



THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND

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The Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS)

Annual Report 2008-2009

The MCofS Annual Report aims to provide a concise report of the organisation's activities and financial performance over the period from April 2008 to March 2009.

President's Overview by Chris Townsend

The last year has seen progress in many fields and I think MCofS is now a more efficient and effective organisation. Following strategic planning which involved all members of the Executive, we have looked again at the management structure and decided it could be improved even more, hence the EGM in September.

The aim of these changes is to make MCofS more flexible, more responsive and more democratic. Volunteering will become easier and a more attractive proposition – there will be no need for a commitment to four-hourly meetings required! - and communication between the elected Board and our members will be better.

Many people are due thanks for these improvements, both dedicated volunteers and staff. We have a great team working for us and it is they who keep MCofS moving forward and delivering improvements.

Mountain Safety has been one of our strong points in recent years due to our outgoing Mountain Safety Adviser (MSA) Roger Wild. I would like to express particular thanks to him for all his work. Happily Roger is not leaving us completely and takes up a new role as Scottish Students' Mountain Safety Officer, a new post funded by the Catherine Smith Memorial Trust. Roger has done much good work with students in recent years and this is an opportunity for him to build on and expand this important area. Appointing a new MSA was clearly of major importance and I'm delighted to welcome Heather Morning - an experienced and respected mountaineer - to our team.

We also have a new post of Membership Development Officer and I'm pleased to welcome Mike Dales to the team. Mike is no newcomer to MCofS, having been Access and Conservation Officer until a few years ago. The MCofS Board and Executive have recognised – and had it forcefully pointed out to us! – that communication – particularly with clubs - could be

improved. Mike's remit will seek to address this as he works on our membership development aims, including improving support for clubs and raising our profile with the media.

Despite the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, access issues continue to be a problem in some areas and a major work area for Access and Conservation Officer (ACO) Hebe Carus. We cannot take access rights for granted. New fences, poor signage and misinformation are still problems. Protecting the mountain landscape and biodiversity is also of primary importance, and Hebe has worked hard responding to consultations and in her work with partner organisations.

In other areas *Scottish Mountaineer* editor Kevin Howett has continued to produce an excellent magazine that we can be proud of, as well as working hard in the newly-defined role of Mountaineering Development Officer. Membership Administrator Jane Anderson and Bookkeeper Denise Logan have ensured that these areas are run efficiently. And finally Chief Officer David Gibson has worked amazingly hard, overseeing all our work, acting as a point of contact for the media and producing our detailed plans for the future.

None of this work would be possible without funding of course and we are very grateful to have support from sportscotland, the Scottish Mountaineering Trust (SMT), The BMC and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), all of whom recognise MCoFS' importance and influence. And of course, membership subscriptions are extremely significant and it is good news that membership is increasing, a trend we are working to continue.

Treasurer's Report by John Irving

This is the first full year's accounts since incorporation. The figures summarised below show a small surplus over the year. The full certified accounts will be published in the November edition of *Scottish Mountaineer*, following approval at the AGM. Their publication will also be notified by a news item on our website www.mcofs.org.uk as soon as possible. The summary shown below has been prepared from the year end (31/03/2009) provisional figures.

Overall the financial situation is satisfactory. Reserves at about £120,000 are close to the 35% of turnover agreed by the Board. These reserves earned a high rate of interest in a corporate account until the reduction in bank rates in October. As advised at the AGM in 2008, reserves no longer include trust and legacy funds, and these are now in separate bank accounts and the responsibility of the respective trustees.

Income

Membership income showed a small increase over last year, partly from the increase in club per capita fees and from the increase in individual members. The investment from sportscotland was similar to the previous year and will

continue at the same value for 2009/2010. This was the last year for the SNH grant for the access and conservation work programme, which concluded in January.

There are a number of small sources of income. The meeting room at the Old Granary is let out to groups for a small rental, and sales of books and maps have not yet shown a profit. Our various courses generally run at cost so that any income is small. Bank interest, subject to corporation tax, amounted to just over £5000, however this will virtually disappear in the next financial year.

