

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

OUR YEAR IN SUMMARY
1 APRIL 2023 TO 31 MARCH 2024



WHAT WE DO

Mountaineering Scotland is the nationally recognised representative and membership organisation for hill walkers, climbers, mountaineers and snow sports tourers in Scotland, and the governing body for competitive climbing in Scotland. We aim to represent, inspire and develop Scottish mountaineering in all its forms, to protect the mountain landscapes and access rights we all cherish, and promote responsible access in the hills, mountains and climbing venues.

Through our **mountain safety programme**, we offer training and information to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of the hill and mountain environment.

Our **ClimbScotland** programme, funded by sportscotland, aims to support children and young people to get involved in climbing through outreach work and competition.

FIND OUT MORE AT WWW.MOUNTAINEERING.SCOT

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ROUND UP OF THE YEAR

APRIL

The Mountain Safety Team began delivering the new season's training programme, and Mountaineering Scotland met with Braulen Estate staff to discuss winter vehicular access for Strathfarrar, resulting in a new arrangement for winter 2023/24.

JULY

The Mountain Safety Team joined Mhor Outdoor on one of their How 2 the Hills walks with the Maryhill Integration Network Group from Glasgow, while the It's Up to Us campaign reached the £40,000 fundraising mark.

OCTOBER

ClimbScotland celebrated Scottish Women and Girls in Sport Week 2023 by highlighting the large number of girls taking part in climbing competitions and the RealRock program, and we consulted with members on the Earba Pumped Hydro Scheme proposal on Ardverikie estate and a plan to clean up the Old Man Of Hoy.

JANUARY

The revised Snowsports Touring Code for tourers and walkers in managed ski areas was published and the Student Winter Skills weekend was held at Glenmore Lodge, with 60 students taking part. We also said a fond farewell to Kevin Howett, who retired after 35 years with the organisation.

MAY

The It's Up to Us campaign was launched in Perth and a coalition of concern released a joint statement over concerns to site hundreds of 4G telecoms masts in remote areas of Scotland as part of the UK Government's planned Shared Rural Network.

AUGUST

New-look #TakItHame bags – recyclable bags designed to be kept in your rucksack and used to keep the hills litter free – arrived in the office, and Malcolm Airey was recruited to replace Ali Rose in the position of St John Scotland Student Mountain Safety Advisor.

NOVEMBER

Anne Butler was appointed as the first female president of Mountaineering Scotland at the 2023 AGM where we also welcomed Brendan Hughes and Hugo Allan to the Board, and the 100th issue of Scottish Mountaineer was published with a brand new look.

FEBRUARY

Members of the team attended the Fort William Mountain Festival, with a stand in the exhibition hall, and a live #ThinkWINTER discovery session in partnership with Glenmore Lodge, Girls on Hills and Snowsport Scotland.

JUNE

The 2023 Scottish Youth Climbing Championships took place at EICA Ratho, new digital membership cards for individual members were launched, and we said goodbye to Finance Officer Denise Logan after 16 years at Mountaineering Scotland.

SEPTEMBER

The first in-person Mountain Safety Group meeting since the pandemic took place at Mountaineering Scotland's office in Perth and fundraising for It's Up to Us continued, with just over £50,000 raised through public giving and generous donations from our clubs and corporate/trust donors.

DECEMBER

Plans for a new Climbing Development Group were announced and the annual #ThinkWINTER campaign launched, with a new landing page sign-posting users to key winter mountain safety information and resources.

MARCH

Mountain Matters - our new interactive digital members publication – launched, over 320 young people took part in the ClimbScotland Fun Competition qualifying rounds and a new ClimbScotland website was launched.



PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

BY ANNE BUTLER

Whichever way we choose to spend time in the Scottish hills, Mountaineering Scotland unites walkers, climbers and skiers, allowing us to develop friendships and connections with like-minded people, escape the pressures of everyday life and feel relaxed and recharged.

Historically, women have been underrepresented within the outdoors, either as participants, leaders or trainers. Over the last few years, I have been pleased to see a considerable increase in the number of women out enjoying the hills, but women need to see more positive female role models. During 2023, Mountaineering Scotland has appointed the first women into the roles of President and Chair of the Board, taking a proactive and visible approach to increase the representation of women into senior positions within the outdoor community. I am honoured to be seen as a role model and would like to inspire women to get into the hills and experience the life changing and life enhancing benefits for themselves.

Women make up 32% of our membership and Mountaineering Scotland has responded to member feedback by organising women only navigation, rock climbing and winter skills courses as part of the Mountain Skills programme, giving them the confidence to lead or plan a walk or climb themselves.

Anyone walking, climbing or skiing in the Scottish hills will note that they are increasingly popular and the importance of messaging on responsible behaviour has never been more relevant. The mountains are under considerable pressure so the Manifesto for the Mountains and It's Up to Us initiatives are a key priority for the protection of the mountain landscape.



I would like to pass on my thanks to Stuart Younie and the team who work tirelessly behind the scenes to promote Scottish mountaineering. Since taking up my new post at the end of 2023 I have been impressed by the hard work and dedication of the staff and volunteers in supporting members, dealing with sometimes very complex access and planning issues, and delivering climbing competitions, mountains skills courses and outdoor climbing sessions, with the support, guidance and expertise of the volunteer Directors.

Our focus, as ever, must be to continue the work we do representing hillwalkers, skiers and climbers and protecting the mountain environment. Keep in touch, feedback from members is important, we like to know what we do well but it is equally important to know which areas you think we should focus on.

