



**Press Release**

**14 March 2019**

**For immediate release**

## **Mountain safety reminder as winter returns**

### **Mountaineering experts underline need to act on weather and avalanche forecasts**

Following the tragic news of fatalities resulting from an avalanche on Ben Nevis this week, mountain safety experts have issued a reminder to walkers, climbers and backcountry skiers that their enthusiasm should always be tempered by close attention to avalanche and weather forecasts.

Winter is a particularly attractive season to many, with snow and ice adding an extra dimension to their activities, however this winter has been frustrating for outdoor enthusiasts, with unseasonably warm conditions in February which saw the snowpack almost disappearing.

Winter has now come back with a vengeance, but the sudden and heavy snowfall, combined with lower temperatures and high winds has produced snow conditions that can fluctuate rapidly, as well as rapid changes between hostile and benign weather. The Scottish Avalanche Information Service (SAIS) has recorded five avalanches in the West Highlands in the last 48 hours, highlighting the unstable nature of the snowpack.

Heather Morning, Mountain Safety Adviser with Mountaineering Scotland, said: "Mountain conditions in Feb were unusually mild, resulting in the majority of the mountains being snow free. However, over the past few days winter has very much returned.

"When you're heading up into the hills, whether it's for walking, climbing or skiing, it's absolutely essential not only that you check the avalanche forecast but also that you understand what it's saying. Different slopes on the same hill may have completely different snow conditions.

"A careful study of the mountain weather forecast is also an essential part of your planning, and your planned route should be finalised with that forecast in mind. Something else to be mindful of is being flexible. Don't become fixated on achieving your original goal. As conditions on the hill change, then so should your decision making. Often I end up on Plan B, C or D as my journey on the hill progresses."

Kev Mitchell, Vice Chair of Scottish Mountain Rescue said: “We encourage people to make use of all available information, including weather and avalanche forecasts. It is important to plan your day taking into account the conditions, ensure you are prepared to make safe decisions based on the weather and environment you are in and the group you are with.”

Trafford Wilson, CEO of Snowsport Scotland, said: “Back country skiing and boarding, whether in the mountains or through the glens, offer some amazing opportunities for unforgettable days out, and it’s encouraging to see so many people taking up the challenge.

“But skiing or boarding away from pisted and managed slopes adds a considerable degree of seriousness and people must be sure they are properly equipped and experienced.”

Avalanche forecasts and explanations of how to interpret them can be found at [www.sais.gov.uk](http://www.sais.gov.uk)

Mountain specific weather forecasts can be found at [www.mwis.org.uk](http://www.mwis.org.uk)

## Ends

### Notes for editors:

**Image:** Ski mountaineering on Cairngorm by Al Todd

[http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/Ski\\_07.jpg](http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/Ski_07.jpg)

Bad weather in the Cairngorms, by Wallace Gilbraith.

[http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/IMG\\_0806-crop-L.jpg](http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/IMG_0806-crop-L.jpg)

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Mountaineering Scotland: <https://www.mountaineering.scot/>

Snowsport Scotland: <https://snowsportscotland.org/>

Glenmore Lodge: <https://www.glenmorelodge.org.uk/>

Sportscotland Avalanche Information Service: <https://www.sais.gov.uk/>

### About Mountaineering Scotland:

- Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland’s mountains.
- 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 14,000 members representing hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers, 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 has launched the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression. It offers a dedicated website and a development team, which will introduce young people to climbing at schools, climbing walls and via youth organisations with a range of activities and events, while developing kids clubs and providing specialist support to parents, volunteers and teachers.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sports 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

#### **sportscotland**



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