Donations received throughout the year have been paid into trust accounts where specified by the donor or simply shared across the three trust funds, these being the Mountain Safety Trust, Henry Hindmarch Access and Conservation Trust and the Mill Cottage Trust.

Expenditure

As usual, the largest item is staff salaries and costs. Expenses have been well below budget, both for staff and volunteers and this is the major contribution to the small surplus achieved. Reduced expenses partly come from increasing use of electronic means of communication. However the cost of printing and the rental of the photocopier contribute about 20% of the administration expenses, a potential area for cost savings.

Some of the expenditure is incurred by the role of MCoFS in managing the contract and funding for the mountain weather service (MWIS) and for Mountain Leader Training Scotland (MLTS). The phasing of payments explains the cost of the contribution to MLTS.

Civil liability insurance premiums increased this year, partly from an increase in costs but also because cover was increased from £5m to £10m. A further small increase in premium is expected this year, although this will not be passed on to members through an increase in subscriptions at this time.

Scottish Mountaineer costs now include editorial expenses which explain the apparent increase in cost. (Previous year £18,000)

Outlook

The strategic plan approved earlier this year, as circulated to Club Secretaries and published in *Scottish Mountaineer* and www.mcofs.org.uk, includes financial projections.

It anticipates no change in sportscotland investment, a small increase in membership levels and a small increase in membership fees. This year, no increase in fees will be necessary.

The AGM in September falls at a time not always convenient for Club Secretaries and Treasurers. It would be easier for Treasurers if any increase could be predicted 12 to 18 months ahead. Operating costs are expected to rise by 2-3%, liability insurance premium is likely to rise by 5% this year and

salary costs may increase. The strategic plan suggests an increase in fees of circa 5-10% in 2010 and again in 2012, subject to AGM approval. This should allow Clubs to plan ahead.

New grants have been agreed from SMT and from The BMC to support our access and conservation work. Each grant is for £10,000 per annum, for 3 and 4 years respectively.

sportscotland is keen to increase participation in outdoor activities and sports. MCofS shares this vision and needs to demonstrate how this is achieved. Public policy could change with the next election threatening our financial support. However I would remain optimistic that mountaineering, climbing and hill walking will always be an important part of Scottish life.

Acknowledgements

I must express my thanks and appreciation to Mrs Denise Logan, our Bookkeeper for all her work, particularly continuing despite serious medical problems. My task has been much easier thanks to all the officers for their enthusiasm and hard graft.

Accounts Summary

Income	Membership Fees	Club	£87,784	
		Individual	£47,294	
		Other	£27,134	
		<u>Sub Total</u>		<u>£162,212</u>
		sportscotland Investment		£155,000
		sportscotland Membership Database		£ 15,600
		SNH Grant		£ 13,922
		Other		£ 5,493
				<u>Total £352,227</u>
Expenditure	Salaries + costs			£134,071
	MWIS			£ 42,300
	MLTS (2 years)			£ 40,000
	Scottish Mountaineer			£ 26,808
	Civil Liability Insurance			£ 29,426
	Admin. / Office			£ 47,885
	Other			£ 15,694
		<u>Total</u>		<u>£336,184</u>
Bank Balance (31/03/2009)				<u>£154,155</u>

Chief Officer's Report by David Gibson

MCofS is the only organisation which acts to represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering.

Working together, the elected members of the Executive and Officers developed and agreed Strategic and Operational Plans covering the period 2009-2014. I believe that all share the view that we have a duty to our members and stakeholders to ensure that we have clearly articulated aims, and focused plans against which progress is measured.

MCofS is going through a period of significant change. That change is necessary, planned and often challenging.

It is necessary because simply meeting the needs of the membership is insufficient if we are to evolve as an effective organisation. Indeed, representing the views of the membership effectively requires that we position ourselves to act on their behalf and engage with a range of partners – many of them involved in mountaineering – and many for which mountaineering in all its forms is of growing importance.