Thank you for your continued support.

Anne Butler
President, Mountaineering Scotland

CHAIR'S REPORT BY JO DYTCH



This past year has been an incredibly exciting one to take on the role of Chair of the Board of Mountaineering Scotland. As always we have had a full calendar, with some significant highlights and our key findings in the annual report make for positive reading. It's been a pleasure working with Anne Butler (President) and Alistair Todd (Vice Chair) as we look forward to our next strategic cycle.

I've been involved in the organisation in a voluntary capacity since 2017 as Director for Clubs, and each year as I reflect on the previous twelve months, I still find it hugely impressive the breadth and depth of work our organisation carries out. This simply wouldn't be possible without a team of incredibly motivated staff, and the voluntary board of Directors. I'd like to thank everyone in the team for their dedication and passion over the last year.

On that note, at the end of last year we saw some changes to the Board and staff at Mountaineering Scotland. Lucy Fraser stepped down from her role as Director of Climb Scotland and Nigel Clark from his role as Director of Mountain Safety. We would like to thank both Lucy and Nigel for their tenure over the last four years. Following the AGM in November 2023, we welcomed Hugo Allan to the role of Director of Climb Scotland and Brendan Hughes into the role as Director of Mountain Safety. Early in 2024, we said a very fond farewell to Kevin Howett who was the first employee of MCofS in 1989, and his talent and enthusiasm has been instrumental in helping the organisation develop to where it is today. We wish Kev our very best, and hope to see him on a hill or crag soon enjoying his retirement.

Two long-term volunteers with Mountaineering Scotland, Scott Forsyth and Dave Gordon, were awarded honorary membership at the 2023 AGM. Scott has been integral to the development and delivery of youth climbing competitions in Scotland over the last 23 years and has made a huge contribution to the ClimbScotland program. Dave was a member of the board of Mountaineering Scotland (then MCofS) from 2012-2016, after which he

continued as a volunteer, leading on Mountaineering Scotland's work on proposed developments in the mountains including taking forward objections to more than 40 windfarms and attending public enquiries on behalf of the organisation and our members. Our thanks to both Scott and Dave for their many years of tireless support and expertise.

As an organisation we are committed to innovating, and our future sustainability relies on growth across our membership community. As we look ahead into 2024 and beyond, our focus turns to renewing our strategy, and ensuring we stay focused on delivering the key priorities for our membership. Our strategic pillars of Representing, Protecting, Developing and Inspiring remain relevant and core to our direction of travel. Our financial state is solid, and as part of our new strategy from 2025-2029 we will focus on working with members and partners to ensure we mitigate against challenges which are facing all sports across the country.

On behalf of the entire Mountaineering Scotland team, I would like to thank you, our members for your support and insight. You underpin everything we do and we are privileged to be your collective voice.

Jo Dytch
Chair, Mountaineering Scotland



MEMBERSHIP

Membership of Mountaineering Scotland fell by **0.4%** over the financial year, but remained over **16,000** at **16,196** at the year end. Individual membership fell by **2.8%** compared to the previous year due to more members choosing not to renew their membership, with the majority citing financial reasons. In contrast, club membership grew by **2%** as forecast and continues to do well.

OUR MEMBERS

- Equalities data provided by **6876** members (at 31 December 2023)
- **31.9%** Female / **65%** Male / **0.2%** Other / **2.9%** Prefer not to say
- Members who reported having a disability **2%** / **84%** without / **14%** prefer not to answer
- Black, Asian, African, Mixed, other ethnic group **2.4%** / White non-UK **5.4%** / White Scottish/British **74%** / Prefer not to answer **18.2%**

TOTAL MEMBERS

16,196

-0.4%

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

7,850

-2.8%

CLUB MEMBERS

8,346

+2%

NO OF CLUBS

138

AFFILIATED CLUBS

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

We were delighted to welcome members to our 2023 AGM which was held as a hybrid meeting at Birnam Art Centre in November. After the formal business of the AGM and adoption of our updated Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, the focus was on current issues in access and the mountain environment, with a range of speakers providing insight into relevant topics and the opportunity for discussion. The day was rounded off with an informal walk up Birnam Hill.

500 members responded to the biennial members survey in 2023, answering a range of questions about their participation in mountaineering activities, the various areas of our work and what they think of our communications and membership offering. The responses will be used to inform a review of our membership strategy and develop our membership package.

SUPPORTING CLUBS

The first in-person clubs networking meet since the pandemic took place on Saturday 7 October 2023. Representatives from 8 clubs braved torrential rain to join us for the meeting in Drymen, which unfortunately had to be cut short due to the weather. Nevertheless, it was a productive morning with lots of great discussion and helpful to connect with clubs face to face.

The 2024 Club Survey was shared with clubs in February 2024, with 24 clubs responding and providing insights into which areas of our work are most important to clubs, any challenges clubs are facing, what their goals are for the coming year and what support they need to achieve their goals.



OUR COMMUNICATIONS



WEBSITE VISITS PER MONTH
37,363

E-NEWS SUBSCRIBERS
17.2K

YOUTUBE SUBSCRIBERS
3.6K

FACEBOOK PAGE LIKES
36.5K

TWITTER FOLLOWERS
21.5K

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS
13.9K



DEVELOPING OUR MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

2023 saw some significant changes to the publication of our members magazine, Scottish Mountaineer, and the launch of Mountain Matters, a new digital members communication.

