

West Cumberland Orienteering Club Club of the Year (2008) submission

Give examples of the opportunities your club has created for its volunteers, coaches, participants (e.g. players/athletes) and non-participants (e.g. spectators, parents).

Last year, WCOC organised 13 schools' league events (including a final), that included 20 primary and 8 secondary schools providing competition for around 450 pupils. This was a successful feeder into our junior structure which featured 6 junior training sessions last year. As well as providing valuable experience for our four new level 2 coaches, we were able to field two junior teams in the Peter Palmer relays and finish second in the Yvette Baker trophy final taking over 30 juniors. This also led to strong representation at JK, BOC and the CompassSport Cup

WCOC hold events every Thursday throughout the year, catering for all standards from beginner to experienced competitor. The structure allows new planners and organisers to gain experience before getting involved in the five district events we organise each year, the one regional and occasional national event. We stage fun events, e.g. Christmas and Haloween (with proceeds to charity). All events use electronic timing and overprinted bagged maps, with a strong support service to lighten the burden on volunteer planners.

Last year WCOC introduced indoor activity nights (Orient8) comprising physical and mental fun activities organised and run by qualified coaches. It provides opportunity for established orienteers to sharpen their skills while non-orienteering family members take part in the exercises and quizzes.

The club actively strengthens the volunteer skill sets with courses for coaches, controllers and mappers. This year we have organised the entire membership into three groups, rotating the organisation duties and encouraging all to be involved.

Explain how your club engages with the local community and beyond.

In 2008 WCOC re-vamped its popular website. Re-designed and built by a junior member, it is regularly updated to include news, photos, results and details of forthcoming events. This is in addition to the 'Orienteering in the Lake District' website which is maintained by one of our members, and advertises all North West events.

WCOCs events are always reported on in the local newspapers, with detailed accounts and result lists being provided by our press officer. Colour pictures often accompany the articles.

High quality glossy flyers describing the sport and advertising events are prepared and distributed at our events, aimed at promoting the sport among beginners and families.

WCOC has strong links in all primary and secondary schools in the area through the Spring Term Orienteering Leagues. Pupils and staff are encouraged to get involved in the sport and our flyers adorn the notice boards in all of the schools.

Members also post information about the sport and fixtures at their places of work. For example, weekly updates are advertised on the local intranet on the Sellafield site, reaching up to 9,000 people.

Our permanent course packs contain flyers explaining more about the sport and a welcome letter including club contact names.

The club has advertised its winter evening activity series (Orient8) in the local press, inviting non-members to come along and find out more about the sport.

The club maintain strong links with a large number of land owners and commoner groups by nominating named members as liaison officers.

How does your club benefit the local community?

WCOC have strong links with schools through the local Primary and Secondary schools' involvement in our Spring Term Orienteering Leagues. These leagues involve more than twenty Primary and eight Secondary schools, with a total of about four hundred and fifty school children taking part each year. Because three of our coaches are qualified teachers, they have been able to provide after school courses for teachers, helping them to prepare for the league events and to help them create exercises for their school children using their mapped school grounds. The club has been instrumental in getting ALL school grounds in West Cumbria mapped.

The club maintain strong links with a large number of land owners and commoner groups by nominating named members as liaison officers.

From time to time the local Scout groups and Boys Brigade are provided with orienteering expertise to prepare events and competitions specifically for their memberships

The club are willing to help local businesses with organised team building activities, e.g. provision of overprinted maps and advice to George Fisher Ltd. which enabled them to run a successful staff training day.

WCOC have provided maps (and in some cases permanent courses) for various organisations in the community such as the Forestry Commission at Whinlatter forest, Keswick and Muncaster Castle at Ravenglass.

The club is pleased to support local charities on a regular basis such as Cumbrian mountain rescue teams, Hospice at Home, Calvert Trust, Fix the Fells (National Trust) and North West Ambulance.

What has been the impact of your club's work in the local area in the past 12 months?

The club's membership continues to grow steadily. As the club strives to provide activities for all ages and abilities, more families and new starters attend, especially the park races and informal Thursday night events.

Constant dialogue with landowners has resulted in many farmers and agents becoming 'friends' of the club, often stopping by to chat to organisers as events take place. This enhances relationships and provides greater cooperation when applying for permission to stage events.

There are increasing numbers of requests from organisations seeking to include orienteering in their programmes of activities, e.g. Whitehaven Harbour Youth Project, George Fisher Ltd., Boys Brigade, DoE participants, District Sports Development Managers, etc. The club is always happy to oblige, providing guidance, advice and maps wherever possible.

The committee regularly receive praise from schools involved in the schools leagues, with an increasing number of schools wishing to take part.

How has your club reduced the barriers to participating in your sport or recreation?

Between WCOC's summer and winter evening leagues, the club organise easy park races based within easy reach of town centre car parks. The events are widely advertised through the local press and club website and attract up to 100 competitors to each event.

To help those who wish to move from novice to more technical courses, a group of volunteers are on hand at the clubs summer league series (20 events) to shadow beginners and offer help and advice after their run.

