

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland

Annual Report 2011-12

We published the Annual Report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012 here on 24 July 2012. These reports will also appear in the August 2012 edition of Scottish Mountaineer.

Any enquiries concerning these reports should be directed to David Gibson, Company Secretary [by email](#) or to 01738-493942.

Directors' and Officers' Reports:

President: Brian Linington

Prior to the 2011 AGM it was clear to the Board that although a great distance had been travelled between the 'unincorporated association' of the original MCoS to the present 'incorporated company', much still remained to be done in terms of consolidation of the organisation, clarification of the task, and a greater degree of democratic involvement of members.

When I began my term as President I made it clear this was my view, and that I would seek to take the MCoS forward with this in mind. It was also clear that landscape issues, particularly onshore wind farms, present a major challenge to the mountaineering community. In addition the Board wanted to conduct the second membership opinion survey in recent years.

I believed for some time that a systematic review of our key work areas would be vital, especially prior to the development of the next strategic plan covering the period 2013-17. We started with Access and Conservation, debating internally and consulting with stakeholders, and mindful of the last membership opinion survey. The result of this work has been to refocus our efforts on Landscape and Access, the detail of which is reported later.

We recently started a similar review process with Mountain Safety, and we will consult with members and stakeholders, and aim to ensure that our work in this area is relevant, focused and in our members' interests. This particular review is important to me, going to the core of what we do. My view of being safe in the mountains includes provision of the widest range of information and skills, from weather reports, mapping, planning and route information, the ability to navigate, and competence in tackling your chosen terrain in the mountains. It is not the intention that MCoS deliver all this itself, but in partnership with others.

We have also attended to the policies and procedures that a modern company has to have; matters such as the company manual, accounts, strategic plan, operational plan, information for members, equity, risk, health & safety, and much more. Hardly exciting, and at first glance nothing to do with mountains, however it is essential.

During the coming year we will have the results of the membership survey available to inform our thinking and complete the strategic planning process.

Finally I would like to thank fellow volunteers and our staff for their efforts. We are always pleased to hear the views of our members, and welcome interest from volunteers with the necessary time, energy and expertise.

Chief Officer & Company Secretary: David Gibson

During 2011-12 mountaineering has not been immune to the challenges posed by a tightening wider economy. We are therefore fortunate that key stakeholders continue to support and contribute to our work. Special thanks must be given to sportscotland, and to the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC for their financial support for Landscape and Access work.

We believe that the achievement of membership growth is a key aim, demonstrating the vibrancy of Scottish mountaineering, increasing income and potentially reducing our reliance on other stakeholders; despite challenging economic circumstances overall membership grew by 3%, with an increase in individual membership of 7%.

As a modern representative organisation, we have to make our views and those of our members known to the Scottish Government and its agencies, the media and a wider public. Whilst we have limited resources compared to some organisations, notably those which promote wind farms in mountain areas, we hope members have recognised our increased media profile, particularly concerning landscape issues. During the year we published 25 press releases, including 9 relating to landscape matters.

We also responded to the Scottish Government's consultation into Adventurous Activities and were pleased to learn following the publication of the consultation report in July 2012 that there are no plans to regulate club activities.

One of our key aims is to keep members informed, whilst recognising that today's news has a limited shelf-life and attention spans are shorter than ever before. We therefore use a mix of media including Scottish Mountaineer magazine - our regular means of communication to every member, for which we receive welcome editorial and design support from colleagues at Herald & Times Group Magazines.

In addition, we continue to develop the MCofS website and saw a welcome annual increase of 9% in the total number of unique monthly visitors, to 238,000. We published a News4Clubs newsletter in every month and introduced an occasional e-bulletin for individual members. Our social media presence improved with over 500 followers on facebook and 1300 on twitter, and the MCofS YouTube channel has achieved more than 143,000 views.

I believe that Ron Payne deserves a special mention for his dedication to our landscape work during and since the officer hiring gap at the start of 2012. Without his hard work, mountaineers' interests, in the face of an onslaught of onshore wind farm applications and the lack of coherent government policy concerning their location, would be in a far worse position.

