

MAROC President's Report, 2022 AGM

It has been another eventful year. Just when we thought that we were getting back to normal after Covid we were hit by three winter storms, Arwen, Malik and Corrie a month either side of Christmas. Unfortunately, the effects of the damage are likely to be far more long-lasting than Covid as our mature, runnable forests that are the envy of others are now compromised by windblown trees and felling.

To add to this, we are finding that it is getting steadily harder to gain access permissions for orienteering as landowners become more commercially minded and environmental voices louder. The local community benefits that we provide to those of all ages appears to be of ever decreasing importance.

Another big change we have seen this year is the significant drop in membership since 2019, pre-Covid. Our membership has decreased by a half, almost entirely due to the loss of family and junior members. We currently have 89 individuals of which 22 are Juniors. We have also seen a drop in attendance at events.

The bottom line is that although we have now got over Covid we are having more and more difficulty putting on events and those we do organise are perhaps not appealing to those we wish to attract. We must be prepared to re-focus on quality and re-think the number and style of events and training that we run. One initiative has been to experiment with an urban format for some of our night events and we are considering others. Our new 2022 organisers and planners manuals will make it easier for volunteer officials to step up to deliver these events.

These, then are the challenges going forward; fewer quality forests, difficult access and lower numbers.

So, despite all this doom and gloom, how did we do during 2022? Well, not at all badly considering. Our end-year tally of 16 events is just 5 down from the pre-Covid norm of 21 per year. These include the Scottish Relay Championships, the Banchory Scottish Urban League event (both in May) and the GB Squad selection race in August as well as three Regional Events. We also held nine lower key events, that is 6 night and 3 Spring Series events. There were also 5 Sunday training sessions.

This level of event and training delivery suggests to me a healthy base-line level of interest and willingness of our fantastic volunteers who organise them. I'd sincerely like to thank every single person who has contributed to running these events and, in particular, to Sue who has the task of identifying officials. Please continue to be proactive during 2023.

The committee continues to be strong, with six meetings held this year, two of which had 10 attendees. There is always a natural turn-over and some key posts are currently vacant so we are always on the lookout for anyone interested in playing an increased role in the running of the club. With the challenges ahead of us its important to make your voice heard.

In addition to revisiting our event structure, there are two further themes for 2023; Schools and Mapping. We are restarting after-school clubs to attract juniors and families to local events and hope that this will lead to participation in the Scottish Schools Championships in June plus more members. Also, remapping many of our forests is inevitable and a big draw on our funds, so if anyone is interested in taking up mapping in our forests as a hobby, please let me or Caz, our mapping officer know.

Through the year we will be increasing our links with our neighbours, Grampian Orienteers, who are going through the same challenging period as ourselves. There is no appetite for a merger but I think that we will be seeing more cooperation in the coming months and years.

I'd like to finish on our success in the forest during the year. Our club's greatest strength is the development of our Juniors and I'm pleased to say that once again in 2023 we have a strong compliment of seven in the Scottish Junior Squad (ScotJos). Only Forth Valley have more, with eight. Also, three of our older Juniors, Matthew Gooch, Ewan Musgrave and Adam Barrie all represented Great Britain abroad in 2022. Josh Dudley also continues his successful Senior Team GB career.

And what an amazing achievement it was to come 2nd in the CompassSport Trophy Final in October after 58 UK clubs started the competition. We only missed out to Interlopers by five points. Thanks to all 33 runners who showed amazing commitment with some really special performances across the whole

age spectrum. If we needed self-belief that we are a successful club then surely this is it!

After four eventful and enjoyable years I'm now stepping down as President. Much has happened since 2018 and there has been much to celebrate including; our switch to SI Timing, the continuation of our events during Covid and, of course, our recent CompassSport Trophy success. Despite recent set-backs we remain a strong and healthy club.

I have been honoured to act as Club President and I'd like to thank everyone, particularly our volunteers and committee, for the time you all put into helping me run the club. Please continue to give your support.

Thank you.

Nick Hale

19th November 2022