

New Chairman's Comments.

Firstly my thanks to Bob for all the hard work that he has done over the last 4 years, much of it behind the scenes and unknown to most of our members. I think I should remind everybody that not only has he been chairman for the last 4 years, he has also previously been Vice Chairman and Club Secretary. That is a lot of work over, by my calculation, at least 10 years. So very many thanks and I am very pleased that you are staying on in a senior role on the committee.

We have over the last 8 to 10 years become, by the measures applied by British Orienteering and Sport England, a very successful club. That success has not come by accident. It has been delivered by a lot of hard work and careful planning, forethought and meeting the challenges as they have arisen.

I would like, for a few minutes to talk about some of the issues and challenges that I think are facing the club over the next few years.

It is some time since the club's committee took a comprehensive look at our programmes and activities. It is, I think, time for us to do that again. Whilst everything appears to be running very smoothly, it is very easy to get complacent. As Roger Edwards, wearing his Development Co-ordinator hat, has mentioned, you the members of the club, have recently been asked to complete a survey to indicate what direction you would like the club to go and what events and activities you would like. The results of that survey will be studied by the committee and will form a core part of our review of the club. I hope that we will be able to publish our conclusions in the Spring 2016 newsletter.

Many of us who have been involved in the running of events, sitting on committees, producing maps and all the myriad tasks that are needed to keep a club of our size functioning are, whilst we are maturing like fine wines, starting to head towards our sell by date. We have always been, as a club, very good at bringing forward new and younger members to take over key jobs but, for instance, as every one of the principle officers of the club are in their mid to late sixties; we do need to be more proactive in this area. The same applies to event officials. We now have a number of younger members who have stepped up to be Level A and B officials, having gained experience within our Level C & D events but we have to replace them with next generation of volunteers.

One of my tasks as your Chairman will be recruitment and development of the next generation of key volunteers for the club.

We have, as club, benefited over the last decade or so from members who have taken early retirement and have used their leisure to volunteer for the club - well it beats decorating or gardening. With the rise in retirement age it is likely that we will not have the same workforce at our disposal and we may have to look at other ways of delivering our events and activities.

One area that is likely to be hit hard by the reduction in the number of volunteers available is mapping. We have a very dedicated band of mappers who for a number of years have been keeping our mapping stocks up to date. The problem with mapping is that it is a fairly slow process and lots of time is required to produce or update a map and we have benefited greatly from Roy, Don and the two Peter's being able to spend lots of time mapping. The Events Sub Committee have been looking at this issue recently and have come to the conclusion that we almost certainly, in the near future, will have to outsource some of our mapping, particularly for events on our larger areas, to professional mappers.

As the Treasurer has indicated the club finances are strong and healthy. However there are one or two black financial clouds gathering on the horizon. By the end of 2017 the sport as a whole will see a significant reduction in the amount of external funding it receives from government bodies like Sport England. As I have already mentioned we face the prospect of spending more money on mapping. Changes in some of the technology that we use for timing are likely, in the next 2 to 3 years, requiring the club to spend money in that area too. Given some forward thinking and planning by your committee that is achievable but it will inevitably mean an increase in event fees in the not too distant future.

As I said at the beginning we are a very strong and successful club and I am very confident that we will be able to meet the challenges of the coming years and continue to enjoy our wonderful sport.