We are also planning for change. In doing so I believe that the elected members of the Board and Executive have not only given outstanding levels of personal commitment, but have moved to a shared strategic view which enables MCofS to speak clearly and with focus on behalf of Scottish mountaineering.

Board directors Brenda Clough and Brian Linington have been involved at the centre of these plans and taken on some of the more significant challenges.

Brenda worked on the development of a new staff structure and revised pay and conditions of employment for all staff. This has not been easy work, but we were able to implement these changes at the start of April 2009 and they appear, so far, to be working as well as we could have hoped.

Brian has contributed a great deal to strategic discussions and chaired the working group which followed the Executive's decision to disband itself, which was taken in December. The working group made recommendations to the Executive concerning the future board structure and how to engage with and inform members of the need for, and nature of the changes. The changes mean we have had to call an Extraordinary General Meeting to amend the Articles of Association, at which only those present may vote.

Your elected representatives and other volunteers have all made a significant contribution and with the move to more flexible working groups, which will inform and support the work of the officers and the Board, this should provide a framework in which new volunteers will feel able to contribute.

I would particularly like to thank staff for their continued commitment, patience and contribution, during what may have been a difficult and unsettling time for them, as well as for the organisation as a whole.

Our team will miss Irvine Butterfield, a volunteer of many years standing and prior to his final illness a regular visitor to the MCofS office. There are many

reminders of his work and contribution to Scottish mountaineering in the office.

Mountain Safety Report by Graeme Morrison

This has been an interesting and busy year for the Mountain Safety Committee. We have made significant progress with a number of initiatives, building on the success achieved under previous chair, Mary's Webster's excellent leadership.

Members will be aware that it was as a direct result of our effective lobbying, supported by members of the Scottish Mountain Safety Forum, that the Scottish Government awarded MCofS through sportscotland a grant of £42.3k per annum for 3 years, to ensure provision of forecasts for 5 mountain areas of Scotland, 365 days a year.

The resultant contract was awarded to Geoff Monk in October 2007, and the Committee, through the Chief Officer, manages the consultancy contract and monitors the effective provision, quality and accuracy of mountain weather forecasts. Enhancements to the range of forecast services, including improvements to the MWIS website and provision of mobile internet access will be implemented during the second quarter of 2009.

As Mountain Safety Adviser (MSA), Roger Wild obtained funding for a Hillwalking Essentials DVD aimed at providing entry-level walkers with essential information concerning route planning, navigation and mountain hazards. This was co-funded by, and produced with, Mountain Leader Training England and The BMC.

In addition, our 'Navigator's Dozen' – developed jointly by Roger and volunteer Bob Sharp – now provides a comprehensive, web-based navigation resource for all mountaineers hosted in the Mountain Safety section on www.mcofs.org.uk

Effective from June we have a newly-appointed MSA. Heather Morning brings a wealth of knowledge to the post and we look forward to working with her on new initiatives, as well as building on our already well-respected mountain safety portfolio.

The Committee also welcomed Roger Wild's appointment as MCofS Scottish Student Safety Mountain Safety Officer. We believe that we are fortunate to retain Roger's expertise at a time of change, and that his appointment enables the range of mountain safety initiatives to be expanded.

2009 opened sadly with the avalanche incident in Glencoe, attracting significant media interest, including Sky News, BBC Radio and TV News, and national and local press articles.

The Committee is keen to ensure that MCofS' response to media enquiries concerning mountain incidents emphasises that while mountaineering activities offer adventure, that there is no adventure without risk, and that self-reliance is the most important personal attribute for mountaineers. This type of coverage needs to be handled with sensitivity as we seek to promote interest in and awareness of the mountains, and inspire others to get involved in a sport that has something to offer all ages and abilities.

Another important dimension of our work is the provision of training and events to inform and educate. This year our MSA organised a range of 18 different courses and events related to mountaineering safety, attracting over 300 participants. These included navigation; safety talks to clubs; safety and good practice seminars; a first aid course for mountaineers; avalanche courses; talks at the Clachaig Inn and student winter skills.

