

**Moravian Orienteers
Club Development Officer
Report to the Orienteering Foundation
April 2023 - September 2024**

1. Introduction

In December 2022 Moravian Orienteers applied for funding to the Orienteering Foundation and Scottish Orienteering to employ a Club Development Officer. This application was set against a background of declining membership, but recognised the potential to raise awareness and develop our club profile in Moray with the imminent Scottish Six Days Orienteering Festival in August 2023. The initial funding proposal was for a 12-month project supported by a £12.3k financial package. The final agreed support was £9.4k, as itemised below. As can be seen, the club itself provided half of the funding, drawn from club reserves.

Revised project funding, March 2023

Orienteering Foundation.....	£3,150
Moravian Orienteering Club.....	£4,800
Scottish Orienteering Association.....	£1,500
 Total.....	 £9,450

Due to the reduction in total funding awarded, and a later project start date (April 2023) than originally planned, the specific objectives were re-aligned, and the timescales adjusted such that the CDO contract provided a realistic and achievable set of goals. Following interview in March 2023 we were pleased to appoint Will Hall to the CDO position. During the initial contract period Will developed his orienteering knowledge, supported by the club and training activities delivered by the Scottish Orienteering Association (SOA). Since then, Will has successfully developed and delivered a variety of orienteering activities across Moray, as well as supporting the club in enhancing our marketing and social media engagement in the local area. Due to other work and personal commitments, the project timescales have been extended, such that the CDO activities are now planned to continue until late Autumn/early Winter 2024.

This report summarises activities and outcomes over the period April 23 - July 24. Whilst the report focuses on the activities of the CDO, key members of the club, particularly the coaching team led by Morag McLuckie, have been engaged in

regular parallel coaching activities, usually linked to our local orienteering events. We are very encouraged by the consequent increased attendance at local events, and the upturn in club membership. We hope to extend Will's CDO contract for a further 12 month period, subject to securing further funding.

Finally, the club were very pleased that the SOA have acknowledged our development efforts with the recent award of Club Mark Silver accreditation status.

2. Club Development Officer role description and outcomes

2.1 Role Description (March 2023)

The Club Development Officer will:

- Be a first contact for new participants to orienteering, presenting a knowledgeable, welcoming and friendly persona.
- Focus on increasing membership from MOR's five key 'hubs' of Forres, Elgin, Lossiemouth, Fochabers and Buckie. The development and training sessions will be distributed across these core communities, supported by local events.
- Encourage participation in orienteering in these hubs through developing relationships with schools, community groups, and through effective communication, advertising and promotion.
- Coordinate communication and publicity of future MOR Club events and activities in order to generate awareness and interest of orienteering in the local community, particularly the key hubs identified above.

Our main project outcomes were to:

A. Develop skills through focused orienteering activities and training sessions for schoolchildren, families and new members.

Will Hall is leading developments with Active Schools Moray and local youth groups to raise the profile of orienteering. To date, Will has engaged with 10 primary schools, and around 450 primary students; two Scouts groups as well as other local sports clubs (see Table 1). He has organised and contributed to four successful come and try it (CATI) events catering to more than 300 local people and families. In the future we are looking to establish semi-permanent orienteering courses at primary schools in the east of Moray (e.g. Llanbryde, Fochabers).

Table 1. Schools and Youth Group activities May 23- July 24

School/organisation	Number of students	Age
Elgin Scouts (two sessions)	30	12-15
St Geraldine's Primary	30	P6-7
St Sylvester's Primary	50	P4-7
Burghead Primary	30	P5-6
Keith Community Day	15	P3-7
Knockando Primary	30	P5-7
Mosstowie Primary	30	P6-7
Mosstodloch Primary	60	P4-7
Llanbryde Primary	50	P4-7
Aberlour Primary	50	P4-7
Roths Primary	70	P3-7
Milne's High School	10	S1-2
Elgin Ladies Rugby Club	20	15-30
Greenward Primary	50	P5-7

Examples of the successful CATI events include one in Cooper Park, Elgin and two at Brodie Castle, and one in Grant Park, Forres. In total we reached over 300 people at these events. Importantly, families have joined in the fun of introductory orienteering courses, learning about maps and the ever-popular Maze. Lorna Leil, the Visitor Services Supervisor at Brodie Castle has been very complimentary about the work that Will and other club members have been doing - the news article in the local press can be viewed at: www.heraldscotland.com/news/24484326.new-photo-trail-launched-iconic-scottish-castle.

