



THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND

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Annual Report and Uncertified Accounts 2009-2010

1. President's Overview by Chris Townsend

The last year has been one of consolidation following the changes of the last few years with the Board and Officers becoming used to the new system of advisory groups that have replaced the rather inflexible committee structure. Developing remits for the new groups has taken time but this new flexible system is enabling more time to be spent on productive work rather than bureaucratic details. I must say it is a relief not to have four-hour meetings which too often produced very little.

Whilst the Board has the responsibility for running the MCofS and meets regularly to oversee the planning and direction of our organisation, it is the officers and staff who carry out the work from day to day and we are lucky to have such exceptional and hard working staff. This last year has seen much progress in every field. Whilst not an area in which I can claim any expertise, I am pleased at all that is happening in rock climbing and competitions, especially with youth climbing. Encouraging the next generation is important for all aspects of mountaineering.

In Mountain Safety the range of activities and courses has been expanded over the last year and now includes GPS training, ice climbing in Norway and one that I think is particularly important, training for trainers for members of clubs who want to lead days out or advise and teach other members. Passing on skills is another key way of encouraging up and coming mountaineers.

There have been big strides in access and conservation work too, especially with regard to hill tracks. I think getting a debate in the Scottish Parliament is significant and shows that our influence is increasing. Conservation is my particular interest (I've taken on chairing the new A&C Advisory Group) and the reason I originally became involved with the MCofS. I am the MCofS representative on the Beaully-Denny Landscape Group and of course the most unwelcome news in the last year has been that the pylon line will go ahead, opening up many mountain areas to the possibility of wind and hydro schemes. Future work will involve trying to mitigate the impact of the pylons and opposing energy developments in mountain areas. Despite all the efforts of the MCofS and other organisations our mountains are still slowly being degraded and their wildness reduced. It is imperative that everything possible is done to protect what is left.

All this work depends on us, the members of the MCofS. We are the organisation and if we want to collectively work to encourage the mountaineers of the future, to train leaders and share skills, to protect the mountains we love then we have to provide support and finance. I would like the MCofS to do more – there is plenty of valuable work just waiting to be started – but this will require more volunteers and more money. As it is, the Board is tailoring activities to the financial reality. The whole question of subscription rates is a thorny one but it comes down to deciding what members want from the MCofS and whether we are prepared to pay for it.

Meetings, papers, finance, plans – all the office work that keeps the MCofS running – may seem to overwhelm everything else. We must never forget what it's all about though – the mountains and all the adventures and pleasure they offer. Days on the hill remind me why I am involved with the MCofS. This overview has been about the work of the MCofS over the last year but my

strongest memories, as I am sure is true for many of you, are of the glorious last winter. As I write this in late May there is still snow on the tops. When I think back to 2010 it will be of snow and ice – the fantastic views of white hills stretching into the distance, the long ski tours, the snow camps, igloos on the Moine Mhor, day after day of shining sun and firm snow. Overall it's been a good year.

2. Chief Officer's Report by David Gibson

MCofS has reached the great age of 40 and there is good reason to celebrate. 2009-2010 was a very good year, and I am delighted to report record membership levels, with individual members up 18% in the last year alone. We attracted more people to our mountain safety lectures and courses than ever before, and can celebrate the fact that Scottish youngsters now make up the majority of the British youth climbing team.

We strengthened our team during 2009, with Heather Morning and Mike Dales joining in Mountain Safety and Membership Development roles. Heather made an immediate and positive impact, identifying new ways in which we can attract potential female members, by organising ladies-only courses, all of which have been fully subscribed since their launch!

We are also fortunate that Roger Wild continues his mountain safety work with Scottish student clubs; although Roger's post is funded by the Catherine Smith Memorial Trust he is still very much part of the team.

We've made a real effort to improve our communications and as a result we now have an up-to-date website which attracts 1000 visitors daily. In Scottish Mountaineer we continue to offer a uniquely Scottish, member-focused, high quality perspective on mountaineering activities; our Editor rightly refusing to adopt the more formulaic approach of the monthly magazines. We also introduced News4Clubs, with the aim of better-informing clubs about our work and the opportunities and benefits available to their members; hopefully as members of clubs you are getting this information!