Finally, I have great pleasure in thanking both Mary Webster and Roger Wild for their exceptional contribution over previous years. We now look to the future with the aim of promoting self reliance and safe practice in the mountains to a wide audience.

Membership Services Report by Brenda Clough

In preparing my third report on the workings of the Membership Services Committee I began to realise how much the ways of working in MCofS have changed over the last few years. In practice the Committee only met a couple of times and much more of our work was undertaken by e-mail and through small working groups. We also began to question if large committees meeting on a quarterly basis was the best way of conducting business.

In looking back, lots of things have happened, the Committee received the results of the non-member research undertaken through the use of volunteers and also the research into non-members undertaken at climbing walls. Both sets of research underlined the need for MCofS to raise its profile, attract more members and clearly set out the benefits of membership.

Since then there have been a number of positive outcomes, in June 2009 we appointed a part-time Membership Development Officer Mike Dales, to address these opportunities, and demonstrate that MCofS is relevant to mountaineers out there who have not joined, whilst continuing to support our existing members.

We increased our profile through advertising in TGO, the Sunday Herald, Hosteller and Trail amongst others, and had some excellent media coverage, including David Gibson having a slot on the Fred MacAulay Show.

This all helped drive traffic to www.mcofs.org.uk which had over 10,000 unique visitors in March 2009 alone, and contributed to an increase in membership to 10,300 including members of clubs. Mike will now be working

on the implementation of a marketing plan to further increase our membership.

Once again a small sub-group of the Committee have been responsible for organising this September's Annual Gathering at Glenmore Lodge. They did an excellent job in organising the last gathering in September 2008.

Individual Committee members have contributed to the work undertaken to develop and install a new membership database which should go live this year with a welcome grant of £15.6k and lots of support from sportscotland. The database is a long overdue requirement which will allow us to better communicate with and understand the needs of our membership.

David Gibson has been working on the development of a volunteering strategy to support all our volunteers much better and in a similar context Kevin has finalised a Mountaineering Events Protocol. These types of protocols are needed to ensure that we are not placing you as a volunteer at risk from legal action from any work that we offer to do on our behalf in taking part in events, especially involving young people and vulnerable adults.

MCofS is fully committed to the Equity Standard. The Standard provides a framework for assisting sports organisations to widen access and reduce inequalities in sport and physical activity from under-represented individuals, groups and communities especially women and girls, ethnic minority groups and disabled people. We have continued to develop our equity policies and have agreed an Equity Code of Practice with the aim of achieving the Foundation Level of the Equity Standard by 2010.

We launched our Legacy Pack in the August 2008 edition of the Scottish Mountaineer and received some welcome donations for our charitable trusts.

We decided to move publication of the magazine to Herald and Times Group, and this has enabled us to achieve a number of synergies, including tapping into other publications and websites in that Group, and improving our editorial efficiency. The new relationship is working well. We have also produced a digital version of the magazine and now publish the paper version on recycled paper – all moves towards a more sustainable MCofS.

A member of the Committee, John Leftley, continues to chair the Huts Working Group, which assists clubs which own such properties to come to terms with modern day demands in relation to legislation, disabilities, equity and child protection.

So, my many thanks to all the Committee members and volunteers for their contribution over the past year.

Access & Conservation Report by Hebe Carus

The Access and Conservation (A&C) work programme received external funding through a combination of SNH, SMT and BMC support. While support

from SMT and The BMC has been extended, the SNH contribution ceased in January 2009 after two years, due to grant restructuring and a hugely reduced budget.

It is a combination of the support received from these organisations, volunteer time, expertise and commitment, including the significant contribution made by A&C chair Richard Spencer, which has made the work programme possible.

Access

Implementation of some of the provisions of The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the associated Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) is still suffering from lack of adequate resources. This has been due in part to the statutory nature of Core Paths Plans, which have been prioritised by access authorities, together with issues relating to physical barriers, which received a large number of reports.

Consequently, issues of importance to mountaineers sometimes require effort to move them up the priority agenda, requiring a good deal of commitment from volunteers and staff. During the year we raised 124 unique enquiries and the majority of these have been dealt with.