Treasurer's Report by Robert McMurray

This report refers to the following information:

[Income and Expenditure Account 2011-12, and Budget 2012-13](#)

[Charts providing an analysis of Income and Expenditure, and Allocation of Subscription Income](#)

[Directors' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2012](#)

2011-12 was a strong financial year for the MCofS, which demonstrated good performance, increased income and an overall reduction in expenses. As opposed to a small deficit to budget of £2,702 in financial year 2010-11 and a larger deficit of £35,212 in 2009-10, 2011-12 resulted in a surplus of £26,365.

Much of the explanation for this is discussed below; however it should be seen to reflect not only the continued growth of the organisation but also the prudent, cautionary and conservative approach to financial management which was taken by the Board last year and adopted by my predecessor as Treasurer, John Irving. This is the approach which I intend to follow in my term as Treasurer and I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the Board to thank John Irving for his tireless and selfless work throughout his term as Treasurer.

Since being elected as Treasurer at last year's AGM I can report that despite some challenges, tremendous steps have been taken to improve both our accounting practices and to provide better financial transparency to members of the Board and most importantly, to our membership.

Denise Logan, our Bookkeeper, has worked hard to improve the presentation of our accounts, with the aim of making them easier to interpret by Board members. Quarterly accounts now enable us to pro-actively analyse performance and anticipate funding gaps, and to take remedial action in the event that it becomes necessary.

I chair the Finance Advisory Group, for which we have a dedicated group of Board members and staff in place to allow for internal monitoring and understanding of financial matters. The Group provides many benefits including more detailed financial scrutiny and the ability to advise the Board with a level of well-informed joint understanding, in turn freeing up Board time.

Karin Froebel Overton, a Board and Finance Advisory Group member, has worked with Denise Logan to produce quarterly management accounts based on activity. These are now used to demonstrate the true cost of each activity area undertaken by the MCofS and the proportion of members' subscriptions that go towards it, [as shown in the charts included in this report](#). I would like to thank Karin and Denise for their hard work in developing these reports, and Denise for all the help that she has given to me since I became Treasurer.

sportscotland's total investment in 2011-12 was £160,500, which included deferred income of £5,200 to cover the implementation of our new membership system. sportscotland have also confirmed investment of £155,300 for 2012-13. The Board are working towards the production of a strategic plan for 2013-17 and we hope to work with sportscotland to move to longer term rather than annual investment for mountaineering.

Access and conservation work continues to be supported by both the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the British Mountaineering Council. Support has also been given by the Mountain Safety Trust and the Mill Cottage Trust for winter mountain safety lectures for student clubs.

We are very grateful to all of these organisations for their continued support.

The figures contained in this report are based on the [2011-12 accounts prepared by Johnston & Co.](#), Chartered Accountants, from the records supplied by the MCofS.

Income

MCofS income increased by 4.8% last year; of this, membership income increased by 9.8%. This reflects a 7% increase in the number of individual members and an overall membership increase of 3%. At the time of writing, the MCofS has 11,400 memberships. Encouragingly, income from members derived from MLTS registrations also grew by 11.5% over the prior year.

With sportscotland investment being dependent upon membership growth, amongst other key criteria, this is extremely encouraging and we are making significant progress towards reaching targets set in the current four-year sportscotland Investment Agreement. In this regard, special thanks should go to our Chief Officer, David Gibson for the hard work that he has done (and continues to do) in order to achieve membership growth across all areas. It is worth noting that

the incremental cost to MCoFS of servicing a new member is now almost zero, reflecting the economies of scale of a larger membership.

The significant increase in 'Other Income' reflects the £6,481 of profit share from the BMC, from profits gained through mountain safety 'Essentials' DVD sales. There was no such 'profit share' in 2010-11.

Expenditure

Total expenditure in 2011-12 represented a 3.3% saving over the previous year. It is worth noting that the majority of expenses were lower than anticipated in the budget but were off-set only by the increase in staff / volunteer travelling expenses.

That increase in travel expenses was anticipated by the previous Treasurer in last year's Annual Report and reflects increased petrol costs and the resultant increase in mileage rates for staff and volunteers. We are taking steps in an attempt to reduce travel costs and these are being closely monitored. In addition, there were two unbudgeted items: £9,937 for Depreciation and £1,393 for stock adjustments.

A significant saving was made on salaries, reflecting the hiring gap which occurred when our Access & Conservation Officer, Hebe Carus, left in December. Savings were also made due to some employees not taking pension entitlements, although provision has been made for this in the 2011-12 budget. Due in no small part to the efforts of David Gibson, we were able to negotiate a saving from Perkins Slade on civil liability insurance cover, including a rebate of £2k reflecting the maintenance of our no-claims record. Savings were also achieved by reducing the number of pages in the Scottish Mountaineer magazine and through lower AGM costs.