Following consultation with members and a review of the costs of production and distribution of Scottish Mountaineer, the decision was made to work with a new supplier, Connect Communications, and to refresh and relaunch Scottish Mountaineer as a printed publication for two issues a year, and introduce Mountain Matters in a digital-only format in between. The relaunch with the 100th issue and the new digital publication have been a great success and we hope will ensure a sustainable future for one of our most well-regarded member benefits.



ThinkWINTER GOES TO FORT WILLIAM

The annual ThinkWINTER campaign started early, with a planning session held at Mountaineering Scotland HQ in Perth in August, where we were joined by colleagues from Glenmore Lodge, Mountain Training and Snowsport Scotland to agree areas to focus on and come up with some creative content ideas.

The campaign kicked off in December and post-Christmas featured the 12 Days of Snowknowledge, a daily post by one of the organisations involved designed to engage audiences and raise awareness of some of the key safety messages.

ThinkWINTER also made an appearance at the Fort William Festival in February, where a panel of four female experts from mountaineering, snowsports and trail running shared their own learning from their experiences and mistakes in winter in a one hour dedicated session.

PROTECTING ACCESS & ENVIRONMENT

PROTECTING ACCESS RIGHTS

74 separate access case enquiries were received over the year. The main topics were physical obstructions like deer fences and locked gates, and non-physical deterrents such as inappropriate signage and verbal discouragement. There were also specific enquiries about access during deer stalking, and camping, including toileting responsibly. There were numerous communications concerning climbing on crags where birds are nesting and providing updates for the nesting birds crag status page on the Mountaineering Scotland website.

NATIONAL ACCESS FORUM

A wide range of access related topics were discussed at the National Access Forum and in specific working groups. Topics included: Access and wildlife disturbance; forestry planning process; upland deer management; E-mountain bikes; charging for access for events; financial resources for access; visitor management and updated communications for recreational fires; and NatureScot and its role in access work.



GLEN STRATHFARRER WINTER ACCESS

Since the start of the pandemic, there has been no winter vehicular access to Glen Strathfarrer, a benefit which was previously enjoyed by Mountaineering Scotland members to take their cars up the glen for easier access to the four Strathfarrer Munros and the Corbett An Sidhean, plus the winter climbing crags in the shorter daylight hours.

Discussions with Braulen and East Monar Estates led to a renewal of the winter vehicular access arrangement in 2023, with certain conditions agreed to avoid potentially disrupting deer management on the estate and a limit on numbers as the road is neither cleared of snow or gritted during this period.

To simplify the process of requesting access a new online form was created, with the terms and conditions clearly set out. In the winter season from November 23 until the end of March 24 there were 31 requests for access over the five months, allowing 45 of our members to enjoy the Munros and Corbett summits and the winter climbing crags. Only one request for access could not be accommodated because of stalking activities.

Our thanks go to our group of local volunteers who have this year for the first time been maintaining the padlocks on the two gates, to reduce any problems members may have with the padlocks in winter. And also to the staff of Braulen Estate and East Monar Estate for their assistance with vehicle access over the winter months.

SNOWSPORTS TOURING CODE

A few avoidable incidents between snowsports tourers and staff at some of the managed ski resorts in Scotland had occurred partly due to poor awareness of access rights and responsibilities while passing through managed ski areas.

Following discussions between Mountaineering Scotland, Snowsport Scotland, ski touring and mountaineering representatives, and the Association of Scottish Ski Areas it was agreed that an updated Code of Conduct for good practice be produced so that both users and land managers would know how to act responsibly. This was published on the Mountaineering Scotland website and social media channels, and a simplified key-points infographic produced for displaying as a poster or handing out as a flyer.

Further work is underway in identifying and promoting clearly marked routes through managed areas to ease passage to and from the back country and avoid potential problems arising.



OLD MAN OF HOY

Mountaineering Scotland was approached about a project to clean up one of the classic routes on the Old Man of Hoy, by removing the accumulated tat and re-equipping two abseils for descent, by a climber passionate about trad climbing who wanted to give something back to the community.

An online consultation survey received 937 responses in total, of which 93.4% were supportive and 6.6% responded to say they were not supportive of the plans as set out. Approximately 500 detailed comments were received. This project provoked some strong opinions and much debate, but the consultation with the community was beneficial, leading to more informed decisions about how to proceed.



PROTECTING MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES

FORESTRY

26 woodland creation or long-term management proposals were investigated. For the forestry consultations, our comments focused on extensive new deer fences and maintaining or creating new opportunities for access routes to summits. The visual impact of planting schemes was also commented on with support for areas of natural regeneration and sensitive design of plantation edges at altitude.

Mountaineering Scotland, through the Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance, met regularly with Scottish Forestry and Forestry and Land Scotland to discuss various strategic policy matters that affect access for outdoor recreation.

WINDFARM PROPOSALS
70

POWERLINE CONNECTIONS
19

DIGITAL TELECOM MAST PROPOSALS
32

WOODLAND PROPOSALS
26

WINDFARMS

Out of 70 proposals assessed, 32 were full planning applications for new schemes, for which we objected to one in the Monadhliath. This already has significant windfarm development, but this proposal took development further southwest in the Monadhliath, off the plateau and into a different type of setting on the slopes above Fort Augustus. For the other 38 at an early, scoping, stage in planning we offered suggestions for suitable mountain summit viewpoints, and significant comments on routes up and down hill walking routes.