The Maze in action at Grant Park - enthusiastic members of the Forres Pipe Band trying their hand at quick-thinking navigation



B. Co-ordinate communication and publicity of Club events and activities in order to maintain awareness and interest of orienteering in the local community.

We have used both paid advertising and contacts with local organisations on social media to raise the profile of events. Analysis of data provided by social media platforms indicates that the reach of Facebook and Instagram posts typically exceeds 1000 for local event posters. On many occasions posts have lead to enquiries and then attendance at events.

Example of a local event poster shared widely on Facebook and Instagram



3. Outcomes for the club

Employment of a CDO supported by the OF, SOA and MOR club funds has been overwhelmingly positive. As a result of the activities described above, we can report the following key indicators of success:

Attendance at local events - attendance at local events has increased over the last 18 months from typically 50-60 per event to 70-90 per event.

Membership increase 2024 - club membership has increased during the year, so that we now have 143 members, up 26 on 2023. In summary, BOF +7, SOA +19, with Seniors +11 and Juniors +15. We feel sure that part-year membership (introduced by both BOF and SOA in 2024) will have helped contribute to this increase in membership throughout the year.

Increased awareness of Orienteering in the local area – With the later start date of the project we were unable to fully capitalize on the publicity developed through Moray 2023. However, we have been able to set up two permanent orienteering courses at Brodie Castle, which is run by the National Trust for Scotland. This initiative was lead by our CDO, working with club members and the staff at Brodie Castle This summer more than 200 maps have been handed out to visitors who have enjoyed exploring the castle estate. Maps are available from the Brodie Castle Welcome Centre, as well as online at [Go Orienteering](#) and the [Club web pages](#). Maps contain information about the club, and where to find details of future events.

Brodie Castle CATI day - this is an orienteering map!



4. Future plans and sources of funding

Our Club Development Officer, in conjunction with members of the club, have discussed future plans for 2025. Subject to funding, we plan to extend orienteering opportunities for those new to the sport, and will focus on the following themes:

1. Establishment of orienteering activity “hubs” at Brodie Castle, Gordon Castle, Logie Steading and Cooper Park, Elgin. These will be the focus for CATI events, which have been found to be very successful during the past 18 months, based not only on attendance but also the numbers of those new to orienteering subsequently attending local events. It is also hoped to organize some ‘Run try it events’ at Buckie, Cullen and Aberlour, targeting local running groups, using existing links previously developed by our CDO.
2. Further development of our schools activities throughout our catchment area. This autumn we have been running a block of four weekly sessions for Forres Schools giving an introduction to orienteering. These have been well received, and lead to engagement of new families in some of our local events. This autumn a block of four weekly sessions were run for the Forres active schools group. We had 14-16 children from P4-S1 each week introducing them to orienteering culminating with some courses out in the local woods.
3. To develop at least two new Permanent Orienteering courses in Moray and further use of Maprun to extend the range of opportunities for those new to orienteering on a ‘try it for yourself’ basis. Additional developments will include the adoption of Qr codes on Start/Finish posts so that visitors can find out more about orienteering in the local area via our club website (www.mor.scot).

4. Explore the opportunities to further develop Mountain Bike Orienteering in Moray for all ages. This summer Steve Smirthwaite, supported by other club members, ran a successful programme of local MTBO events, which engaged a small but committed number of existing and new members. A Highland MTBO weekend is planned for September 2025, leading to the World Masters' Orienteering Festival in September 2026, which is being hosted in Moray.

