

Expression of interest in an Orienteering Foundation project

For more information see <https://www.orienteeringfoundation.org.uk/seeking-project-partners>

Please send completed form to projects@orienteeringfoundation.org.uk

Note: there is no commitment on either side at this stage. This is merely to start a discussion to see if a mutually agreeable project can be developed.

Name of club: **Cleveland Orienteering Klub (CLOK)**
Project of interest: **Project 1: Engagement of a paid Club Development Officer**
Point of contact in club: **Caroline Mackenzie**
Email address: **caroline.mackenzie7@gmail.com**
Phone number: **07973-870529**

Initial comments on how you see the project being run in your club:

Overview

The aim would be to increase CLOK's attractiveness to young adults in their twenties and thirties and to increase our membership.

A 'stretch' target might be to double club membership over the next three years, but we would need to do some more work to assess whether this is realistic.

We would aim to attract both individuals / couples without children and people with young families.

The plan would be to put on events and activities that would be of interest to our target audience, including in particular young adults interested in adventure sports. Selling points would include the social opportunities involved in orienteering and the opportunity to improve navigation techniques for adventure races.

We would draw on the ideas from the development conferences that have recently been held in both England and Scotland and aim to incorporate learning and best practices from other clubs. For example, we are aware that some other clubs have successfully used social media as a marketing tool.

One particular challenge is that our catchment area is large and does not have a single population centre or university that we could use as a focus for the project's activities.

Another consideration – which is probably both an opportunity and a threat – is the fact that the interest in other running sports and activities – such as trail running, fell running, adventure races, mud runs, triathlons and marathons – has been increasing while participation in orienteering has been declining. If we can find a way of converting young adults' interest in those other running activities into interest in orienteering then it might be scalable nationally for other orienteering clubs.

Timing

We believe that it is worth starting the project now, partly to take advantage of the fact that other running sports are not able to put on their normal events.

Background

The total number of CLOK members has been stable the last 3 to 5 years, after we successfully used 'word of mouth' recruitment to reverse a decline. However, although the numbers are stable, our members are predominantly male and we have an ageing age profile. We need to take action now to prevent a slow decline in the viability of our club and to ensure that CLOK still exists as an active and dynamic orienteering club in five to ten years' time.

Over the last couple of decades we have run a significant and very successful schools development programme in our region. However, although the schools orienteering events did an excellent job of

increasing the participation numbers (which was a Sport England target), the schools development programme never translated into an increase in club membership or adult participation in orienteering. Our analysis suggests that to have a worthwhile 'pull through' effect orienteering development activities really need to involve the whole family and to be run out of school time. Other orienteering clubs have come to the same conclusion and have changed their development programmes accordingly.

Also, our long-standing Development Officer has now stepped back from the programme, which is now being run on a reactive basis (although it does still provide a regular income for the club).

On the positive side, the schools development project has given us a good network of contacts in the region's schools and positive relationships with several local councils.

CLOK also has the advantage of a strong pool of experienced coaches and volunteers.

Overall, we believe that CLOK has a good basis for running a development project, although we recognise that if the project is going to be successful in driving an increase in membership and adult participation in orienteering then it will need to be structured differently from what we have done in the past.

Other factors

We have considered whether a development project should run on a regional (NEOA) basis, but given the challenges of running such a project over a wide geographical area we have decided that, at least for the pilot project, it would be better for it to be a CLOK project rather than an NEOA one.

As was mentioned above, CLOK itself covers a large area, with more than an hour's driving time between the southern and northern parts of the area. The pilot project would need to tackle the challenge of enabling people from different parts of the area to access events and activities.