PUMPED HYDRO PROPOSALS
3

PEATLAND RESTORATION PROPOSALS
5





DIGITAL TELECOMS MASTS

The Shared Rural Network initiative continued to pose significant concerns with an extensive rollout of new 25m-tall telecoms masts in wild and remote areas. This programme proposed hundreds of new masts in areas without digital connectivity, and many of these raised concern as there were no properties anywhere nearby that would benefit from 4G signal. These concerns were shared by a wide range of recreation and conservation groups, local communities and landowners. As a group, we set out a Joint Statement of Concern that indicated that we supported digital connectivity for local communities, businesses and the public road network, and made clear the challenges of unintended consequences. We have met with officials from the telecoms companies and related agencies, and continue to raise awareness of this issue.

**CONSULTATION RESPONSES MAY BE VIEWED ON
THE MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND WEBSITE:**
WWW.MOUNTAINEERING.SCOT/CONSERVATION/PLANNING-CONSULTATIONS/RESPONSES



EARBA PUMPED HYDRO STORAGE SCHEME

In October 2023, we consulted with members on this large scale proposal within Ardverikie Estate, south of Loch Laggan and in a Wild land Area, which has both benefits in decarbonising the electricity grid and disbenefits in substantially changing a mountain landscape with a major civil engineering project. The response from members was split 50-50 for and against. We therefore did not object to the planning proposal but set out in a letter to the Highland Council the significant concerns raised that need to be assessed as part of the planning process.



A MANIFESTO FOR THE MOUNTAINS

Mountaineering Scotland's policies and positions statements are reviewed periodically, and having published our new Conservation Strategy in 2019, it was the turn of Respecting Scotland's Mountains, a vision for the future originally published in 2015, to be reviewed to test the statements against the current landscape.

While it was found to be generally still applicable, certain emphases had changed in the intervening period, with climate and biodiversity crises coming much more to the fore, along with developments to address them and their impact on the mountain environment and mountaineering activities.

The 'Manifesto for the Mountains' is a statement of intent, designed to align with our current Strategic Framework objectives. Through consultation with the membership and with partnership organisations throughout 2023, it refines our purpose and states our objectives to reflect the range of interests in mountain matters.

The Manifesto seeks to explain the context of the importance of mountains in themselves and to human interests, the different uses and values that entails, and highlighting that trade-offs against competing aspects of a dynamic environment are inevitable, while defending our members' interests. The Manifesto for the Mountains can be downloaded here:
www.mountaineering.scot/manifesto-for-the-mountains



CAMPAIGNING – IT'S UP TO US

It's up to us, the joint campaign by Mountaineering Scotland and the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland, launched on 25 May 2024 at the Black Watch Museum in Perth. Staff, board and volunteers from the two organisations were joined by some of the campaign ambassadors as well as colleagues from some of our key partners.

The campaign sprang to life thanks to a £100,000 grant from the Scottish Mountaineering Trust (reported in the annual report 2022-23), which kick started a £300,000 fundraising campaign to address severe erosion on the path on An Teallach from Dundonnell, one that has been on OATS radar for a number of years, but has never been eligible for funding as it is on privately-owned land.

In the year since, the fundraising total has risen to £215,000, with additional grants from the European Outdoor Conservation Association, numerous corporate donations and donations from clubs, and over £20,000 in public donations.

And it's not been all fundraising and awareness raising in the first year. Work started on the An Teallach path in October and the contractors, Cairngorms Wilderness Contracts Ltd, with the help of a team of very hardy and dedicated volunteers, have already completed over 300m of the path repair over the winter months. They were joined by It's Up to Us ambassador, outdoor writer and prolific walker, Chris Townsend, in March who joined in the work and wrote a brilliant article about the campaign and the An Teallach path work for TGO magazine.

It's Up to Us also aims to raise awareness of the desperate need for public investment in mountain paths, especially those that are sited on privately owned land where there is currently no funding available. With more and more people using mountain paths for walking, climbing, biking and running and the increasing frequency of severe weather events, upland paths are facing challenges like never before, and it's up to those of us that use them to find a long term sustainable funding solution for their upkeep and repair.

As we approach the second year of the campaign, the fundraising continues with a fresh appeal going out to mountaineers, mountain bikers, trail runners and outdoor tourism businesses, but the focus also shifts to discussions with government and the outdoor sector on how we can create a sustainable funding model that will ensure the upland path network is fit for purpose for generations to come. Watch this space!

Donate online at savemountainpaths.scot



STEP UP TO SAVE OUR MOUNTAIN PATHS

Supported by:

COTSWOLD
outdoor



Scottish Mountaineering Trust

MOUNTAIN SAFETY PROGRAMME

814

PLACES ON 96
MOUNTAIN SKILLS
COURSES

183

LEARNED BASIC
NAVIGATION
SKILLS

43

ATTENDED NIGHT
NAVIGATION
COURSES

5

GOING THE
EXTRA MILE
COURSES WITH 36
PARTICIPANTS

185

PEOPLE ATTENDED
WINTER SKILLS,
WINTER
NAVIGATION
AND AVALANCHE
AWARENESS
TRAINING

4

WINTER
SAFETY
TALKS

42%

OF PEOPLE
ATTENDING
MOUNTAIN
SKILLS
COURSES
WERE
WOMEN



SUPPORTING CLUBS

17

CLUB TRAINING
DAYS



11

AFFILIATED
CLUBS



115

INDIVIDUALS



NEW SCRAMBLING COURSE



2023 saw the first of the revised one-day scrambling courses designed to introduce people to the parts of the mountain that call for more than basic walking techniques. This may be on rock, but includes steep grass, heather and scree that is often encountered either intentionally or not. The course was attended by both those who are keen to explore more of the mountain, but also by those who want to avoid it, but want the skills and confidence to move through it if they ever found themselves in that situation. The first two courses were called 'Understanding Steep Ground' and were a great success, however, we had some feedback that the name wasn't quite right, therefore for 2024 the name has changed to 'Intro to Scrambling'.

