

## Chair's Report

Once again, we have suffered major disruptions to our sport over the last year. We started 2021 off with lockdown 3 and the prospect that plans for future events were very much up in the air. We could not have anticipated that we would not restart until April and the organisational difficulties that this brought with it. However, in many ways, our experience of lockdown 1 helped us to navigate our way around the restrictions placed upon us and to manage events with confidence once they were lifted.

There have been some positives to come out of lockdown and our efforts to overcome the restrictions placed upon us. Firstly, we have discovered MapRun, as the blossoming of MapRun events across the region has attested to. This enabled us to pursue our sport and ensured clubs in the region stayed active within the government guidelines. Secondly, we have become acquainted with Zoom. Love it or hate it, Zoom has its advantages and it certainly makes meetings like this one a lot easier to attend for people who live at opposite ends of the NEOA region.

As the country started opening up in April of this year, we saw events re-scheduled and today, to a large extent, we are back to normal. The NEOA clubs have all organised events in the last 6 months; the highlights have been Stockton Riverside in May, Hutton Mulgrave and Skelder and Sewing Shields both in June, all having achieved around 100 competitors or more, and finally the JIRCS and October Odyssey in September which were a great success on a national level.

A rather more unwelcome repercussion of lockdown has thrown up the increasing reluctance of land owners to give permission to use areas for orienteering purposes. Where permission has been granted we have more and more examples of land owners demanding a fee for usage, particularly local authorities and publicly funded bodies. This is a problem that I am sure we will continue to encounter and something to consider for the future.

I feel I have had very little to do this year in my role as NEOA chair and indeed at times I had forgotten that such a role existed so thanks to Duncan for keeping me informed of my responsibilities. We did achieve one goal during the course of the year which was to separate the SI equipment between the clubs, making it a lot easier to manage at club level.

As 2022 approaches, I am looking forward to the headline events that we in the North East will be hosting. In April we have the Northern Championships and in June we will be running the sprint weekend between the 3 clubs. These will be great opportunities to bring us together as a region and raise our profile nationally. Thanks to everyone in the NEOA clubs this year that have helped to make this happen.

**Debby Warren**

**16/10/2021**