

# **Swansea Bay Orienteering Club Development Officer Report - October 2022**

## **6 Month report**

Start Date May 2022.

### **1.0 General Progress with sport development**

It has been a very busy 6 months and a lot has been going on with a number of opportunities to promote the sport to a wide range of people. The first six months of this position has not only been about seeking out and building upon these opportunities for future growth, but about capturing the interest of attendees to events and encouraging people to join the club. It has been heartening to see that the Sport is starting to get more traction in the Swansea area with people starting to notice the sport and approaching us to put on activities and work with us further.

### **2.0 Sunday Park-O**

A series of 5 Park-O events over the summer in various country parks across the Swansea Bay region. Some of these were more successful than others and we learned a lot about what worked and what did not. There was a lot of positive interaction from members of the public when putting out or collecting controls, and all park wardens were happy to support the events and pleased with how well the events were received. We will put this learning into action for the series next year.

#### **2.1 What worked well**

Range of courses – Having the White to Orange range was good, as it gave people the opportunity to progress. Families generally went out on the Orange course as they came and took part together and wanted the activity to last longer. Sole parents and kids generally went out on the Yellow course and kids who were more confident or had been out with a parent previously decided that they would do the White course and parents shadowed them.

SI – the kids all loved using SI timing

Certificates and Stickers – these drew in kids who wanted to come again to get the next sticker in the series. Kids also wanted to put the certificates up on their wall when they got home which is great as it is a visible reminder about the sport.

Compasses and whistles – the kids loved having kit to go out with. We purchased new thumb compasses with the grant we received and they much preferred using these over the base plate compasses. They also liked having a whistle and learning about how to use one properly.

Flyers about future events

Regularity – having an event each month at roughly 4 weeks apart was good as people knew that on the second weekend of each month there would be an event that they could attend.

Club flags - We only got these after the second event and the difference it made to our visibility was immediate. Kids would be asking their parents what the Start and Finish flags were for, and people would come over and chat as they could see our name on the club flag and had either done Orienteering in the past or were curious as to what it was we were doing.

Club kit – it was great that helpers and club members were immediately identifiable thanks to the new club kit. It is vibrant, makes us look part of a team and looks very professional.

Advertising – all of the advertising material for the Sunday Park-O was designed with the club brand in mind. The colours on the flyers were the club colours, everything had our Website, Face Book, Instagram and Twitter tags, the imagery for the events was consistent, as was the messaging.

Cost – we kept this as low as possible. These events were not about making a profit, but introducing the sport to as many people as possible. If we covered our costs, this was a bonus, and people were genuinely surprised and pleased that they could keep their kids entertained for so little.

Grant – I applied for a Be Active grant from Sports Wales, which was successful. With this we purchased enough kit to run the events away from the existing SBOC events and get three parks re-mapped. This makes a huge difference in terms of logistics, as we don't have to ferry kit between organisers at such short notice.

## **2.2 What did not work well**

Certain locations were not so great, either the start was not in a place with heavy footfall, or the area was difficult to promote as there was no visitor centre or Parks department advertising on our behalf, and nowhere to display upcoming events

Able-O and Able-O terrain – there was no take up for these courses despite a lot of interest generated at the Para Sport Festival and promotion through county disability sports departments.

No existing club members (who were not helping) attended any of the events. We have to think about why.

Entries – we hardly got any entries on line. Most people turned up on the day, which meant that we either had too many maps or too few.

On site Advertising – we did not do much on-site advertising, and a few people said that they had not realised an event was going to be on, as they are not on social media or knew about the sport/club, but would have liked to have taken part if they had known.

Heat Wave – there was nothing we could do about this. One event was in an area where the carpark is full on summer weekends, on this day the temperature was in the mid 30's and about a quarter of the number of people who would normally be visiting came out on that day.

## **Benefits from the Sunday Park-O**

One adult and seven juniors joined the club following their attendance to these events, and attended the Welsh League and Club Champs event at Kenfig in the 30<sup>th</sup> October.

Park wardens and groundskeepers have been impressed by the activities that we have put on, especially that the activities have brought in new people, have not disrupted other park users and that that once packed up, you would not know that we had been there. All have said they would be happy to support our return in 2023 to run further Park-O events.

## **What to do differently next time**

Put 6 Park-O events into the fixtures for 2023, which will follow on from the Spring training sessions. At the same time reduced the number of Summer League events the club would normally hold so that the club is not overwhelmed with events and enough planners can be found to cover what is needed, as these event will not be run by the CDO in 2023.

Changing some locations for the events, and use heavy footfall areas or areas close to schools who have linked up with us in 2022 to hold the initial events. Use the further afield areas later in the season when it is a regular fixture in people diaries.