NEW DIRECTOR FOR MOUNTAIN SAFETY



This year we said a goodbye and a massive thank you to Nigel Clark who was the Director of Mountain Safety for 4 years, as his period on the Board came to an end. As Chair of the Mountain Safety Group, Nigel steered the group through the difficult period of Covid and led the recent review of the Mountain Safety Team which resulted in its current form. We welcomed Brendan Hughes (above) as the new Director on the Board at the November AGM and look forward to working with him.



I absolutely loved the course. I've been really worried about my skills for navigating and lack confidence of going out on my own. After my course yesterday I feel like I could take the plunge and go out alone.



UNDERSTANDING MOUNTAINEERING INCIDENTS

The Mountain Incident Survey was launched at the end of 2023 to help us better understand the reasons that accidents happen in the hills from the perspective of those involved in them and to look at how people's behaviour changed after the event. This data, along with the Scottish Mountain Rescue statistics, will allow the partners that make up the Mountain Safety Group to better target resources and communications to encourage safety in the Scottish mountains.



STUDENT SKILLS AND SAFETY TRAINING



274

STUDENT CLUB MEMBERS BENEFITTED FROM SKILLS TRAINING

**ST JOHN
SCOTLAND
PROGRAMME**

138
STUDENTS

**STUDENT
WINTER
SKILLS**

60
STUDENTS

**SMART
WEEKEND**

62
STUDENTS

**STUDENT
WINTER
CLIMBING**

14
STUDENTS

SMART WEEKEND

The SMART weekend is open to all affiliated student club members and is held in November each year at Glenmore Lodge, and staffed by volunteers from around Scotland. The focus is on safety in the mountains with workshops on navigation, single and multi-pitch climbing, through to medical and mountain rescue scenarios. Braemar Mountain Rescue Team have been a huge supporter, both financially and with volunteers over the last three years and without this, the event wouldn't be able to run.

STUDENT WINTER SKILLS

In January 60 students took part in a weekend of top-quality winter skills at Glenmore Lodge. The course is aimed at introducing students to winter walking in a safe and structured way to enable them to fully participate in their club meets. A big thank you to the Winter Sports Legacy Trust which has part funded this course for many years and to Glenmore Lodge for their continued support.



STUDENT WINTER CLIMBING

Based out of Mill Cottage in the Cairngorms National Park, the Student Winter Climbing weekend is only open to 14 students each year. The aim is to give specific winter climbing training to University club members who are taking the lead in developing newer members of their clubs. The course is based on a 1:2 instructor ratio which allows for very in-depth training.

This course is heavily subsidised by a grant from Braemar Mountain Rescue Team which Mountaineering Scotland and the students are extremely grateful.

ST JOHN SCOTLAND PROGRAM



St John Scotland has been financially supporting a dedicated Mountain Safety Instructor since 2015, and has been immensely important in supporting student club members to learn essential skills. Malcolm Airey came into this post last year and have built upon the fantastic work done by his predecessors. With more student clubs affiliating with Mountaineering Scotland to gain access to all the support on offer, the demand on the dedicated St John Scotland Mountaineering Instructor's time has been matched by additional funding from St John Scotland. Mountaineering Scotland would like to thank St John Scotland on behalf of the student mountaineering clubs.

“

I learned about using axe and crampons to keep myself safe on steep ground, and to pick safe routes.

”

“

I found the avalanche forecasts quite confusing before, but now I feel like I can use them to plan safe routes.

”

SUPPORTING INCLUSIVITY IN THE OUTDOORS

This year the Mountain Safety Team have spent several days out on the hills supporting groups access the hills in a supportive and safe way including a day on Dumayat with Sole Sisters upskilling their walk leaders and supporting Mhor Outdoors on the Connect Outdoors project.

Ben and Kirsty continued to work with the RMT Union through online and outdoor skills sessions to promote the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of hillwalking, while Ross and Ben delivered navigation and scrambling workshops for the inaugural 999Re:SET event organised by Scottish Fire and Rescue Service which aims to support mental health for blue light services.

Ben spent a day with NatureScot employees training them in navigation and mountain safety to prepare them for working remotely in wild coastal areas.



DEVELOPING PATHWAYS AND POTENTIAL

16.3K

DOWNLOADS

OF THE
SCOTROCK
PODCAST

56

YOUNG
PEOPLE

LEARNED TO
CLIMB AT 16
REALROCK
SESSIONS

133

ADULTS

LEARNED
CLIMBING SKILLS
AT 42 READY TO
ROCK COURSES

136

PEOPLE

ATTENDED
23 FUNDAS
WORKSHOPS

16

YOUNG
ATHLETES

IN THE
SCOTLAND
TALENT
SQUAD

38

YOUNG
CLIMBERS

IN SCOTLAND
DEVELOPMENT
SQUAD

320 climbers in the 2023 Fun Climbing Competition qualifiers
164 climbers in the 2023 Fun Bouldering Competition qualifiers
158 Competitors in the 2023 Scottish Youth Climbing Championships
131 competitors in the 2023 Scottish Youth Climbing Championships
58 competitors in the 2023 Fun Climbing Competition Final
33 competitors in the 2023 Scottish Youth Speed Climbing Championships
80+ competitors in each of 4 rounds of the 2023 Youth Climbing Series

52%
GIRLS

48%
BOYS

COMPETITION ROUND-UP

2023 SCOTTISH YOUTH BOULDERING CHAMPIONSHIPS (SYBC)

The 2023-24 competition year kicked off with the 2023 Scottish Youth Bouldering Championships (SYBC) at Eden Rock in Edinburgh in April. This competition attracts competitors from across the UK and often international competitors too. 158 young climbers took part in the qualifiers, leading into the excitement of the finals in the afternoon, with the crowd cheering them all on. SYCC is part of the 4 Nations Boulder Cup Series of competitions, in collaboration with BMC and Mountaineering Ireland.