Some longstanding issues remain unresolved (some of which originated before the reporting year) including Glen Lyon and Braemore. There have been some improvements at Invervar, achieved through work with the Local Access Forum. The Glen Dessary situation has been greatly improved through new signs that are approximately SOAC compliant.

Issues at Glen Doe are imminently concluding, due to the end of the construction phase of the hydro scheme, and MCoFS staff and volunteers will carefully address similar issues in new consultations.

We continue to deal with access issues at the most appropriate level - local or national. This has involved Local Access Forums (LAFs) and the National Access Forum (NAF) respectively. The NAF eventually published a stalking signage guidance paper, in response to a paper presented by the ACO. The NAF guidance can now be used as a tool to resolve relevant issues.

We would like to thank all LAF members that continue to represent mountaineering interests. We held a workshop to support those involved in representing mountaineering, and we are planning to run a similar event this autumn.

The Hillphones Service continues to be an important area of work, a key aspect of which is monitoring message content. Many thanks are due to volunteer Dougal Roy, for assisting with that monitoring. Dougal has also put in much work preparing a partnership bid to SNH for a web-based version of *Heading for the Scottish Hills*. Response to a members' survey of the usefulness of this facility assisted in moving this forward and positive noises

are now emanating from SNH, although at the time of writing there is yet to be an official go ahead.

Conservation

The Beaully-Denny Inquiry was eventually completed at the end of 2007 and the Reporter is expected to announce a decision in autumn 2009.

The A&C Committee responded to other upland development plans including a number of renewable energy projects, with much work being done by the former chair of the A&C Committee, Beryl Leatherland, to whom we offer many thanks.

Occasional reports also continued to come in regarding bulldozed tracks in the uplands, including a curious case for which the ACO has lodged a procedural objection, in the hope that following cases are dealt with in a more productive manner. If successful, there should be no doubt with perpetrators what is permissible and what is not. Planning authorities continue to see these as low priority unless in designated areas and, despite pressure from us, there is little that can be done without a change in legislation.

The ACO is currently seeking ways to influence this through raising the profile of the value of wild land. This has included making representation regarding the consolidation of the Scottish Planning Policy exercise where we are emphasising the importance of retaining the profile of wildness.

During the year 21 responses were made to local and national issues that would potentially affect the mountaineering environment. All these responses have been posted on www.mcofs.org.uk .

Often a local voice can have a significant influence over the outcome of such applications. We therefore urge all mountaineers to involve themselves in consultations and local planning applications.

We contributed to other responses through our partnership and involvement with Scottish Environment LINK and its members. These relationships help to increase our sphere of influence and MCofS is represented on three LINK task forces: Biodiversity and Access (Hebe Carus); Landscape (Beryl Leatherland) and the Scottish Environmental Funding Forum (Richard Spencer).

We also updated A&C position statements, which have been published on www.mcofs.org.uk ; we also published a new 'Where to Go ...' leaflet, and contributed numerous articles to the *Scottish Mountaineer* and www.mcofs.org.uk .

Writers from organisations of interest to mountaineers also contributed articles to the *Scottish Mountaineer* on various aspects of access and conservation.

Representation on other bodies

MCofS is a small organisation with many interests; volunteers and the ACO continue to represent MCofS on a wide range of external bodies. In addition to LINK, mentioned above, these are: Access and Conservation Trust; Deer Commission for Scotland Round Table; Local Access Forums (Argyll & Bute, Fife, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, Ross & Cromarty); MoD Scottish Liaison Committee; Montane Scrub Advisory Group; National Access Forum; National Trust for Scotland Council; Nevis Partnership; Perthshire Alliance for the Real Cairngorms (PARC); Scottish Natural Heritage NGO Recreation Liaison Group; Traprain Law Advisory Group; Upland Path Advisory Group, and the Upland Path Trust.

Mountaineering Development Report by Kevin Howett

A first 'Mountaineering Development Framework' for 'climbing' was completed. This directed mountaineering development work for the remainder of the year. It also led to the setting up of working groups to help advise and deliver MCofS initiatives, including a Youth Working Group and the Scottish Climbing Wall Network.

