Wilbert Hollinger, Joe McClure, Moire O'Sullivan, Aran Power, Mark & Stephanie Pruzina, Ann Savage, Gordon Stephens, Kenny Weir.

5 NWOC: David Blair, Ruth Blair, Des Fletcher, Anthony McGonigle, Ross Walker.

Apologies

Cecil Armstrong, Anne Bell, Gavin Cairns, Lyle Fleming, Sarah Gamble, Declan Logue, Ryan McDonald, Richard McCourt.

Welcome

Chairman Gordon Stephens welcomed members and with the meeting following the 2025 junior prize-giving and preceding the senior prize-giving thanked Ann Savage for her work preparing the trophies.

Previous Minutes

The minutes of the last AGM held on 15 February 2025 and EGM on 30 September 2025 were accepted on the proposal of David Blair, seconded by Ann Savage.

Chairman's Report.

Gordon Stephens presented the Chairman's report, noting the challenges that had been overcome following the extensive damage caused by Storm Éowyn in Jan 2025.

Engagement with Sport NI over the past year had finally resulted in a grant of £20,000 to be offered to assist with mapping, with a focus in open areas. A useful meeting had been held with Forest Service, with regular harvesting being suspended for 3 years to allow for clear up following the storm.

Despite the storm damage a full program of 7 Colour Series, all NI Championship events with the night postponed to November, and 4 NI Urban Series events. Cooperation with Orienteering Ireland had resulted in a NI Colour Series being held at Carlingford and a Leinster League being held at Tyrella. Similar cooperation was anticipated for 2026 with shared events at Castleblayney and Slieve Croob. Discussions with British Orienteering had taken place regarding the insurance implications of cooperation with Orienteering Ireland.

A coaching for coaches training day had been held at Gortin in March 2025 and a course for controllers taken by experienced controller Barry Elkington took place at Hillsborough in May 2025.

Susan Lambe had stood down as Senior Home International manager, with Rosaline Heron having taken up to role. Sharon Dickenson continues to manage the Veteran team with Steph Pruzina the junior and JIRCs team.

The highlight of the year had been the Irish Orienteering Championships, extended to 5 days of competition. Anthony McGonigle had excelled in the role of coordinator on behalf of NWOC assisted by FermO and LVO. The storm damage had resulted in the relays being planned for 3 venues, with Graeme Francis remapping an additional open area at Magilligan. NIOA had contributed funding for mapping.

Membership at the end of 2025 had totaled 358, with 24 FermO, 201 LVO and NWOC 24, an increase over 2024 although not yet at pre-covid levels.

A review of strategy was underway assisted by Moire O'Sullivan. An initial finding was that the committee size was rather large and therefore a proposal was brought to the meeting.

Financial Report.

Hon Treasurer Philip Baxter presented the financial report. The income and expenditure figures for January-December 2025 are appended.

Income derives largely from membership fees, levies, a small profit on development team events and a small amount of interest from our savings account. Expenditure remains fairly constant: support to those selected to represent us at national and international level (seniors and juniors), support to coach development and some junior coaching, mapping support towards clubs who stage either the NI or the Irish Championships, and general running costs such as maintaining the website, paying for Zoom and maintaining the NIOA trophies. These are all areas that we would expect to continue to support to the best of our ability.

.There are some 'one offs' that cloud the picture: we bought the finish gantry that was used for the IOC in Magilligan; the closure and transfer of the dormant Coaching Juniors account swelled the development fund which has taken over the management of junior funding; the overspend arising from the storm induced changes to the IOC meant that the anticipated and significant levy was waived to help reduce the loss faced by NWOC.

Overall the one-off purchase of the gantry was roughly balanced by the transfer in of the balance of the closed junior account and a generous donation by NWOC to the juniors in memory of Noel Bogle. The only mapping cost in 2025 was towards the remap of Mount Stewart which was covered from the National Trust grant made in 2024. The mapping support to the IOC and NIOC was made in 2024. The effect on all our forest maps of repeated storm damage and the focus on ensuring that the IOC met our widely recognised high standard put mapping programmes for 2025 into temporary abeyance while damage assessments are made and potential external recovery funding sought.

By and large, therefore, our actual expenditure matched our actual income.

