Planner’s Report for SHI and NIOC 2026 - Meelmore

On scouting out the area for initial planning I chose to have courses avoid the large marsh area as the going is very rough and there was enough better ground to avoid placing controls within it. There were also a couple of small areas within the large boulder fields that I couldn't match well to the map so omitted them from the planning of courses.

I gave the 4 SHI courses the same long leg back from the far side of Luke's to just before the Trassey Track, with Luke's and the unpalatable marsh being good obstacles to force competitors to choose between north or south route options. It worked well, as Livelox showed the routes fanned out across the whole area with the North option being quickest as expected (which was desirable as this was the only time competitors ran that bit of ground).

I had initially planned NIOC course lengths gauging off the previous number of years NIOC's course lengths. I planned the SHI courses based off minutes per km for running speeds on the terrain. However, less than ideally, very soon before the event I made the decision to lengthen the courses. This was done by adding 4 extra controls which could give a potential extra loop on the small hill just to the East of the Trassey Track. The extra length worked well for the NIOC as my gut feeling before lengthening was the NIOC courses were too short and the fast nature of the terrain meant adding between 0.4 to 1.2km only added to the experience.

However, the SHI courses were quite long already and the extra distance (1.4km for M21, less for the others) meant that the winning times ended up being long. 10mins long for M21 (100min winning time) and 3mins over the 90mins for W21. I made the call that it was better to have the courses run long than to be too short. I didn't realise just how many of the best 20's were away at JEC's and so the fastest competitors didn't break 90minutes (or 10mins/km in the W20) and so the courses needed to be much shorter for them.

I feel that the SHI courses offered a good technical challenge but in hindsight I will mention a couple of other niggles, in addition to the SHI courses being too long. 3 of M21's mispunched towards the end. Two controls were in close proximity, 80m apart. Both on boulders, it was a deliberate decision knowing the competitors would be thrown by the very visible control flag enroute to their penultimate control (hidden from their approach). I was so aware of this that I changed the code of one so the two codes were very different. I expected people to be thrown by the visible kite and then to realise their mistake when they checked the codes. In hindsight, I possibly would do something similar again but to make it fairer use two different features.

I placed some controls quite hidden, such as one of the last controls (on boulder by the river) but I would state that orienteers need to be navigating to the feature (and use control description to get side) rather than navigating to spot a flag.

I enjoyed the planning of the event and I feel the courses were at the right level technically from M/W10 through to older age categories. In future planning, I will get out and do more full run throughs of courses before finalising the course. My thanks to you all at LVO!

Shane Lynch, CorkO