Reserves

At its annual review of reserves, the Finance Advisory Group and the Board agreed to increase the level of reserves to £105k, the assumption being that the following costs would be incurred in the event of a winding up / worst case scenario: Salaries - £37k; Rent - £2k; Scottish mountain weather forecast contract - £22k; Magazine Costs - £37.5k; and Office Machinery - £35k. The reserve funds are banked in a deposit account.

The total capital and reserves at the beginning of April 2012 stood at a healthy £172,370 – an increase from £146,005 last year, reflecting this year's surplus to budget of £26,365.

Budget and Subscriptions 2012-13

The Board has sought to take a comprehensive, albeit cautionary and conservative approach to the budget for 2012-13, which is based on the fully-costed operational plan approved by the Board.

We anticipate membership income to increase significantly in 2012-13 following the increase in subscription rates from April this year and have based income for 2012-13 on a conservative estimate of 10,500 memberships. With current memberships at 11,400, actual income should be considerably higher.

The future of our organisation is highly dependent on continued investment from sportscotland and as noted above we will be working with sportscotland through the implementation of a new strategic plan for 2013-17 which we hope will include a move towards longer-term investment for mountaineering.

The budget for salaries has been increased significantly for 2012-13, and is to reflect: (i) a 2% increase in staff salary scales as agreed by the Board to reflect the hard work put in by staff and

the fact that salary scales have not increased since 2009; (ii) an extra £5k spend (within an overall budget of £31k) to implement our new Landscape & Access strategy by the appointment of three specialists to provide specific access, planning and policy expertise; (iii) salary adjustments for individual employees relating to a small increase in working hours and movement within a salary scale respectively; and (iv) importantly, a contingency to cover a full take-up of pension entitlement, which was not previously budgeted.

In light of the implementation of our new Landscape & Access strategy, the Board decided to withdraw MCofS from membership of Scottish Environment LINK, and believe the saving made (£2,400) will be put to better use in funding our own Landscape & Access initiatives.

The budget for courses / competitions has been increased for 2012-13 and includes (i) £4k to cover potential support for Scottish climbers competing in the Great Britain Climbing Team; and (ii) a contingency of £5k towards the development of the UK-wide climbing coaching initiative.

Against a significant budget under spend of 30.7% last year in Computer Supplies, Software & Website, we have increased the budget this year to cover (i) the required replacement / cost of new exchange server and licence; (ii) a new back-up system; (iii) increased IT support; and (iv) the cost of three new PCs. For the first time, we have also budgeted for Depreciation, included at £4,365.

University climbing clubs have benefited over recent years from initiatives funded by the Catherine Smith Memorial Trust. CSMT funds are now much reduced and can no longer fund a full programme of Winter Mountain Safety initiatives for student clubs. A decision was made by the CSMT to use its remaining funds to cover the cost of the annual winter skills course (for 66 students) in January 2013 and January 2014.

As a priority group for delivery of training, the MCofS has agreed that it should continue to provide safety-related courses and events to student clubs. For 2012-13, we are extremely grateful to the Mountain Safety Trust and the Mill Cottage Trust for financial support to undertake this work, albeit on a reduced basis from previous years.

We are also delighted to be able to work with charity Mountain Aid which will fund a series of winter lectures for the general public, held at Cotswold Outdoor retail outlets in November 2012.

Due to the strong financial performance in 2011-12, and the anticipated increase in income in 2012-13, the Board has agreed to absorb increases in expenditure in 2012-13 and a subscription increase will not be required in 2013-14. Future subscription increases will continue to be considered by the Board on a year to year basis where these are consistent with future agreed plans.

Feedback from some clubs continues to indicate a desire for greater clarity on how subscription levels are set and where subscription monies are spent. The charts in this report provide detail on MCofS sources of income, the cost of the main activity areas undertaken and the proportion of a members' subscription that goes towards them.

We will of course continue to undertake research with members, and to seek the views of stakeholders, to assess the relative importance of all of our activities and to consider each of them when looking to the development of future plans and budgets for expenditure.