MCofS was founded by Scottish climbing clubs, and more than 130 clubs are now members. Volunteering in today's economic and social environment is a real commitment, and we exist in part to represent and support clubs, our work helping volunteers running clubs to do so at less cost and with less effort than would otherwise be the case.

Many members join MCofS for altruistic reasons – choosing to support our access, conservation and mountain safety work. But many members wish to enjoy a rounded package of benefits and services, so we have dramatically improved our range of member discounts, with more than 80 retail outlets and service providers now recognising the MCofS membership card. If you are an active hill-goer, then you should easily recoup your membership subscription. We are also committed to introducing MCofS registration cards for members of clubs in 2011.

We've tried hard to improve the way we work with the media, and welcome any opportunity to represent the mountaineering view. I've been involved with some interesting exchanges, in which MCofS views have been challenged, for example over the subject of waymarking and its relationship with mountain safety. We need to listen to others' views and the Board will actively review and reappraise our position where appropriate. We welcome public and internal debate; otherwise we risk becoming out of touch!

The mountain landscape is under increasing pressure from development. Our Access & Conservation Officer's work with the hill-tracks petition and parliamentary debate is a fine example of how MCofS as your organisation can make a real difference. The petition also demonstrates that your actions as members are really important as you can influence decisions which affect your playground, the mountains.

MCofS has to work with many partner organisations to be effective, and to effectively represent our members' interests, be it mountaineering at UK level; mountain safety and training; access and environmental issues; with climbing wall operators; or with the government and its agencies. We value all these relationships and the individuals who meet with us to facilitate this work.

So, as we enter the 40th year, I would like to thank our staff, and all the volunteers who work with and for MCofS, particularly the directors. Thanks also to sportscotland who will again support MCofS and Scottish mountaineering to the extent of £155,000 in 2010-2011; the BMC; the Scottish Mountaineering Trust; Summit Financial Services (financial support for the Annual Gathering 2009) and to the many others who have made voluntary donations.

And thank you, our members and clubs, for your continued and valuable support. And remember, if we are in for a period of financial austerity, what better way to get way from it all than to get out and enjoy the mountains. Tell your friends, and encourage them to join us!

3. Treasurer's Report by John B. Irving

The following 2009-2010 report is written using the unaudited provisional accounts shown in the appendix to this report. These are different from the certified accounts which will be available in late June 2010 for publication on the website and eventually in the Scottish Mountaineer. Printed copies will be available from the office in Perth and issued at the AGM on 4 September 2010. The comparison of unaudited and certified 2008-2009 accounts caused some confusion at last year's AGM and hopefully members will appreciate the limitations that timing issues have on the preparation of these reports.

3.1 Income

sportscotland invested £155,300 again in our activities; some of this was for specific projects such as the mountain weather service and Mountain Leader Training Scotland (MLTS). Our work promoting mountain safety and the development of climbing at both grass-roots and elite level is also strongly supported by their investment.

We are very grateful to the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC for their continued support for our access and conservation work; both contribute £10,000 per annum.

We saw an increase in income from individual members including joint and family memberships, and those claiming concessionary rates, of about £8,000 for the year. Both individual youth and MLTS registrant members have shown a decrease.

The AGM in September 2009 agreed to alter the subscription year for clubs. Previously this had followed the date of the AGM, timing which had caused confusion for club treasurers. It was felt that a fixed financial year (April to March) would be more acceptable, except for university clubs. As a result of the change, clubs paid for part of the full year (£7.50 per adult member) prior to 31 March 2010, resulting in a reduction in income compared with the previous year.

Income from sales, i.e. courses, books and DVDs, did increase in the year. Actual profit was small since most of these sales are for the benefit of members. Interest from the bank accounts also fell so that the interest almost balances bank charges.

3.2 Expenditure

The main increase in expenditure related to staff salaries. A small cost of living increase was paid in April 2009 and Mike Dales and Heather Morning joined in June 2009. Expenses for staff were below budget as were those for volunteers and meetings.

The premium for Civil Liability Insurance increased by just over £5,000; this was partly due to the increase in membership and partly to an increase in total liability, which is now £10m.