Looking ahead to 2026, on the expenditure side, thanks to the sterling development work carried out by clubs and NIOA coaching, we hope to have a larger JIRCs team, perhaps more selection for JHI, extra support for James Ewart (selected for a GB Talent Squad) and an increase in coaching support for the NI Junior Squad. We will have a trophy bill following the presentations of the 2025 trophies but are not anticipating a large mapping demand. On the income side we anticipate that a small increase in membership and a small increase in regular events will result in a modest increase in income. A drawdown from the NT mapping account is also anticipated. All of this adds up to an excess of expenditure over income which will reduce the bank balance! Most of the increase will stem from increased junior activity so the effect will be mostly to the Development fund.

In summary, careful management has left us in about the same state at the end of the year as we started. We anticipate a small excess of expenditure next year but we must look forward to seeing how to increase our income if we hope to sustain a good balance.

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

Development Report

Ric Gamble presented the Development report, noting that he had almost completed his second full year/funding cycle in my role as NI orienteering Development Officer, which is funded by SportNI. The last two years we have been awarded £55k, which includes salary, supporting costs/expenses with the rest of the money being put into participation programmes. It was expected that this 1-year funding/development package would be changed to 4-years; however, this has not materialised and SportNI are still in the process of moving to this new model. It was confirmed on 16/02/26 that funding allocations for this coming financial year will be maintained at 2025-26 levels, with an inflationary uplift of 3% added.

Howard Blackman, continues as British Orienteering line manager. After a short term with interim SportNI officer David Smyth, Conleth Donnelly is now SportNI lead and has taken over the outdoor sports which Mike McClure previously managed. Although not from an outdoor recreation background, Conleth has been very supportive of us with lobbying for financial support due to storm losses. SportNI continues to have an emphasis on inclusion meaning targets need to include, encouraging more females in participation and reaching more diverse groups.

Event/Activity and participation figures

Comparing to the previous year, 2025 has seen a 36% increase in the number of events and activities and a 28% increase in participation. IOC had an influence on the rise in participation figures. During the period Jan-Dec 2025:

Events and Activities

- 147 events/activities in total were hosted by clubs, OCO, club coaches and development programmes.
- Fermo x14, NWOC x12, LVO x44, Dev x38, Other/OCO/Coaches x39.

Participation

- There were a total of 7,102 participant runs recorded in NI activities/events.

- 54% of participant runs are adults and 46% U18s. 2025 has had an increase in the number of juniors participating. The Adult v U18 percentage difference has fallen from 24% in 2024 to 8% in 2025.
- Average participation runs = 592 per month or 48 per event/activity.

This data does not include what happens outside club/development activities, e.g. Permanent Orienteering Courses; individual MapRuns; schools and outdoor activity providers.)

Examples of areas/items of Expenditure/support:

- British Orienteering Instructor Qualification Course (new Level 1)
- REC1/2 First Aid course – NIOA members
- Coaching the Coaches – NIOA members
- New Controllers Course – NIOA members
- IOC banners and advertising
- Mapping support
- Supporting monthly Club training/CATI activities (FermO and NWOC)
- Volunteer time/expenses for development activities
- Council/community programmes – MEA, AND, FOCD, NMD, NT Mount Stewart, NI Science Festival
- Development of links with youth organisations e.g, Scouts, Girl Guides, Crescent Arts group, Portglenone Enterprise Group
- Education, development of orienteering provision in schools (PE and DofE) and UU Coleraine.

Ric expressed thanks to clubs and members who have supported me with quality events, activities and development programmes in this busy year. There are many opportunities for members to support with development programmes, only a small number of these will need you to be a qualified coach, the vast majority are supportive volunteer roles, with time and travel expenses fully covered.

Juniors Report

Stephanie Pruzina presented the report.

The Running Wild and Teens and Tweens programmes had been successful in attracting new juniors and families. NIOA and The Orienteering Foundation had assisted LVO with funding. Although run by LVO, FermO and NWOC juniors were encouraged to join.

A junior development squad of 1-12 members had been established; particularly with a new group of M/W14s. Coaching at TD3/4/5 level had taken place at Carnawady, Meelmore and a weekend in Fermanagh supported by FermO.