People Resources: Graham Boyle

People play a key role in the MCoFS and in addition to the workload of our core paid staff, a huge amount of voluntary effort goes into delivering our operational plan, not to mention that the 136 clubs are run entirely by volunteers.

The following table, taken from our operational plan 2011-12, gives an indication where this contribution is made within the MCoFS:

Activity Areas	Staff Days	Volunteer Days	Coach / Consultant Days
Landscape and Access	200	23	0
Clubs / Advisory Group	73	42	0
Development and Sport Climbing	124	695	111
Governance, Member Services and IT	316	133	0
Mountain Safety	213	8	65
Communications and Media	237	5	12
Total planned work days	1163	906	188

For this valuable resource to work effectively requires careful and sensitive management with policies and procedures in place to meet legislative requirements and best practice. In the past year the MCoFS has achieved foundation level Equity Standards, produced comprehensive and practical Child Protection guidelines and as well reviewing its human resources and health and safety policies and procedures.

There are many unsung heroes but it is worth recording particular thanks to a few individuals for their contribution over the past year. Hebe Carus who served the MCoFS as Access and Conservation Officer until December; Avril Gall who as Scottish Youth Events Coordinator voluntarily supports and coordinates 60 youngsters involved in the Youth Climbing Series, 9 of whom are in the GB Team; Neil McGeachy and Martin Hopkins who make significant input to coaching for kids, and Robbie Philips for his input with coaching the Elite Team; and Ross Lorimer for the work he has done developing the national Climbing Training Curriculum.

People make things happen and new folks are always needed to step forward to share the work around, so if you feel you have something to offer please get in touch with David Gibson.

Clubs: Karin Froebel Overton

The MCoFS currently has 136 Club Members, comprising 6628 individuals – over half the total membership. At last year's AGM Mike Dales, Membership Development Officer, led a thought-provoking seminar on 'Growing Clubs' in which he challenged us to consider 'why would anyone want to join your Club?'

John Leftley, continues to direct The Huts Advisory Group (HAG) keeping managers of huts aware of legal and other issues relevant to their operation, and will host the biennial huts seminar in October this year. The HAG also publishes and regularly updates the Huts Directory.

The Clubs Advisory Group (CAG) now comprises 23 Clubs. This is a useful network for hearing Club concerns and a sounding board for ideas before they come to the MCoFS Board. I have had

meetings with five Clubs this year (Grampian, Cairngorm, Edinburgh Ski Touring Club, Edinburgh JMCS and the Scottish Mountaineering Club) making 10 in total since I joined the Board.

Some CAG members want greater clarity about how the subscription level is set, and where the money goes. The Board has now agreed to prepare quarterly management accounts broken down by activity; these will show the true cost of each activity and the proportion of the subscription that goes towards it.

Going forward, the MCofS would like to recruit more Clubs, and would appreciate introductions from existing members to non-member clubs.

Landscape and Access: Ron Payne

My first year as Director for Landscape and Access has been busy and challenging, commencing with the strategic review and steps to implement our new strategy. Having the necessary skills available resulted in the recruitment of well-qualified, part-time specialists, including Andrea Partridge (Access Officer), Catherine Newton (Planning Officer) and Matthew Shelley (Policy Officer).

We developed a manifesto on onshore wind farms which includes our position statement and articulates our position against wind farm developments which affect the mountains. A Landscape Working Group, which will support MCofS efforts to implement the landscape strategy, has recently been convened, chaired by Dave Gordon of the Ochils Mountaineering Club, who has been co-opted to the Board.

We responded to 4 wind farm scoping requests, 5 wind farm planning applications (less than 50MW), 4 Section 36 applications (wind farms greater than 50MW), 4 forestry consultations, 2 national park plans, 2 local development plans, and 1 Scottish Environmental Protection Agency consultation. We are in preparation for the Allt Duine Wind Farm Public Inquiry. Look on our website for full [details of our formal responses](#).

We remain vigilant concerning access issues, and appreciate our members' efforts in bringing these to the attention of our staff. The major concerns related to Traprain Law and Auchinstarry Quarry. We also took issue with Forestry Commission Scotland and Cairngorm Mountain Limited concerning the introduction of car parking charges, and at the time of writing, such issues remain under discussion.

The long-running hill tracks campaign has moved forward, and we reinforced our position concerning estate tracks through participation in, and support for, the Scottish Government Consultation on the General Permitted Development Amendment Order 2012.

