

Planner's Report

SLMM – Howgills 2019

Thank you for supporting the SLMM in what is an interesting area to plan on. Thanks also to Dan and Karen Parker for their constructive input as Controllers. Version 24 of the courses actually went to print, changes having to be made for many and varied reasons, and many hours were spent by the planning/controlling team to get that far and hit the target times for the courses.

Clearly, on the Carrock day 1 in particular, I got this wrong and sincerely apologise for those who had an over stressful experience as a result. Next year, the team will be careful to revisit the reasons, some of which are mentioned in the Controller's report.

By their own admission, on any course, Winner's rarely choose all of the fastest routes between controls, and it is an interesting exercise to add up all the fastest 'splits times' for a course, to see what it could have been done in. If you want to go faster, concentrate less on ultra-lightweight kit (although it helps), but do a little research into the background of some of the leading teams/individuals. It might inspire you.

'Crocodiles' are the bane of mountain marathons and are only completely avoidable if each course has its own unique controls. This is logistically impossible and environmentally wouldn't sit well with a number of interested parties. We used about 70 controls this year, which is right at the top end of what is usually used. However, the Planner can use crocodiles to advantage by luring competitors into the wrong one. This is done by having a cluster of two or three controls relatively close together at the end of a leg, but on different courses. A lack of concentration would result in a costly mistake. The control sites on the main Howgill massif were not very technical so in bad weather competent teams should not have had issues with actually finding their control at the end of a leg. However, it would've been quite easy to descend the wrong spur or ridge as there were so many of them. Wild Boar Fell to the east would've been much more entertaining !

The area lent itself to a lot of route choice options, especially on the longer courses. Routegadget shows quite a few variations. Discussions at the overnight camp revealed that many chose to avoid the steep climbs and go around, only to walk. However, the basic unwritten rule is:- If you have to walk, walk the shortest route. So, up and over. Those steep climbs, descents and contouring legs caused havoc with feet this year. I trust you can all walk properly now.

It was particularly warm on day 1 and those who found themselves on the eastern end of the map had little surface water to drink, because the geology is quite different, and water soon disappears into the limestone bedrock fissures. One team were seen actively defending a little water-filled crevice they had discovered. In hindsight, I should not have sent the Carrock Fell class over there to suffer further, at the end of their day.

I look forward to locking horns with some of you next year, on one of the longer courses. I trust I shall be running in horizontal rain and low cloud and basking in glorious sunshine at the overnight camp.

May you all stay injury free.

Andy Creber
Planner 2019 SLMM