

Fixtures Secretary Report

Since the last AGM we've had another successful year of events, covering our four main winter, spring, summer and autumn series (see attendance figures below).

Summer 2010	82
Summer 2011	65
Summer 2012	64
Summer 2013	61
Summer 2014	59
Summer 2015	61
Summer 2016	59
Spring Fell Races 2010	38
Spring Fell Races 2011	33
Spring Fell Races 2012	35
Spring Fell Races 2013	27
Spring Fell Races 2014	22
Spring Sprint Series 2015	55
Spring Sprint Series 2016	44
Autumn Park Races 2010	68
Autumn Park Races 2011	62
Autumn Park Races 2012	54
Autumn Park Races 2013	55
Autumn Park Races 2014	55
Autumn Park Races 2015	63
Autumn Park Races 2016	~60
Winter 2009-2010	39
Winter 2010-2011	29
Winter 2011-2012	35
Winter 2012-2013	32
Winter 2013-2014	35
Winter 2014-2015	37
Winter 2015-2016	35

Numbers have been generally good this year being broadly similar to last. The summer and autumn series were slightly down, but holding their own at an average weekly attendance of ~60, which has been the case since 2011. The 2015-16 night series was also about the same as the previous ~5 years (35). The most significant difference was again for the new Spring Series, with average attendance down this year to 44 from the peak of 55 following the change in

format in 2015. It is not clear why there has been this drop, although attendance is generally still higher than the old Fell Race Series – perhaps the format needs further tweaking.

Total attendance over the last year over the four main club series was ~2300 (compared to ~2400 last year), which is mainly due to the reduced numbers attending the Spring Series.

In the Galoppen series, WCOG retained the Borrowdale Trophy in 2015, and are looking good to retain the trophy in 2016 with 2 events remaining (although it was quite close in the mid-year standings). Numbers have been down since the last AGM with 178 at Muncaster Fell (including Cumbria Schools), 139 at Leaps Beck, 179 at Greta Gorge and 149 at Whinlatter (an average of ~161 compared to ~190 over the previous 5 events). There is, therefore, scope to look at what we offer for our Level C events – any comments and suggestions welcome.

We again put on several Sunday Winter events with the aim to attract experienced orienteers as well as novices, juniors and improvers. The three events, at Harris Park, Woodhall Park (jointly with a coaching session) and Mawbray, had an average attendance of 34 (compared to 44 over 4 events last year). Four similar events are planned for Winter 2016-17; the venues will be Keltonfell (preceded by a coaching session), Camerton (tbc), Slate Fell and Whinlatter Visitors Centre in October 16th, December 11th, January 15th and February 12th respectively.

A successful Club Chase, held at Rannerdale back in January, was won by Anne Burbidge. The 2017 Club Chase is scheduled as a 50th Anniversary special event at Hawse End on Saturday January 7th, with Anne picking up the mantle of planner – details will appear on the website soon.

For the spring we again held a mixture of events; a mass start score in Setmurthy, a street event in Cockermouth, 2 small woodland sprint events at Marron Leys and Powter How, then 3 “high and low” events (Bleach Green, Leaps and Fangs) before the summer prologue at Sale Fell. The “high and low” form that attempted to give competitors the choice between a low-level park/sprint event and a longer run up onto the fells. In 2016, it is planned to do a similar mixture of events, so again keep an eye on the website (and the request for planners!).

We’ll be organising five Galoppens in 2016, including a weekend in Eskdale on 13-14 May as a further special event to celebrate the club’s 50th anniversary with a Middle distance event on Saturday and a classic on the Sunday. The other three Galoppens are Threlkeld Knotts, Bleaberry Fell, and Cockup, the latter possibly on an extended map).

Finally, I’d just like to thank all the people in the club who have helped at our events in the past 12 months. In particular, I’d like to thank all the planners, organisers, mappers and Access Officers. Roger for printing the maps and looking after all the equipment (including managing the SI boxes and sorting out the results), Kate for looking after the leagues, and the website team for ensuring event details and results are posted in a timely fashion. It’s fantastic that the club is able hold an event every Thursday throughout the year as well as several larger events.

Access Officers’ Report

Before I start, I’d just like to say that I’m giving this report on behalf of all the club’s Access Officers, who’ve worked tirelessly to ensure that we’ve continued to have a largely trouble free year getting permissions for our events. The main issue has been the new National Trust

on-line permission system, which needs to be completed a minimum of 6 weeks in advance for all competitive events with >25 participants. The new system was described in a Newsletter earlier in the year, with the article summarised below for information.

We started using the new system in March for the Spring series following face-to-face discussions with the NT, which confirmed that the majority of our Thursday evening events wouldn't be exempt from the formal on-line application process nor the £50 admin fee. However, a concession was agreed that if a number of events were submitted at the same time, a "two for one" charge would apply, i.e. £50 would cover 2 events.