CLIMBSCOTLAND FUN COMP

The ClimbScotland Fun Comp kicked off 2024 with the qualifiers running from 20th January to 1st March across 12 host venues, from Orkney to Kilmarnock. 320 young people took part in the qualifying rounds, which is the biggest sign up yet! 62 of those climbers qualified and were invited to the finals at EICA on 23rd March. There was a great atmosphere at the finals, which made for the perfect first competition experience for the young climbers in attendance. Discounted YCS entry has been offered to the finalists, to help encourage and support the transition to the next level of our competitions.

FUN BOULDERING COMPETITION

Moving into the summer, ClimbScotland piloted the first grassroots Fun Bouldering Competition, which consisted of a qualifying round only. 164 young climbers got involved in the competition, giving a clear steer to the ClimbScotland team that this event has great potential and we will be adding a final for the 2024 competition.

2023 YOUTH CLIMBING SERIES

With summer drawing to a close, focus and planning turned to the 2023 Youth Climbing Series, which began in September. After four rounds of the YCS, a team of the top climbers went on to compete at the YCS Grand Final against other regions across the UK and Ireland Parthian Wall in Southampton.

SCOTTISH YOUTH CLIMBING CHAMPIONSHIPS

In June, it was the Scottish Youth Climbing Championships at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena Ratho (EICA). This competition provided the opportunity for competitors to take part in both lead and speed disciplines and saw 131 young climbers compete for a place in the finals and for a spot on the podiums.



CLIMBING AS AN INCLUSIVE SPORT

ClimbScotland partnered with Able 2 Adventure, with funding from sportscotland, to deliver three more Inclusive Climbing Workshops in 2023-24 with the aim of making climbing as an activity more accessible to people with additional support needs. They saw a range of participants from parents of disabled young people, to SEN schools, volunteers from Paraclimbing Clubs, Council Outdoor Education and public climbing walls.

The workshops brought out some great conversations around the work people are already doing and what we can do as a collective to help supportive an inclusive

climbing community in Scotland. They have been extremely popular and oversubscribed and we look forward to delivering more next year to keep up with the demand.

The Inclusive Climbing workshops were subsidised through ClimbScotland's funding from sportscotland to ensure people could participate without cost being a barrier.

SUPPORTING NEW FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

The Ledge, Inverness: Mountaineering Scotland National Bouldering and Performance Centre – April 2023 saw the opening of this new state of the art bouldering centre in the heart of Inverness. It is home to Scotland's only Olympic standard bouldering wall, as well as offering climbing and training facilities for visitors at all levels. Mountaineering Scotland were involved in this project for some time and the area had been identified as a key priority through our facilities strategy.





SCOTTISH DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL SQUADS

There were big changes at the start of 2023 to the way in which climbers were supported in the talent pathway, making 2023-24 a challenging year, but with lots of learning and development for the ClimbScotland team. At ClimbScotland we are always evolving and moving forward, trying to provide a range of opportunities for our young Scottish climbers.

We aim to build a solid and sustainable pathway that helps our current climbers, and those to come, to have a life-long and positive association with climbing and physical activity more generally.

ClimbScotland supports two Scottish squads, the National Squad and Development Squad. We aim to provide opportunities that supplement and add to what members are already getting from their own climbing, through their local walls, coaches, and parents, from developing technique and physical conditioning, to experiencing all forms of climbing both indoors and outdoors to widen their horizons. The work around the programme for the squads has been well received and engagement and feedback from squad members has been positive, giving us a good base to work from moving forward.

OUR SQUAD VALUES

Building the Scottish climbing community

Relevant preparation and exposure to terrain at key times

Providing holistic opportunities to develop resilient young people

Developing climbers technique, tactics, and psychology/physical attributes



THE END OF AN ERA...

Mountaineering Scotland said a very fond farewell to our longest serving member of staff, Kevin Howett, who retired in January 2024. Kevin has been with Mountaineering Scotland since the early days, and has seen the organisation – as well as the wider climbing community and sector – grow to what it is today, with Kevin being an integral part of its development. It's an understatement to say Kevin will be greatly missed and irreplaceable given his years of knowledge and experience, and we wish him a long and healthy retirement!



YOU CAN WATCH OUR
TRIBUTE TO KEV ON
THE CLIMBSCOTLAND
YOUTUBE CHANNEL



CHANGE OF DIRECTORS

At the 2023 Mountaineering Scotland AGM, there was a change of Directors for ClimbScotland with Lucy Fraser finishing her term in the volunteer director role. Lucy had served during a challenging time for the organisation, going through and coming out of Covid and has provided guidance, support and strategic input to the team. We'd like to thank Lucy for all her efforts and contributions during her time as Director for ClimbScotland.