With changes in education with the Curriculum for Excellence, sports will be given greater emphasis at school. Critical to the future growth of our sport was MCofS' submission to the Scottish Government's "Pathways into Sport Inquiry", the second phase of the Health and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament's investigation into 'Children and Sport', 'Community Facilities', and 'Coaching'.

Coach Development

In 2007 the Mountaineering Co-ordination Group for the UK and Ireland (MCG) established an expert group – the National Source Group (NSG) - to consider the need for, and future of, coaching in mountaineering activities, and to advise the MCG of its recommendations.

We contributed extensively to the NSG, which submitted a report on possible future options for the development of coaching to the MCG in 2008.

The MCG endorsed the report and agreed that the NSG, administered by Mountain Leader Training UK, would investigate the preferred option. In the meantime, MCofS commissioned Dave MacLeod to write a series of extremely well-received 'CoachWise' articles for *Scottish Mountaineer* and www.mcofs.org.uk.

Bursaries

The MCofS Bursary grants for 2008/9 were awarded to the following:

- Nansens Endeavour Expedition (completed a crossing of the Greenland ice cap)

- Scottish Cordillera Expedition (Antony Barton, Oliver Metherall and Tom Chamberlain attempted the south west face of Nevado Huagaruncho in the remote Cordillera Oriental, reaching 5000m in bad weather)
- Alan Cassidy (completed a seven week trip across Europe's best sport climbing areas and raised his standard to 8a+ and attended two world cup competitions)
- Robert Mackenzie (achieved 21st at the World Youth Climbing Championships in Sydney)
- Steven Addison (attended two Ice Climbing World Cup competitions in Val Daone and Saas Fee as the youngest competitor)

Facilities Development

The international standard competition wall opened at Edinburgh Indoor Climbing Arena (EICA: Ratho) in August 2008, hosting a British competition (BICC) and British Trials. EICA: Ratho also applied to the MCofS for recognition as Scotland's National Indoor Climbing Arena and September 2009 will see its first international competition.

The Scottish Climbing Wall Network (SCWN) has led to closer working relationships between the leading Scottish walls and MCofS and we are jointly investigating initiatives for autumn and winter 2009.

With a strategic focus on developing grass-roots facilities, we have given advice to numerous climbing wall projects in schools (primary, high school and community sports facilities) and over 50,000 children now have access to a wall in Scottish schools and this is rising quickly.

Youth Development

The MCofS Youth Working Group was convened by Executive member Scott Muir, and their deliberations informed the Strategic and Operational Plans for 2009-2014.

Potentially one of the most important developments for Scottish climbing was the establishment of a climbing club specifically for children: the Quickdraw Club was set up by parents with support from MCofS and with direct links to EICA: Ratho. This unique club followed advice set out by MCofS to enable kids and parents to gain membership and benefits of MCofS through affiliation whilst retaining parental responsibilities for their child's welfare. Two other clubs in Aviemore and Aberdeen are now being developed.

The MCofS Youth Climbing Series Competition (YCS) 2008 saw a 13% increase in the number of competitors in the regional rounds in April. The final is in London in June 2009.

Competitions Scene

After several years of on-off dry-tooling competitions (The Scottish Mixed Masters) several of the main climbing walls came together to present a five-

event series in November 2008. This was supported by MCofS and saw on average, forty competitors, including a junior category with 4 entrants.

Equity

The MCofS Visually Impaired Course 2008 saw 10 people engage in canoeing, climbing and walking, along with an equal number of sighted volunteers. Thanks go to volunteer Norma Davidson for co-ordinating the course, Glenmore Lodge for administering and hosting it, and to the SMT for grant support.

Issued: 24 June 2009

David Gibson

Company Secretary

Any questions concerning the Annual Report should be addressed to David Gibson, Company Secretary, The Mountaineering Council, The Old Granary, West Mill Street, Perth, PH1 5QP. Company number SC322717.