Since March, 11 applications for events (10 Thursday evening and one Galoppen) have been made on the new NT system, with 8 x £50 cheques written (of which 7 have been cashed). The on-line form requires a lot of information, e.g. environmental policy, insurance, normal and emergency operating procedures, maps of the site as well as the courses, risk assessment, competency of officials, risk assessment, etc. that took a long time to complete the first few times. However, the process is now a lot slicker, with most of the information being generic for Thursdays or Galoppens, and once a permit has been received, the previous application can be used as a template, again saving a lot of time.

The response from the NT has, in general, been inconsistent, e.g. sometimes a formal permit is sent, sometimes not. Note that the on-line applications get directed to the appropriate Lead Ranger for the relevant NT Lakes region (North, West, or Central and East for WCOC's events), and again the response has differed depending on who is dealing with the request. For example, useful feedback was provided for the Wasdale event about some new fencing that had been put up and needed to be added to the map. On a positive note, none of the submitted requests have been declined and all of the events on NT land have taken place, albeit sometimes without any response from the relevant Lead Ranger, or an actual permit!

The new on-line process is actually a pilot scheme being trialled in the Lakes and some other areas, with a view to it ultimately going nationwide following review and stakeholder discussions (due to take place in September 2016). The outcome of these discussions is not currently known, so watch this space, but it is likely that only minor tweaks rather than wholesale changes will result (I've not been asked for feedback, nor to my knowledge has the NWOA). So, until we hear otherwise we will continue using the process under the existing agreement and hope for a more consistent response from the NT (as they themselves get used to the new system).

Finally, the club is still looking for a dedicated NT Liaison Officer to manage the new event application system to ease the burden on myself.

NT Access

In common with the FC, the LDNPA and the NT are also now charging for events. In the case of the NT, this is to "cover the time and systems that are needed to look at the application, deal with any relevant tenants, get permission for protected sites (SSSIs and SACs) and generally help with the application".

The new charge being levied by the NT is part of their new centralised online permission system for all events being held in the Lake District on NT land. This new system is a direct

response by the NT to the increased number of sporting events taking place in the Lakes, coupled with the additional environmental responsibility in line with Natural England requirements. It is specifically aimed at the larger commercial organisations who base their outdoor events within the Lakes rather than small local sports clubs with many years of good relations with the local NT Rangers and their tenants. However, we all have to follow the new system, which is a 'simple' three stage process, i.e.

- 1) **Contact the relevant NT Ranger at the start of planning your event** (via the new website)
- 2) **Apply online for your event permit to use NT land (admin fee = £50)**
- 3) **Donate to NT Lakes (3% of takings is suggested as a minimum).**

The initial contact with the local NT ranger is intended to determine whether permission is required, including any application to Natural England (which can take up to 4 months). The criteria for whether permission is required are:

- a) A static base on NT land, e.g. registration / download
- b) More than 25 participants
- c) Competitive (over a set route or timed)
- d) Organised by a professional organisation

Hence, the vast majority of WCOC Thursday evening events will need to go to step 2, as well as all the Galoppens, Level Bs, etc, but coaching activities wouldn't need a formal application, just notification of the relevant local NT Ranger.

The online event application system itself asks for a lot of information, but much of this either won't be applicable or will be generic, i.e. the same for every event. The main information required is:

- Brief description of route and a description of the area being used with a jpeg map file
- Insurance certificate (from BOF)
- Risk assessment (WCOC's generic RA)
- Environmental policy (from BOF)
- Qualifications/experience of the person running the event
- Entry fee and maximum number of competitors
- Details of any SSSIs that the event passes through or near
- Normal and emergency operating procedures

Once everything required has been submitted, the NT "aim to issue a permit within 6 weeks". However, 4 months might be required if Natural England get involved. The NT advocate you apply at least 6 months before you want to start advertising your event, and start planning the event 12 months in advance – rather more in advance than we do currently!!

So, what are the implications of the new NT event permission system? Obviously, there's the increased cost – almost half of our informal club events use NT land in some capacity. This will in all likelihood necessitate an increase in our entry fees, although the exact amount is still to be determined. In addition, many more events will need to be organised and planned earlier (minimum of 6 weeks, possibly up to 6 months). And finally, there is the increased bureaucracy and time burden for the new application process.

To this end, the Club is looking for a dedicated NT Liaison Officer to act as single point of contact and to manage the new event application system, similar to the way we interact with the FC. I'll be happy to talk over any aspect of the role with anyone who's interested.

The club will continue to use its existing local contacts with NT tenants and commoners to ensure all the relevant stakeholders are informed, and also to ensure we get the most up to date information about the land we want to use.

Further information on the new NT event permission process can be found via the following link:

<http://www.ntlakesoutdoors.org.uk/event-permission>