

Birmingham urban 2022

Planners comments



Well, that was a lot more work than I had expected. Over three years ago I had one of those conversations, you like urban orienteering, we are thinking of putting on an event in Birmingham to link up with the Commonwealth games, do you fancy planning... I accepted, it should be an interesting challenge I thought.

Birmingham has changed a lot and I was given a brief to show it off. With a practice event in 2020 to get the council and the landowners on side and show how it all runs what could go wrong.

Planning for the 2020 event got underway, courses were drafted, had the first meetings with the council and all seemed positive. And then lockdown happened and the event was cancelled. We were going to have to do everything with no trial run.

I could use the 2020 courses as a base for the 2022 event but it also included a slight change in area so we could take in the canal/Brindley Place and NIA sections. Things were looking ok but then earlier this year there was a couple of bits of bad news. The Birmingham International Dance Festival had been agreed for the same weekend and was going to be using the main squares and the tram extension to the HS2 terminal had started and cut through the eastern section of the map. There would also be a large structure going up in Centenary Square related to the Games. We had lost our proposed start and finish and a large replan was required.

It also restricted the routes around the centre necessitating the use of the underpass outside the mailbox in both directions to get across the dual carriageway and narrowed the section around the Cathedral and the possible route options.

We had the support from Birmingham Council at a very early stage but the Commonwealth Games took precedence over everything else around the centre and we were unable to start getting final permissions arranged until 6 weeks before the event which, as we hadn't had the prior event, involved educating various landowners to what we were planning to do. In the end they were all very supportive so a massive thanks to Bob Scott for leading this and reducing the pressure on me.

When I took the planning on I had no idea I would end up getting involved in safety meetings with the Council and emergency services to get the event agreed. Luckily Eric Brown took the lead on these and produced such a detailed presentation that the event got accepted with very few questions. Great work Eric.

The city centre is constantly changing and we had to keep on top of what was happening. I made numerous trips to the city centre and sent loads of map updates to Alison who had volunteered to take on the role using the original Dave Peel map. She did it without complaint and frequently headed into the centre to review the different areas. Without Alisons hard work it wouldn't have been possible to put the event on.

I was expecting to do some late replanning but in the end only two control sites were lost in the last week or so before the event due to new temporary closures. Luckily nearby backup options were

available so it didn't involve too much replanning but unfortunately did make those control locations slightly less interesting.

In the end all the prep work we had put in paid off and the day itself went very smoothly. I was very appreciative of the help from Marian, Kerstin and Andy in putting the controls out early in the morning. Birmingham city centre is an interesting place at 6 in the morning.

A big thanks to all the team from the three clubs that helped on the day in the various roles. I had enough volunteers to collect controls so I didn't have to go out myself which was a bonus after such an long day.

Thanks to Richard Lewis for controlling and his guidance – it can't have been easy with me frequently messaging him with replans and my predictions of what else would be likely to change before the event so we could come up with backup plans – a large number of which we ended up using.

And thank you to Lesley for organising. It takes a huge amount of work to pull everything together and she didn't complain when at times I was sending a barrage of emails on various parts of the event. It all went so smoothly on the day it shows what a great job she and the rest of the team did.

Lastly, thank you for everyone that came. Looking at the entry list before the event it was amazing to see how many different clubs were represented. It seemed that everyone enjoyed their courses and it is great to see people smiling at the end – after they had recovered from the steps towards the end and the run in. The city centre isn't the most technical of areas with a lot of wide streets but hopefully everyone got chance to take in the sights as they ran round. All the senior courses took in iconic Birmingham sites such as the canal basin, the Bullring, the cathedral and pigeon park, the library and the reflective frontage of Grand Central so you could see yourself running. And hopefully at least some runners recognised Tony Hancock and Black Sabbath as they went to the controls next to their statues and bench...

Dave Aldridge, Planner