In conclusion, Moravian Orienteers are committed to extending the contract of our CDO for a further 12 months (Phase 2), in order to embed the successful activities carried out over the past 18 months (Phase 1) and build a more sustainable future for the club. We are extremely grateful to the Orienteering Foundation and the Scottish Orienteering Association for part funding Phase 1 of this project. We will need to source approximately £4,500 to fund the work of our CDO for a further 12 months. The club has committed to providing up to 50% of this funding package; we are currently investigating options for support from local charitable organisations, but would like to discuss options for follow-on funding with the Orienteering Foundation.

Rob Parkinson
Karen Fraser

Moravian Orienteers
October 2024

Appendix 1 Interim feedback to Orienteering Foundation, December 2023 (As featured on [OF webpages](#))

WHAT WERE/ARE OUR TARGETS?

We have identified that in orienteering there is a fall off in members between 16-30. This is caused by a number of factors; when young members join they are reliant on their parents driving them to events, and tend to have pressure from parents to attend. We have found that these members tend to fall off as they get older, attend university and move away. However, there is a resurgence in numbers when people return to the sport in their 30s/40s.

We therefore identified that getting as many young members involved would have the largest impact for uptake. We worked with local scout groups with limited success - by their teens, youngsters are less inclined to take up a new sport, especially if it's not supported and encouraged by parents. And so we found that the greatest successes have come from working with primary schools and community groups. The 9-11 age group was the most common one because the children can understand the concepts, able to put into practice a lot of what is required but will also require parental buy-in in order to progress. Family days were among the more successful events we ran - introducing the sport to families meant that both the adults and children were interested and likely to return to larger competitive events.

PUBLICITY: WHAT'S WORKED

One of the major issues we'd faced is getting traction online. How to gain interest from local communities and groups. Facebook remains the best method of communication for family-aged members. Instagram works for updates and short form content but doesn't drive much traffic to the website because it's challenging to get links to work properly and obviously. With this in mind, we added the club to as many community Facebook groups as possible (most towns will have a community Facebook group) which allowed us to advertise upcoming events and to just be *present* in the public eye. We've had good results from this but it needs to be maintained in order to gain traction. In the lead up to a local event, posters and information would be shared on these local pages and we saw good uptake as a result.

To make the posters and information of a higher quality, we'd been using Canva (the free version). It's very intuitive and produces really good quality media which can be printed or shared online.

WHAT HAVE BEEN OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES?

The main issue we faced is that, regardless of the number of primary children we reached, if the parents either didn't know about or didn't buy in to the sport, then the children weren't going to be coming to the events. As orienteering events are often in more remote locations, transport is always required and so what we found was that in-school sessions resulted in very few new members joining the club.

This was for a number of reasons but primarily it was because children might have really enjoyed themselves but wouldn't pass on information to their parents when they went home so interest would fizzle out. We have plans in 2024 to run *after school* events for parents and children to get the family involved and interested.

PROGRAMME MATERIALS CREATED

It's crucial to have good maps of schools, public parks and local green spaces to help run local events. We had success creating our own maps from [Open Orienteering Mapper Tool](#) which was fine for beginners but not great for anything larger. We also have had good success with MapRun: creating courses and maps for novices and veterans to run around local parks. It's free and accessible for anyone which makes it a great tool for coaches and clubs. It is reliant on high quality maps though which is something to bare in mind.

HOW ARE WE TELLING OUR SUCCESS STORIES

Aside from Facebook and Instagram, having a good email community to keep the club members updated for upcoming events and training is essential. We are lucky that our newsletter is managed by a member of the club and always comes out on a Tuesday. Drip feeding information at the same time every week through something like MailChimp really helps drive engagement with the club and would be a great thing to set up.

Will Hall

December 2023