Mountain Safety: Michael Anderson

Having been elected to the Board last September, I was delighted when in February I was asked to take over the mountain safety remit previously carried out by Rosie Goolden.

Our work in this area benefits from the involvement of partner organisations including Glenmore Lodge, Mountain Training (formerly Mountain Leader Training), the Mountain Weather Information Service and representatives of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors. In practice we meet formally through the Mountain and Hill Walking Advisory Group, which I now chair. I also act as

the MCoFS representative on the boards of Mountain Training UK and Mountain Training Scotland, whose aims we support.

The MCoFS manages the contract for the Scottish mountain weather forecasts provided by the Mountain Weather Information Service; while the MCoFS financial contribution equated to £42.3k per annum, the actual value of this service to all mountain users is amply demonstrated by the more than 2 million website forecast downloads made in 2011-12.

In 2011-12 we continued our busy programme of mountain safety work, including--

- delivering a programme of training courses for members, including first aid, navigation, leadership, mountain biking for hill walkers, scrambling, avalanche awareness and winter skills,
- providing another successful winter safety lecture series at venues across Scotland, getting the winter safety message across to nearly 800 people,
- supporting charity Mountain Aid who organised Scotland's Mountain Safety Day in Stirling last October, bringing together 30 interested organisations and attracting 700 visitors,
- representing mountaineers' interests in relation to mountain safety issues in the media and with landowners and public agencies, including the successful initiative to secure the rebuilding of the Fords of Avon refuge, and liaising with the JMT and other organisations over the abseil posts on Ben Nevis

Particular thanks are due to Heather Morning for her continuing excellent work as the Mountain Safety Advisor and also to the members of the Advisory Group, who give generously of their time to support Heather and to help provide strategic direction to our mountain safety activity.

The challenges ahead include consideration of how we may be able to facilitate the mountain safety work with university climbing clubs previously carried out by Roger Wild under the auspices of the Catherine Smith Memorial Trust. The strategic review mentioned in the President's report is timely; we hope to ensure that all who have a view get an opportunity to have their say.

Sports Development: Kevin Howett, Mountaineering Development Officer

This report comprises key activities in the areas of coaching, competitions and our support for Scottish climbers in the Great Britain Climbing Team. Our work is made possible by sportsScotland investment coupled with the financial contributions of parents. Our role is to organise, coordinate and facilitate development activities and events, enabling young climbers to realise their potential.

Coaching was a key area of focus through the year and has progressed both through our input to the Mountain Training UK coaching development groups, and induction of 9 providers to deliver 3 FUNDamentals workshops to 26 MCoFS coaches.

Coaching sessions included 5 Scottish Team coaching events with 100 places filled from the 36 team members, whilst indoor coaching sessions saw 22 participants on 12 sessions, and 5 elite team events for 10 Scottish youngsters in the GB Climbing Team. The MCoFS also supported Scottish GB Team members attending 20 Core Conditioning sessions at Heriot Watt University.

In addition 14 young climbers and their parents attended a REALsport week of climbing in Spain, preceded by belay training for the parents, an event funded from the parents' own contributions.

Outdoor climbing events in Scotland saw MCoFS deliver 3 Kids Club REALrock sessions with 38 youngsters visiting local crags, whilst 10 REALrock events took 21 youngsters to crags in central Scotland and Northumberland under the leadership of Pamela Millar and Neill Busby from EICA: Ratho.

It was a busy year for youth competitions. MCoFS supported the Scottish Tooling Series, the Scottish High School Competition Series which saw 75 youngsters from 20 schools attend, and the first ever Local Authority competition with 40 youngsters competing in Perth & Kinross. In the run up to our own competitions, we undertook parent Volunteer Training for 20 adults, who then helped run the Youth Climbing Series with a total of 102 competitors, the Scottish Youth Climbing Championship with 69 youngsters attending Ratho and the Scottish Youth Bouldering Championship at Transition Extreme where 50 competed.

sportscotland Bursary Grants were made to 2 greater ranges expeditions, a winter ice climbing trip to Morocco, sport climbing trips to European venues, and competition training.

The Visually Impaired Course at Glenmore Lodge was once again kindly supported by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and 7 participants attended the week long course.

Following the announcement in Scottish Mountaineer concerning vacancies for elected directors, the Board were pleased to co-opt Pamela Millar with interim responsibility for Mountaineering Development activities.