Advertise well in advance of the start of the series, and place posters at event locations.

Think about using Eventbrite for ticketing. It was successful for SWOC when they held their Winter of Wellbeing events and it is used by a great number of organisations and is easy to use.

### **3.0 Links to other Partners**

Run4All Neath – I held a training session with the club in May for 16 members at Gnoll Country Park, going through various techniques in the classroom before heading out to put them into practice followed by a score course set up in the park.

Disability Sports Wales – I showcased orienteering at this year's Para Sports Festival in Swansea and are in discussions for Orienteering to be included once more at the 2023 festival.

Canolfan Maerdy Youth Group – I held a training session for the kids of the Youth Club in a local park, and I'm in discussions to hold another session in Spring 2023.

Outdoor Partnership & Pobl Housing – I held an activity session in Blean-y-Meas with the OP and Pobl housing. This was a really positive session, slow to get going, but once a few kids joined in more came along and they were engaged, competitive, had a great time and did far more activity than they normally would. This session for me was one of the most successful that we have run in terms of getting the sport noticed and breaking down the perceived barrier that this is a white middle class sport. The kids in this estate had never heard of Orienteering and would never normally have the opportunity to take part in this sport, and it was great to be able to show them how accessible it was. We hope to include the local schools from this area in the 2023 schools project.

Llyn Llech Owain and Pembrey Country Park – both parks have asked for help in getting their Permanent Orienteering courses back into a usable state. I have worked with maintenance crews to locate markers and get areas around them cleared so they can be seen and accessed without getting attacked by undergrowth, and with park wardens to get markers replaced so they can start using the stock of maps that they hold.

Hungry Bear Media Opportunity – we were contacted in August by a filming company who wanted to film two presenters undertaking family activities that are low cost or free that they can do whilst on holiday in Swansea. I worked with them to arrange a session and several club members attended a morning of filming, which will be aired in Spring 2023

Penllergare Woodland Park – I am working with the park to set up a permanent orienteering course which will incorporate a nature and history trail. We are also working together to set up an Orienteering Hub in their soon to be opened Education and Welfare Centre. This is a wonderful opportunity to have a permanent base for the club where we can run training sessions, events and activities and really get the club well established in the local area. The centre is conveniently located for access, being in Swansea, but just off the M4, has parking and Penllergare Valley Woods are in its doorstep.

Schools project – I helped to support the schools project with Swansea Council over the summer term and will continue to support the project into 2023 and beyond by working with the club and the Swansea Active Youth team to create strong links with both the council and schools in the area.

Beat the Street – We linked in with the Active Communities Team at Carmarthenshire council who put on a Beat the Street activity in Llanelli in October/November. I created a virtual course using the UsynligO app at the location of one of the BTS boxes, which the council promoted on our behalf for the Go Explore week.

### **4.0 Junior Development**

I have been putting information and ideas together to create a Welsh Orienteering Association award booklet for new juniors. This booklet would be endorsed by WOA, be dual language and given to every new junior across the country, so no matter what club they belong to they are all working towards the same goals. This

will be a booklet where juniors can track their progress and work towards awards depending on the skills they learn and the number of events that they attend.

The development of this booklet got a kick start when 7 juniors joined the club, and I wanted to put a Welcome pack together for them. For the interim, I have put all this information together to create the SBOC Seren Awards, based on a Pathway to Orienteering and broken down into skill levels. This Welcome Pack was given to each new junior at the last event, and they loved them. The information from the packs have now gone to a WOA development group for further consideration.

## **5.0 Whole Club Development**

Over the summer I ran a series of 6 Step-Up sessions where people were able to come along a re-run a course they had previously done or try the next course up, without the pressure of competition and where they could ask questions or focus on a particular technique they would like to try, in preparation for the return of the Summer League in September.

In October I put on a series of UsynligO events, in preparation for the MapNav series where people could try out the app and get used to running with a torch and map reading as the nights start to draw in. This culminated in a fun Spooky O at Singleton Park, which was great fun.

I have been developing a series of MapNav events, working with a club member to hold a series of Virtual night events, in various urban areas around Swansea. Advertising and promoting the events to running clubs and other parties who would be interested in this style of events.

Club nights start in November, and I have hired a room for 14 evenings where we can run class room sessions including sessions on planning, organising, mapping, how to use the results programmes including SI droid, OE and SI programming. For the newer members there will be sessions covering the techniques and skills they can learn to improve their orienteering. These sessions will be social and give us a chance to meet up away from events. The classroom sessions will be followed by Strength and Fitness in Singleton Park, run and planned by one of our members who is studying Sports Science and will be tailored for the abilities of those who attend.