Filling Lucy's shoes was incoming director Hugo Allan. Hugo joins the board bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience, with his own children being involved in youth climbing clubs and competitions, being a Chair on the Quickdraw Climbing Club board and having a passion for the Scottish Mountains, completing the Munros in 2007.



Hugo Allan and Lucy Fraser at the 2023 AGM

OUR ORGANISATION



Mountaineering Scotland have ended the 2023-2024 financial reporting period with a small surplus of £2,626 compared to a forecast deficit of £23,506, a result that is very welcome and recognises the hard work to reduce and remove costs by the team. A generous and substantial legacy donation contributed to this improvement and as such the board and staff team remain focussed on ensuring financial sustainability through continued efforts to address costs and generate additional revenue to balance the books. The pressures of operational, insurance and cost of living increases continues to challenge the finances.

OUR INCOME

Member subscriptions continue to provide the backbone of Mountaineering Scotland's income, enabling the team to continue the wide range of work done on behalf of our members. Membership income was 11% higher than the previous financial year, due to the fee increases effective from 1st April 2023. Overall membership numbers were slightly down on the previous year, with individual memberships dropping by 3% and club memberships increasing by 2%. Membership income made up 57% of the total income for 2023-2024.

Sportscotland investment as of March 2024 was slightly higher than the 2023 investment at £252,050 (2023 = £238,300) (6% increase). This figure represents 35% of the total income, down from 37% in 2023, (was 38% in 2022 and 40% in 2021). This funding supports our mountain safety programme, Climbscotland and our member services.

Other income includes surplus from Mountain Safety courses, sponsorship, member donations and merchandise sales through the online shop.

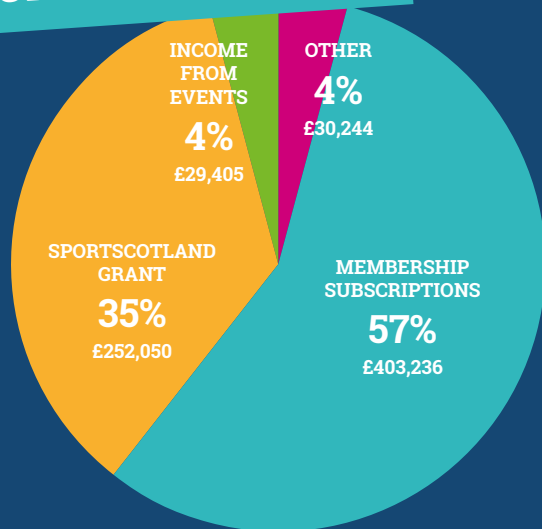
OUR EXPENDITURE

Considerable savings on general office and administrative costs were made compared to previous year and current year budget. Property costs remained consistent with the previous financial year and ahead of budget. A review of how membership communications are delivered meant that membership services costs were better than budget, with advertising revenue covering the cost of the magazine and some reductions in marketing costs. Despite the notable savings, expenditure remains higher than previous year by 7%.

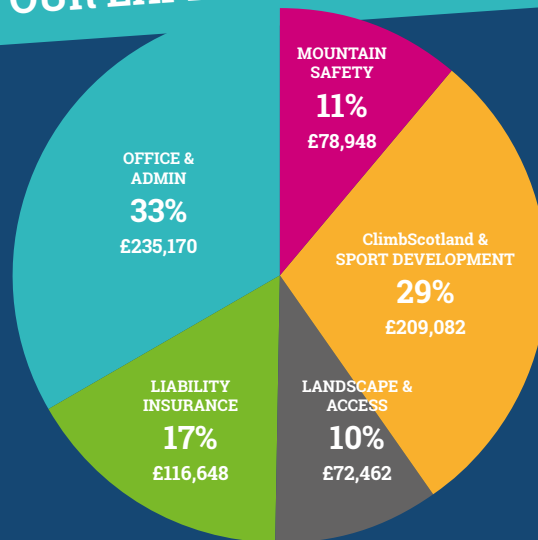
Public liability insurance is a key part of our membership package with 73% of our 2023 member survey respondents saying insurance was one of the top reasons for being a member. Costs for this benefit, however, have increased again from £108,099 to £116,648 (a further 8% increase on top of the 36% increase in 2022-2023).

The insurance limit of liability on the Mountaineering Scotland liability policy has been increased from £15m to £20m due to feedback and advice from our insurance brokers, a result of some recent claims on similar policies. This additional protection has added a small but noteworthy additional cost. Whilst MS remains committed to offering liability insurance as a membership benefit, the board and staff team continue to look at how this is packaged to members.