We paid a total of £24,000 to MLTS, being £20,000 from sportscotland investment which goes directly to MLTS, and a further MCofS contribution of £4,000, towards their administration costs.

MCofS administration and office costs declined by about £2,000; the new membership database is now operational following receipt of assistance for the capital costs from sportscotland. The running costs will be about £5,000 per year, however, we expect a significant reduction in administrative time and in postage and telephone costs next year.

3.3 Reserves

Total reserves will be about £80,000 or 20% of turnover. Companies House guidelines state that reserves should be about 30% of turnover, the Board is aware of the variance and will be taking steps to correct this.

3.4 The Future

The 5 year strategic plan (2009-2013) included a 5% increase in both income and expenditure, while retaining reserves of 30% of turnover. Membership has been increasing in a very satisfactory trend although club membership is static. Individual members and members of clubs now total in excess of 10,500.

During the year, we had a number of meetings round the country. Feedback from clubs indicated a reluctance to accept a significant increase in subscription costs, even while recognising that individual members contribute disproportionately for similar levels of service.

Looking forward, we believe that sportscotland funding will not increase in the foreseeable future and the state of public finance suggests that a reduction may be possible. At the same time, demand for mountain safety courses, events and competitions mean that staff are very busy. We also have to deal with some unpredictable costs, including insurance premiums and any costs which are subject to inflationary pressures.

The Board will therefore propose changes in subscriptions at the forthcoming AGM. If approved by members, these will be effective from 1 April 2011, and include an increase of £2 per adult in club subscriptions, together with changes to some individual member subscriptions.

Increases have to be justified and the Board strongly believes in the importance and relevance of MCofS' work to represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering, a remit agreed by elected members in 2009. We hope that through the information provided on our website, Scottish Mountaineer, News4Clubs and through other media, that members recognise that we provide good value for your subscription in the various ways that we address this remit.

3.5 Trusts

Under new regulations for charities and trusts, these must be considered separately from 'parent bodies'. MCofS provides trustees for 3 trusts and jointly with the BMC, for the Alex Macintyre Memorial Hut in Onich, and the Glen Brittle (War) Memorial Hut in Skye. The 3 trusts are the Mill Cottage Trust, Mountain Safety Trust and the Henry Hindmarch Access & Conservation Trust.

Mill Cottage is a popular hut used by many clubs. Any profit made is donated to mountain safety. During last year improvements to the showers were made with financial help from the Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

The Mountain Safety Trust has funded several courses including winter skills particularly for students, and organised by Roger Wild. The trust received just over £11,000 from the winding up of the Boots Across Scotland charity, with special note of the Martin Davies Memorial Award.

The trustees of the Henry Hindmarch Access & Conservation Trust are currently looking at taking over the responsibilities and assets of the Footpath Trust. The latter was set up with European and Heritage Lottery Funding to build the path on Stac Pollaidh. SNH has been funding maintenance for about 7 years although this work will finish in 2014.

The Alex Macintyre Memorial Hut is currently undergoing refurbishment thanks to loans from both the BMC and MCoS (£5000 over 5 years), and financial support from the Scottish Mountaineering Trust.

4. Club Affairs & Development by Ron Payne

The Director for Club Affairs and Development is a new position on the Board resulting from the changes in governance at last year's AGM. Setting up the new portfolio has given me a busy and challenging year. I see the role of the Director for Clubs as representing clubs to the Board and the Board to clubs. This is not always straightforward and rarely easy. I am one of eight directors and we have a statutory responsibility to the overall organisation beyond our individual portfolios.

I am fortunate to be supported by the Clubs Advisory Group (CAG). They represent a range of clubs and their views do have influence with the Board. In the main we carry out deliberations by email.

A wide range of fundamental issues have been covered during the year. The first, which resulted from the AGM, was to examine the club block vote arrangement and I established a working group for this purpose, which decided in favour of the status quo.

The CAG decided to undertake research with clubs and developed a questionnaire. The results and analysis will be invaluable in adding to our knowledge and aspirations of our Club Members and I am grateful to all the clubs who took the time to respond.

The initial Club Seminar will take place at the Annual Meet, on the same day as the AGM on 4 September 2010. I believe it will be a useful and exciting seminar which will equip clubs with some valuable tools to aid their growth and development.

