

Planning an urban orienteering event

Overall Permissions etc.

- The first step in organising an urban orienteering event is consultation with, and agreement from, the relevant local authority. Probably the Sports Development Officer (or equivalent) will be the best person to start with. He/she will need to consult with other local authority departments and possibly the 'blue light' services so start early – a year before the event date. You will need to provide an event submission/proposal so all parties can see/understand who we are and what's involved. A copy of one used for Tunbridge Wells is attached as an appendix to this document.
- Attempts should be made, early on, to get the event included in the South-east Urban Orienteering League (SEUOL) and Nopesport (or equivalent) national league competitions.

Advertising

- We found that advertising by small A6 cards and distributing to local sports shops, clubs etc did not prove effective. We had only two newcomers to the Tunbridge Wells event.
- Possibly a more effective method may have been notices on lampposts, roadsides etc similar to those advertising local fairs and concerts.

The Event Arena

- Greatly enhanced event to have the arena in a public park where toilets and food outlet were available. This also made the sport more visible to the public and reduced costs on hiring toilets.
- Need a really visible place to erect the large banner 'come and try orienteering today'.
- Would have been good to have the banner up a few days before and add the date rather than the word today.

Control flags and units

- Make sure you have permission for all sites being used. Most of these may well be the local authority but check any private estates, shopping centres, etc.
- If in doubt don't use the site or you may be in danger of having the control box removed during the race.
- Make sure all flags have the Saxons permission notice on them. (Small printed slip of paper saying Saxons have obtained permission to place this flag and unit here from etc.etc.)

Safety for Competitors in Race and at Road Crossings

- Any major road being crossed should have either a timed out leg with controls either side of the road or a marshal. Assuming the competitor will cross the road at a pedestrian light – even if the course is planned so that is the best route – cannot be guaranteed. Competitors do silly things to save time; such as jumping barriers and trying to manually stop traffic!

- Bibs are useful so public know competitor is in a race. Can use numbered bibs where number is not specific to runner or event – so can recycle bibs – we have a lot in stock.
- Need to get runner to put their name on front of bib and telephone number of organiser or member of registration team who is not competing. This number should also be on the map. This is in case runner has an accident and is unable to say who they are – unlikely runners carry identification.

Appendix A

Example submission to a council for an urban orienteering event

Saxons Orienteering Club – proposed Tunbridge Wells Urban Orienteering event

8.6.14

Introduction

Saxons Orienteering Club (see www.saxons-oc.org) was established in 1975 as a non profit-making sports organisation and covers the geographical area of Kent and the eastern part of East Sussex. Its principal aims are the organisation of orienteering events; and the development of the sport in those areas. The Club is affiliated to the [South East Orienteering Association \(SEOA\)](#), the regional body which co-ordinates the sport in SE England and [British Orienteering \(BO\)](#), the national body, which co-ordinates activities within the UK and represents the sport on the world stage. Saxons currently has some 150 members, ranging in age from 8 years to 80 plus years. It has Clubmark status, achieved in 2009 and recently renewed.

Event programme

In a typical year, the club organises the following events –

Type No. Day/night No of competitors (approx)

Regional event 1 Day 250

Sunday Series 5 Day 150

Kent Orienteering League (Sat) 5 Day 100

Kent Night Cup (KNC) 26 Night 35

Events are attended by both club members, members of other orienteering clubs and members of the general public on an ‘ad-hoc’ basis. The club is grateful to a range of public and private landowners for permission to use their woodland, etc. for our events. The KNC (night) events are held over a mixture of woodland and urban terrain, the latter including, for example, the streets of Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Tonbridge, Canterbury and Maidstone.

Urban Orienteering

Urban (Town/City Centre) Orienteering has been a recent and growing discipline within the sport –aimed both to provide a varied challenge to traditional ‘woodland’ orienteering; and as a way of showcasing the sport to a wider and potentially more inclusive audience. National and Regional leagues have developed; and since 2010, events have been held in a number of city/town centres including -

Edinburgh, Carlisle, York, Sheffield, Lincoln, City of London, St. Andrews (Glasgow), Warwick, Huntingdon, Pickering, Nottingham, Ripon.

Of these urban events, the City of London competition attracts the largest number of competitors at well over 1,000 – 200 of whom are from overseas. The others have

had around 300 people participating at each event. Saxons held a very successful urban event in Canterbury in the summer of 2012 and are now looking to hold a further event in the west of the county of Kent in Tunbridge Wells.

Proposed Tunbridge Wells Urban Orienteering event

The proposed Tunbridge Wells Urban event would be organised in accordance with British Orienteering guidelines for this type of event.

The event would, if possible, use public open spaces, pedestrianised and trafficked streets and parks within Tunbridge Wells. We would seek to attract both regular orienteers from within and outside of the town/region; and also members of the general public to 'give orienteering a go'. We would hope to give publicity to the event in liaison with the Borough Council and Kent County Council. National/local publicity would be organised to maximise participation. We would envisage around 300 people in total participating.

For the main competition, it is intended that there would be 5 age related courses – from 'Men Open' to 'Ultra Veteran Men (age 70+) / Super Veteran Women (age 55+)'. We would also like to provide a junior course for under-16s. This latter course would need to be planned in accordance with BO guidelines, for example in an area where no major/busy roads are crossed – possibly utilising Tunbridge Wells Common (subject to permission). Course lengths would vary (in straight line distances), from 6-10 kilometres for the 'Men Open', to between 2.5-5 k. for the shortest course. We will also be providing a course suitable for local people wishing to try orienteering. Courses will be individually planned and individual start times are likely to be over a two hour period – 10.00am – 12 noon, so ensuring no great concentration of competitors at any one time or in any particular location. Unlike a road race, there is not a mass start and competitors do not follow a set route – each deciding which is the best route between control points. Courses would be planned to ensure that competitors avoid undue risk and do not take short cuts through private property or other designated 'out-of-bounds' areas. The special orienteering map which would be produced for the event would be based on International Orienteering Federation mapping standards, clearly to show such areas. The event would require the preparation of a formal risk assessment, both as a matter of good practice and to ensure comprehensive insurance cover through British Orienteering. This provides a £5m public liability insurance, full details of which are available if required.

In terms of support /sanction for such an event, it is not entirely clear what formal permissions are required. Saxons currently hold (night) 'street' events in town centres and no specific permissions are sought, or thought necessary, for these. These events are seen to be substantially the same as a local running club using public spaces for training type runs. We do not envisage any special requirement for police attendance. For our proposed Urban event, we would need, it seems to us, to seek specific approvals from the Borough Council Parks and/or Highways departments in respect of the planned start/finish area (when agreed); and the location of our small control flags - which would be placed shortly before the event commences and removed immediately afterwards. We would, however also welcome support and guidance from the Borough Council on the best way to carry this venture forward.

A possible Permanent Urban Orienteering Course

As part of the proposed event, Saxons would like to explore, with the Borough Council, the possibility of establishing, in the Town, a permanent urban orienteering course. This could potentially allow residents/visitors/tourists to try orienteering by locating permanent fixtures (e.g. lampposts) using the special map produced. This would obviously need further consideration/discussion, but is something we would like to consider in due course.

David Kingdon
Saxons Orienteering Club
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