Volunteer helpers are also on hand at our regional and district events to offer advice to those new to the sport who may not be familiar with registration, start procedure, etc.

As well as coaching sessions for juniors, the club now have enough L2 coaches to offer adult sessions, aimed at those progressing to Light Green standard. To date the take-up on these sessions has been encouraging with around 12 adults attending.

The club advertise all events widely through advertisements and write-ups in the local newspapers, the club website and the answerphone which is updated weekly with event details.

The club's winter evening activity series (Orient8) which is advertised in the local press, invites non-members to come along and take part in fun activities to introduce them to the sport.

Each spring WCOC organise a series of six fell race/ orienteering hybrid events that are widely advertised around local fell running and athletic clubs to entice other athletes to try the sport.

How does your club ensure the development of all of its members, including volunteers, coaches, participants and officials?

As well as physical activities, WCOC's winter evening activity series (Orient8) also includes activities for members which are designed to improve map reading, navigation technique, route choice and understanding of legend and IOF symbols, etc. The event also hosts speakers who give lectures on topics such as fitness training and nutrition.

The club are actively expanding on their coaching capability with four recently licensed L2 coaches and a waiting list ready to progress in the coming year. As well as the coaching course and experience required to gain the qualification, the club supports coaches with first aid training and 'Coaching Young People' courses.

WCOC have a number of active, talented mappers, one of whom recently ran a course of six evening OCAD courses which was well attended by club members.

To add to the club's strong team of planners and controllers, we are currently organising grade 2 controller training for those wishing to step up to regional/badge planning having planned at district level.

Involvement in the planning and organising of our 20 summer and 16 winter evening events allows novice planners to gain experience before stepping up to C4s. The events are an ideal introduction for new planners supported by experienced planners and organisers. Our experienced planners also offer to mentor novices while planning and organising their own regional events.

This year we have organised the entire membership into three groups to rotate the organisation duties and encourage all to be involved.

What have been your club's key achievements in the last 12 months?

Our junior programme continues to reap dividends with three young members being selected in the last year to run at the World Schools Championships in Edinburgh. One of those, Charlotte Watson has also been included in the GB Start Squad. This is in addition to her selection for the Junior Home Internationals in September, along with her sister, Rosie.

We now have eight juniors in the North West Junior Squad, most of them involved in the regional squads JIRCS victory in 2008.

In 2008 our squad of 30 juniors improved on 2007's effort by finishing second in the Yvette Baker final. Last year was also the first time the club have been able to field two full teams in the Peter Palmer relays event.

Two of our adults also gained national honours last year with Mhairi MacKenzie representing GB in the World University Orienteering Championships and Scotland in the senior Home Internationals, and Susan Skinner helping England to victory at Interland.

WCOC continue to go from strength to strength competitively, again qualifying for the 2008 CompassSport Cup final.

Last year also saw the launch of WCOC's winter evening activity series (Orient8). This complements the seventy five orienteering events the club organised in 2008.

How will winning this award help you deliver your club's key objectives in the next 12 months?

Winning this award will provide recognition to the many club members who work tirelessly to organise the many events staged by WCOC. It will enthuse the volunteers to keep working, reinforcing our belief that we are doing the right things. It will demonstrate to our various partners that our efforts and their input are worthwhile.

Such an accolade will spur the club on to set even higher standards and achieve new goals. It will provide feedback to our volunteer teams, planners, organisers and committee members that their efforts are being recognised and motivate them to keep going. New members be given confidence, seeing that the club has a strong management team who do the right things which will then encourage them to get involved and offer their services.

Being Club of the Year will bring a sense of pride to all of WCOCs members, especially the growing squad of juniors who are already demonstrating a hunger to be the best in all aspects of the sport.

Any prize money will be used to expand our growing team of dedicated coaches, planners and controllers increasing the club's capability to provide high quality orienteering events and coaching sessions for juniors and adults.

What makes your club stand out from others?

WCOC thrives because of its dedicated membership, all of who play their part in providing a full calendar of events for all to enjoy. The camaraderie and friendly atmosphere is evident at any of our events, either around the registration prior to the start or at the inquest in the pub afterwards.

The club is led by a devoted management team who's professional approach reaps dividends for all competitors at our seventy plus events each year through slick organisation, quality courses (always on pre-marked, bagged maps) and use of the latest electronic equipment, even for the smallest event. The committee takes every opportunity to promote the sport whether through advertising, supporting local organisations with advice and help or by inviting other sports clubs to take part in the sport.

In a relatively sparsely populated area, the club competes for membership with other sports organisations such as football and rugby clubs, keeping adults and juniors enthused throughout the year with the provision of at least one event every week. WCOC's press coverage shares the back pages of the local press with the most prestigious of local sports clubs.

Skills are taught to juniors and new members by a growing band of eager coaches, ensuring that all experience a feeling of increased competence and developing confidence.

The club is well known for its provision of opportunities for all family members to enjoy active sport with novice courses provided at almost all of our events.