The Huts Advisory Group, (HAG), previously the Huts Working Group, and chaired by John Leftley, continues to provide information and advice that is relevant to the operation of mountain huts. To this end the group collaborates closely with the BMC's Huts Group in the production of a series of guidelines. Seminars are held biennially and the next one is forthcoming in November 2010. One of the most important services provided by the HAG is the publication of the Huts Directory, which is updated regularly and is downloadable free from the MCoS website. Members of HAG participate in the management of the three national huts (Alex MacIntyre, Glen Brittle and Mill Cottage) either as trustees or committee members.

Looking forward: how do we take forward Club Development and increase engagement of clubs? Some of the answers will lie in the analysis of the Club Questionnaire. I believe communication is important and the News4Clubs email newsletter has an important role to play. I usually manage to write a short piece for this each month. How should the CAG better represent and interface with clubs?

We have covered considerable ground this year and this is due to the participation and feedback from the members of the Voting Review Working Group, the Clubs Advisory Group, and John Leftley and the Huts Advisory Group. My thanks go to all of them.

5. Access & Conservation by Hebe Carus

This report provides a summary of our Access & Conservation (A&C) work during the year. I regularly update our website and publish articles in *Scottish Mountaineer* relating to this area of our work.

A&C work is funded jointly by the MCofS, and grants of £10,000 each from the BMC and SMT, with the remainder made by occasional small project grants.

5.1 Access

Due to the statutory nature of Core Paths Plans (CPP), such plans have been the focus of most Access Authorities since 2004 when the Act came into force. It is increasingly looking like they will continue to be prioritised, due to the need to ensure CPP implementation, which has little impact on mountaineering interests.

As a result, issues of interest to mountaineers are sometimes difficult to move up the priority agenda, but this is not through lack of commitment from me and your volunteers. Between us, we raised and addressed 113 unique access enquiries. Securing continued access continues to be a priority in response to planning developments such as renewable energy projects.

MCofS continues to support Local Access Forum (LAF) members through training and advice, as well as active involvement on the National Access Forum (NAF). Through the NAF Stalking Communications sub-group, the pilot for the Heading for the Scottish Hills website is planned to launch in August 2010. We would of course, like to thank all LAF members that continue to represent mountaineering interests.

Spring 2010 saw the start of a planned annual release of up-to-date information for climbers on bird nest issues, with the aim of assisting trip planning, exchanging information within the climbing community, and promoting responsible access.

5.2 Conservation

Responses to renewable developments remain an important, though time-consuming area of my work, together with responses to the new Local Development Plans. All responses to consultations have been posted on the MCofS website. We urge all our members and other mountaineers to involve themselves in consultations and local planning applications - often a local voice has as much influence as a remote organisation.

During the year I made 35 responses to local and national issues that would potentially affect the mountain environment (more than a 50% increase on last year). We contributed to other responses through Scottish Environment LINK in order to increase our sphere of influence and MCofS were represented on 3 LINK task forces: Biodiversity and Access (Hebe Carus); Landscape (Beryl Leatherland) and the Scottish Environmental Funding Forum (Richard Spencer).

On behalf of MCofS, I would particularly like to thank Beryl Leatherland for the huge amount of assistance she provides in responding to renewable developments, and for her work on the Landscape Task Force.

I also launched a campaign, in association with a number of MSPs, to raise the profile of the issue of degradation of our countryside through lack of planning control over hill tracks being bulldozed through wild areas. This has attracted signatures on an e-petition way beyond what is usual for parliamentary e-petitions, and resulted in a debate in the Scottish Parliament.

5.3 Representing Mountaineering with Other Organisations

MCofS is a small organisation with many interests; together with our volunteers, I continued to work to represent mountaineering interests with 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, Cairngorms National Park, Ross & Cromarty); Ministry of Defence Scottish Liaison Committee; Montane Scrub Advisory Group; National Access Forum; National Trust for Scotland Council; Nevis Partnership; Perthshire Alliance for the Real Cairngorms; Scottish Natural Heritage NGO Recreation Liaison Group; Traprain Law Advisory Group; Upland Path Advisory Group, and Upland Path Trust.

