



Press Release

20 February 2020

For immediate release

Winter climbing festival kicks off

Ice climbing conditions set to inspire top international ice climbers

Scottish mountaineers and their international counterparts have been watching the build-up of snow in the mountains with anticipation.

A relatively warm December and January over Scotland's high ground had meant an international climbing festival starting this weekend was facing poor conditions in gullies and cliffs normally cloaked in the snow and ice that makes them an international draw in winter for the world's mountaineers.

But conditions are now improving.

Simon Richardson, one of Scotland's foremost winter climbers and on the organising committee for the festival, said: "Participants of the International Winter Meet have been anxiously watching the Scottish weather for several weeks now. After the warm December and January the prospects for winter climbing looked bleak.

"Fortunately, the February conveyor belt of westerly storms has changed all that. There is plenty of snow across the Highlands, and ice is building rapidly. Ben Nevis, and the mountains of Glen Coe are ice-making machines that love frequent blizzards and rapid temperature fluctuations. The soft aerated Scottish ice occurs in very few parts of the world and is a delight to climb, and ice climbs in Scotland are highly sought after by International climbers."

He added: "This weather trend looks set to continue through the week of the meet, and winter climbers from both the UK and overseas are looking forward to some superb ice climbing conditions."

Streap Alba Geamhradh 2020, the International Scottish Winter Climbing Meet, from 22nd to 29th February, will see international guests teaming up with UK climbers to climb classic routes, technical test-pieces and possibly brand new first ascents, getting a taste of the unique delights of winter climbing in Scotland.

Nearly 30 guests from 22 different countries will be attending the week-long event, including veterans of Everest and the Greater Ranges, as well as leading Alpinists. All abilities are represented, with climbers from Israel and South Africa, who have little opportunity to climb snow and ice in their own countries, through to regular winter climbers from Europe, Scandinavia and North America.



Host climbers from the UK have been selected to match the abilities of the International guests. These include Paul Ramsden, one of the world's most accomplished mountaineers and three times winner of the Piolets d'Or – mountaineering's highest award.

The Scottish Winter Climbing Meet is being run by Mountaineering Scotland in close partnership with the Alpine Club, the Scottish Mountaineering Club and the British Mountaineering Council, and is sponsored by Salewa, manufacturers of mountaineering clothing and equipment.

Stuart Younie, Chief Executive Officer of Mountaineering Scotland, said: "The delivery of the 2020 Winter meet has been very much a partnership approach and it's fantastic to welcome Salewa on board. With their brand reputation and heritage, it's a great fit for the event and we are very grateful for the support they are providing."

Salewa's UK Sales and Business Development Manager Mark McCarthy said: "Salewa is delighted to be supporting the 2020 International Winter Mountaineering Meet as a grass roots event targeting the core mountaineer, and to allow some of the participants to experience, first hand, our technical mountaineering product. As a technical alpine mountaineering brand, with a long and rich history rooted in the Dolomites, we are proud to have this opportunity to see our products tested to the limits in an environment they were designed for."

The winter meet was started in 1997 and ran for 20 years. The last meet was held by the British Mountaineering Council in 2016, but this year's revival, led by Mountaineering Scotland, recognises the key role that the meet has played on the world mountaineering stage, bringing climbers together to share ideas and form new plans. Partnerships formed on the meets have resulted in dozens of important new routes across the world such as Light Traveller on Denali, The Diamond Ridge on the Grandes Jorasses, and the North Face of Latok 1.

During the week climbers will stay in some of Scotland's most famous winter climbing arenas, including the Cairngorms, Lochaber and Glen Coe, being accommodated in mountaineering huts such as the iconic CIC Hut beneath the massive cliffs on the north face of Ben Nevis.

John Fowler, President of the SMC, which owns three of the huts accommodating climbers, said: "The Scottish Mountaineering Club is delighted to contribute to this international event and welcomes the opportunity to showcase the impressive nature of Scottish winter climbing to some of the best mountaineers from home and abroad."

Victor Saunders, President of the Alpine Club, said: "The Alpine Club is proud to be part of the Scottish International Meet and we are delighted that 12 of our members will be there to host the international guests. Bringing climbers together to try new routes and make new partnerships is a key aim of the club."

The week will close with a social evening in Tiso Aviemore Outdoor Experience, where members of the climbing public will be able to meet and chat with the participants. There will be a talk by leading climber Guy Robertson and a chance to hear about the week's climbing. Tickets for this event are available to members of the public at <https://winterclimbingmeet2020.eventbrite.co.uk>

Ends

Notes for editors:

Images: Photos of winter climbing in the Cairngorms. Both photos should be credited to Simon Richardson.

http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/Cairngorms_chimney_by_Simon_Richardson.jpg



<http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/Climber on Braeriach by Simon Richardson.jpg>

Further information contact:

Neil Reid, Communications Officer, on 01738 493941 or 07444545293 or neil@mountaineering.scot

About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the national representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,500 members and is funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- Mountaineering Scotland also runs the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sport climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.
- The MCoFS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
- Mountaineering Scotland, The Granary, West Mill Street, Perth PH1 5QP
- Website: www.mountaineering.scot

About the Alpine Club:

- The Alpine Club is the world's first mountaineering club, founded in 1857. For over 150 years, members have been at the leading edge of worldwide mountaineering development and exploration.
- The Alpine Club exists to facilitate access to and exploration of the mountainous regions of the world; provide a forum for members to meet, climb and share



information, both internally and with the wider mountaineering community; support mountain arts, science and literature; act as a thought leader in mountain ecology, access and sustainability; and provide a platform for international collaboration.