Club kit, we have a large range of kit that people can order, and I have started collecting items for a box of second-hand kit where people can buy any item for £5. This has been great for our new juniors.

As a member benefit, we have started to reward members who Plan or organise an event with a discount voucher to one of our events. We have also re-iterated that the club will re-imburse mileage and other expenses incurred whilst putting on an event – something that a lot of people either did not know, or were not claiming. We do not want members to be out of pocket for volunteering with the club.

We have started to add more social events to the diary. At the end of the Summer training and Summer league we met up at a local pub afterwards.

## **6.0 The next 6 months**

Organise the Club nights, and ensure there are volunteers to put on specific sessions for both existing members and newcomers, and advertise. Create a 6 week Introduction to Orienteering course to run in March with half the sessions being classroom based and the other half being in the park once the clock go forward.

Continue to promote Winter League event and the MapNav events.

Trail Challenge Series, running a series of 6 Trail events over the Winter. These events have a basic navigation element at an Orange standard, and are aimed at introducing runners to Orienteering. By using well know locations which are used for Cross Country and marshalled trail events, the aim is for them to feel less intimidating than a proper event, and can be run solo or as a pair and there is a choice between a 5km or a 10km course.

To keep being a point of contact for the club for enquires, attend and promote events and encourage existing and new members to attend events and activities.

Building relationships with our new juniors be sending out regular training activities, and working with the Welsh Junior Squad Coaches to develop them into Orienteers for the future.

Put together the Spring Coaching series, working with the Club Coach and the committee to decide on what format we feel will work well. These coaching sessions will be planned to lead into the Park-O events, so that there is progression for newcomers which in the past has been missing.

Continue working with WOA on the Junior Awards scheme.

Continue to work on the progression of the membership, by building up the social side of the club and links for car sharing to events and activities.

## **7.0 Beyond the next 6 months**

Look at events and activities held over the Winter and the Spring training programme and assess what worked, what did not and adapt for the 2023/24 season.

Working on the structure and format of our events to ensure that we have continuous opportunities for people to progress within the sport.

Work with the club to develop a coaching structure for senior newcomers, and continue to work with WOA and the WJOS coaches to create a coaching structure for the juniors.

Build on our network of partners and take advantage of opportunities that were missed this year due to the volume of work. Working with ParkLives in Swansea, Active Communities Team in Carmarthenshire and Active Youth in Neath Port Talbot to put on activities during the holiday with the goal that they will eventually start putting on Orienteering as part of the holiday activities.

Continue to support the schools project.

Work with the club to create a junior section on the club website, and look at ways to encourage more people to attend training sessions and organise club runs. Look at setting up a Spond account for members where they can check in to activities and organisers can quickly update details of activities without having to rely on emails, club website and social media.

Work with the club to look at our membership demographic and find ways to target those who we are currently missing.

Keep working on the profile of the club and look for funding to create a portable information stand that we can display at events to quickly inform people about who we are and what we are doing.

## **8.0 Meeting the objectives**

**1. In first year recruit 30 new members including around 15 junior members. [Recruit]**

I would say that we had been ambitious in how many members we would recruit, but so far, we have recruited – 7 Adults and 9 juniors, with attendance of newcomers to our events standing at 37 adults and 43 juniors, a considerable increase on the previous year.

**2. Retain 80% renewal of all new members into 2023 [Retain]**

We will not know this figure until next year, but for 2022 we retained 95% of our membership, with many members re-joining part way through the year.

**3. All new and existing adult members reach TD4 or higher at end of 12 months and all juniors reach TD appropriate to their age. [Enhance]**

Again, it is difficult to assess this objective as new members have not been with the club long enough to have the benefit of the winter and spring coaching and training sessions.

4. In year 2 and 3 establish a coaching and development framework that will be sustainable post this project.  
**[Enhance]**

This is ongoing.

## **9.0 CDO Role**

I would say that I have been working beyond the 1 ½ days for which I am paid. Most weeks it is more like 2 days, but when I am running an event, I would say it is 3, so almost double. This is in no small part due to the number of opportunities that have sprung up since I started the role, and I have been loath to turn anyone away as these opportunities may not repeat themselves. I don't wish for this work to be taken on by the club's volunteers who are stretched as they are keeping the club running and putting on events.

There have been added costs to the club from my role, mostly through the purchase of equipment to run sessions, printing, extra advertising, venue hire and junior welcome packs. The grant I successfully applied for offset the costs for the Sunday Park-O and has benefitted the club with extra resources which will be used for the future development of the club.

Kerina Lake

SBOC Club Development Officer