6. Mountain Safety by Heather Morning

This has been an interesting and busy year for Mountain Safety. Following the AGM in 2009, the previous Mountain Safety Committee became the Mountain Safety Advisory Group (MSAG). The Group is made up of representatives from a range of mountaineering organisations which have direct involvement in, or influence on, mountain safety issues. As such the group exists to inform and support my work, and I am grateful to the out-going chair Graeme Morrison for his help and support since I joined MCofS in June 2009.

Rosie Goolden MIC was co-opted to the Board to replace Graeme in May 2010, and as director of Mountain Safety now chairs the Advisory Group and the Scottish Mountain Safety Forum (SMSF). The SMSF includes representatives of many outdoor and sports organisations, together with representatives of The Association of Chief Police Officers, SNH, the Scottish Government and sportscotland.

The 2009-2010 mountain safety programme was a huge success with a total of 932 people involved in mountain safety education! The programme built on Roger Wild's work, with new initiatives, including an expanded winter lecture series and the new GPS training courses. Our 2009-2010 courses are summarised below:

	Courses	Participants
• Navigation courses:	4	48
• GPS courses:	4	48
• Avalanche Courses:	4	48
• First Aid courses:	3	30
• Winter skills courses:	2	44
• Winter lecture series:	22	714

Buffera Ltd. (Buff Headwear) kindly supported the winter lecture series and provided 44 polar buffs to give away. Anatom Ltd. kindly supported the avalanche courses and provided each student with the loan of a shovel, probe and transceiver for their day's training.

My work with the media has developed, ensuring that a positive message is delivered to as wide an audience as possible. Media work this year included articles for Trail, TGO, Cas Bag, Mountain Rescue and a variety of newspapers. I featured in video clips, produced in conjunction with TGO Magazine; and these are available via the MCofS website home page 'You Tube' button.

A Scottish Mountain Agencies Information Group (SMAIG) was established under the auspices of the SMSF, chaired by Mark Diggins of the sportscotland Avalanche Information Service. The aim of the group is to provide accurate and timely information to its members, who are drawn from mountaineering organisations and who may be required to provide information to media contacts relating to mountaineering incidents.

I have also been involved with the delivery of talks to a variety of groups and MCoFS clubs: my 4 lectures reached a total audience of 568.

Roger Wild, in his role as MCoFS Scottish Students' Mountain Safety Officer, delivered talks to a total of 480 students, a further 114 attended the Safety and Good Practice Seminar and another 96 attended a variety of training courses covering navigation, avalanche awareness and winter skills.

7. Mountaineering Development by Kevin Howett

This year has seen us further diversify our development efforts. We continue to strongly support the initiatives that have led to so much success in attracting young people to climbing, and to some great performances in national and international competitions.

However, we are also widening our scope to further develop outdoor activity in the hills, in particular to help those who are beginning to explore the Scottish hills through hill walking. We have planned activities that will help both individual members and club members. For individuals we are producing a FactFile on hillwalking as well as some short videos suitable for the website. For clubs we have launched 'train the trainer' sessions to help bring on the skills of those new to the hills, and free help to aid them through the Disclosure Scotland process if they intend widening their younger membership.

7.1 Participation Improvement

We produced two more free FactFiles (Adventure Climbing & Bouldering) for beginners, distributed through climbing walls, and increased the number of mountaineering articles on the website. In addition youth development focused on coaching in performance and our aim is to roll-out FUNdamentals Workshops in Scotland in 2010-11.

Neil McGeachy retired from his position as Area Youth Coordinator for the south region after numerous years, and Simon Tait stepped up to the challenge. The year also saw the establishment of more climbing clubs specifically for children using the same format as the Quickdraw Club: Granite City Rockstars (Aberdeen), Lead-On Club (Aviemore) and Highlander Climbing Club (Inverness).

We supported a series of climbing development events including:

- Four events designed to encourage and coach children, organised by Neil McGeachy and hosted at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena (EICA: Ratho). Over 100 children were introduced to climbing for the first time whilst another 100 children gained more advanced coaching.
- The Quickdraw Club, in association with EICA: Ratho, held the Climbing Rocks Festival in September using instructors from Ratho and volunteer parents from the club. Over 300 children participated in a range of events for all abilities and 30 parents took skills workshops.