The Junior Inter Regional Championships or JIRCs are a competition between the UK's twelve junior regional orienteering squads held in the autumn. A team had travelled to JIRCs in Lakeland. Unfortunately there were no girls on the team, but the boys with only one M18 had ranked 10th.

James Ewart had been the only NIOA member to be selected for JHI with Ireland again winning the Judith Wingham trophy. James had also been selected to run at EYOC and had been invited to the Talent Scotland regular training weekends.

Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults.

Gordon Stephens reported on behalf of Safeguarding officer Chloe Reed wished to stand down with Mairi Kennedy to take over the role. The matter of checking that the policies and procedures of Orienteering Ireland were aligned with British Orienteering was still on going with a Memorandum of Understanding being drafted.

There were no incidents to report. However on foot on a report that there had been incident involving orienteering with an outdoor centre, clubs were advised to put mitigations in place as a temporary measure.

Presentation of the Colin Henderson Trophy

Chairman Gordon Stephens announced that Anthony McGonigle was the recipient of the Colin Henderson Trophy for Services to NI Orienteering. Gordon commented that Anthony had headed up the team delivering an outstanding Irish Orienteering Championships in the midst of difficult personal circumstances. Anthony accepted the trophy noting that IOC had been very much a team effort.

Change of Constitution

Hon Secretary Stephen Gilmore presented the proposal to amend section 2(a) and 2(b) of the constitution, noting that the quorum of 25 had been met and reminded the meeting that a 66% majority was required.

On behalf of the committee Stephen proposed that the constitution be changed from:

(a) The Officers of the Association shall consist of a **Chairman, Vice-Chairman**, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, and to these may be added a President.

(b) The affairs of the Association shall be conducted by an Executive Committee which shall consist of the above office bearers and **eight** other members of the Association. The Officers and the eight other members of the Executive Committee shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. At least five members of the Committee are to be active orienteers. If any vacancy should occur amongst the Officers the Executive Committee shall have the power to fill the vacancy until the next Annual General Meeting. The **Chairman** shall not serve as such for more than three years consecutively.

To:

(a) The Officers of the Association shall consist of a **Chair**, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, and to these may be added a President and **Vice-Chair**.

(b) The affairs of the Association shall be conducted by an Executive Committee which shall consist of the above office bearers and a minimum of **three** other members of the Association. The Officers and the other members of the Executive Committee shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. At least five members of the Committee are to be active orienteers. If any vacancy should occur amongst the Officers the Executive Committee shall have the power to fill the vacancy until the next Annual General Meeting. The Chair shall not serve as such for more than three years consecutively.

Stephen explained that the intention was to alter the language from Chairman to Chair, to identify the Vice-Chair as an optional appointment (which had been the de facto situation) and to reduce the minimum size of the committee from twelve to six.

The proposal was seconded by Wilbert Hollinger and by a show of hands was passed unanimously with no votes against and no abstentions.

Elections of Committee and Officers

David Blair took the chair for the elections:

Chair. Gordon Stephens was proposed as Chair by Harry Bell, seconded by Ann Savage and agreed.

Honorary Secretary. Stephen Gilmore was proposed as Honorary Secretary by Wilbert Hollinger, seconded by Ruth Blair and agreed.

Honorary Treasurer. Philip Baxter was proposed as Honorary Treasurer by Stephanie Pruzina, seconded by Mark Pruzina and agreed.

A minimum of 6 committee members were now required. From the outgoing committee Michael Burton and Des Fletcher had stood down during the year. David Blair, Robbie Bryson, Heather Cairns, Teresa Finlay, Lyle Fleming and Wilbert Hollinger had indicated that they did not wish to be reelected.

The reappointment to the committee of Philip Baxter, Raymond Finlay, Stephen Gilmore, Declan Logue, Anthony McGonigle, Gordon Stephens and Ross Walker was proposed by Ruth Blair, seconded by Mark Pruzina and agreed.

Gordon Stephens took the chair.

Any Other Business

A discussion took place, noting that the committee had lost female representation and also younger people. A “females to the fore” forum had recently been established to allow females to identify issues.

Moire O’Sullivan, leading the strategy review suggested that younger people were best serving at club level, with the NI committee being viewed as a council of elders. The process would review this but the key question was how many clubs were sustainable for the medium future.

The Chair thanked all those present for attending.

The meeting ended at 15:20.