OUR INCOME 2023-24

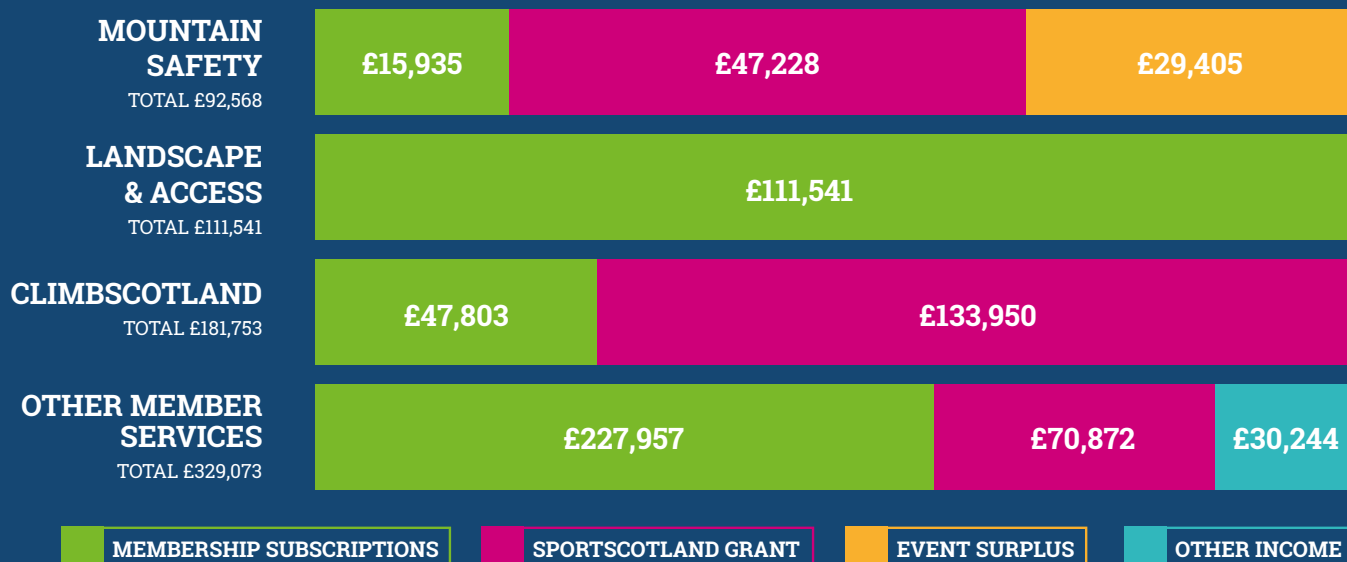


OUR EXPENDITURE 2023-24



OUR FUNDING AND HOW WE USE IT

We have illustrated how our funding is used across each activity, aligned with grant funding objectives from SportScotland, event surplus and membership subscriptions.



INCOME & EXPENDITURE 2023-24

For the period

1 Apr - 31 Mar

	2023-24	2022-23
INCOME		
Membership	£403,236	£362,293
Grants	£252,050	£238,300
Other income	£59,649	£38,503
Total income	£714,935	£639,096
EXPENSES		
Staff costs	£486,378	£440,905
Civil liability insurance	£116,648	£108,099
Magazine costs	£24,626	£31,245
Other costs	£84,657	£84,813
Total expenses	£712,309	£665,062
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	£2,626	(£25,966)



OUR ORGANISATION

This year brought further changes to the staff team with the retirement of Denise Logan in June 2023 after 16 years with Mountaineering Scotland and we welcomed Fiona Kerr who took over as the new Finance and Office administrator. Kevin Howett also retired after 35 years with Mountaineering Scotland and his vast knowledge of all things climbing will be greatly missed. Malcolm Airey was appointed as St Johns Mountain Safety Advisor in August taking over from Ali Rose who has done an excellent job delivering the student safety programme over the last few years during and post pandemic.

Staff continued to work a hybrid system based at the Granary and working flexibly from home. The upgraded meeting room with large screen and video conferencing facility is proving to be a big success enabling hybrid and face to face meetings to take place. As well as our formal board meetings it is regularly in use by staff but is also available to clubs and partner organisations who can book it for use during office hours.

Our CEO Stuart Younie continued to report quarterly to the board on the delivery of the operational plan. With the support of Alistair Todd, Director for Snowsports Touring, a review of health and safety arrangements was initiated including the adoption of a new policy and an update to the delivery arrangements for our courses and events. In response to the recommendations in the KMPG development audit Stuart also attended risk management training in September which helped to inform the development of a new risk policy and review of the risk register which was recently signed off by Directors.

Also in relation to governance, a recruitment process was initiated to find successors to our outgoing Director of Mountain Safety, Director for Climb Scotland and President and we were delighted to welcome Brendan Hughes, Hugo Allan and Anne Butler who were appointed at the AGM in November.

We have continued to benefit from the support provided by sportscotland through our new partnership manager Derek O'Riorden, and Stuart continues to represent Mountaineering Scotland through the sportscotland CEO Forum. We received positive feedback from our investment midpoint review in October 2023 and Stuart also supported sportscotland in the appointment of a new auditor following the end of their current contract with KPMG.

OUR PEOPLE


16,196
MEMBERS


8,346
CLUB
MEMBERS


138
AFFILIATED
CLUBS


10
VOLUNTEER
DIRECTORS


14
STAFF

International Womens Day 2024
- Staff and board



OUR THANKS GO TO....

All the members and freelance instructors who support our mountain safety and skills courses.

The many dedicated volunteers that support youth climbing clubs, competitions, affiliated clubs and club huts.

All the members of the Scottish Climbing Wall Network, especially those that host competitions and events.

Our partners:

sportscotland, DMM, Scottish Mountain Rescue, Glenmore Lodge, Mountain Training Scotland, Association of Mountaineering Instructors, St John Scotland, Police Scotland, Mountain Weather Information Service, Met Office Aberdeen, Mountain Skills and Safety Scotland, Scottish Avalanche Information Service, Herald & Times Group, Snowsport Scotland, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, Mill Cottage Trust, The Munro Society, Scottish Mountaineering Trust, The Winter Sports Legacy Trust, NICAS, Association of British Climbing Walls, GB Climbing, BDO, BMC, Mountaineering Ireland, Tiso, Cotswold Outdoor, Craigdon Mountain Sports.

sportscotland
the national agency for sport





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