7.2 Competitions and Elite Development

The Youth Climbing Series (YCS) 2009 final in London saw some of the best results Scotland has seen with 6 podium places, including a clean sweep in the girls' 11-13 age category and a Scotland North third place.

Coaching from Ruairdh Mackenzie, Neil McGeachy and Neil Buzby helped Scotland's young climbing talent attain British championship positions for Jonathan Stocking and Natalie Berry with many not far behind! Indeed by the end of the year there were 14 Scots in the British Team.

In the latter part of the year we supported Glasgow Climbing Centre which held the first ever High School competition.

The 5-event Scottish Tooling Series dry-tooling competition was again highly successful and saw an increase in participants (including 7 children).

The highlight of the year was the European Youth Series (EYS) event at Ratho. 134 competitors from across Europe attended with Jonathan Stocking gaining a fifth place, and Natalie Berry a fourth. We also funded an EYS coaching session for British Team members.

Dave MacLeod's dedicated series of 'CoachWise' articles for MCoFS again generated an amazing number of hits on our website through the year, indicating the grass-roots appetite for coaching advice.

7.3 Bursaries

The MCoFS bursary saw further diversification with 'traditional' expeditions augmented by grants to participants in elite climbing events. Awards were made to:

- Glasgow Academy East Greenland Expedition (12 pupils)
- West Coast Greenland Expedition (A group of 7 'older' and wiser climbers)
- South West Spur of Mount Vancouver (Paul Schwizer and Simon Yates in the Yukon)
- Jonathan Field (Member of the British Team)
- Jonathan Stocking (British Team competitions and climbing across Europe – including the Dolomites)
- Natalie Berry (European competitions and World Youth Cup)

7.4 Facilities Development

The setting up of the Scottish Climbing Wall Network (SCWN) has led to a closer working relationship with climbing wall operators and a joint marketing initiative was set up to help increase MCoFS membership. Stirling's Peak leisure Centre wall also joined the SCWN as did the Edinburgh University wall.

With our strategic focus now on developing grass-roots facilities, we have given advice to numerous climbing wall projects in schools (primary, high school and community sports facilities) and in particular gained lottery grant funding for Gairloch, and took part in Perth & Kinross Outdoor Strategy Focus Group deliberations.

7.5 Equity

The annual Visually Impaired Course saw 8 people participate this year with an equal number of sighted volunteers. Thanks to Norma Davidson for co-ordinating the course, Glenmore Lodge for administering and hosting it and the Scottish Mountaineering Trust for once again providing invaluable grant support.

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Appendix to the Annual Report 2009 - 2010				
Income and expenditure account				
			2010	2009
For the period ending 31 March			(Unaudited)	(Certified)
Income				
Subscriptions / fees	Clubs		55,500	87,784
	Individual members		48,720	47,294
	Individual youth		250	357
	Concession		11,243	7,117
	Joint / Family		11,595	9,652
	MLTS Registrants		6,985	8,568
	Associate		1,020	1,440
Donations			3,327	3,621
Interest (Net)			1,110	5,745
Grants / investment	sportscotland		155,300	170,900
	Scottish Mountaineering Trust		11,800	
	The BMC		10,000	
	Other		5,325	14,322
Sales			9,106	3,883
Less cost of sales			(7,142)	(7,971)
Royalties/Commission			319	1,984
Rents			617	924
Miscellaneous				
			325,075	355,620
Expenditure				
Officer salaries & expenses			144,245	131,222
Admin salaries & expenses			14,120	12,934
Courses, events and lectures (less income)			6,191	11,168
Rent			9,250	9,300
Office and admin expenses			30,189	32,030
Civil liability insurance			34,955	29,427
Board & Advisory Group expenses			5,519	4,874
General Meeting & Gathering expenses			3,527	3,157
Scottish Mountaineer			13,457	15,489
Membership database			15,874	
Scottish Mountain Weather Forecasts			42,300	38,475
Mountain Leader Training Scotland			24,000	20,000
Bank charges			1,647	1,730
Expedition awards			3,800	3,200
Marketing			7,933	4,911
Miscellaneous			6,679	9,315
			363,686	327,232
Net surplus / (deficit)			(38,611)	28,388