

The Mountaineering Council of Scotland

Annual Report and Accounts

2012-13

The MCoFS Board published the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 here on 16 July 2013; the report will also appear in the August 2013 edition of Scottish Mountaineer. The Directors' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2013 are included in the Treasurer's Report section of the Annual Report below

Please address any enquiries concerning these reports to David Gibson, Company Secretary [by email](#) or to 01738-493942.

Introduction

by David Gibson, Chief Officer / Company Secretary

The last year has seen a great deal of development and activity by the MCoFS.

We have been active in opposing some of the increasing pressures on Scotland's wild and mountainous land. That has involved opposition to wind farms which create visual pollution and encroach on the mountain habitat which makes Scotland so special for both climbers and tourists. We have also taken part in the Hill Tracks campaign to combat the uncontrolled spread of tracks through the hills by urging more stringent planning controls.



Safety has, as ever, been a major concern. This last winter saw a distressing number of fatal accidents in the hills, tragic in themselves and also raising some heated and largely ill-informed debate in the media. It's easy to have a pop at newspapers, television and radio but, more practically, we have got together with other agencies, including the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland and the sportscotland Avalanche Information Service to see what we can do to improve communication between the world of mountaineering and the media, in the hope of avoiding a repeat of the worryingly sensationalist reports and views which were aired during the winter.

On a practical level the MCoFS continues to do excellent work on safety, with safety courses for members throughout the year, focusing particularly on navigation, winter safety and avalanche awareness. We also ran a well-attended series of winter safety lectures which reached out to a general audience.

A high point in the year was the award of Members' Magazine of the Year made by the Professional Publishers Association to Scottish Mountaineer. The 'Mountaineer' has come a long way over the years, but is still produced on a modest budget, and in partnership with the team at Herald & Times Group Magazines.



In June we appointed a full-time Communications Officer, who will edit *The Scottish Mountaineer* (freeing up long-serving editor Kevin Howett to concentrate on development work) and look after communications with members and the wider media. **Neil Reid** (left) is an experienced walker and climber and has many years' experience in journalism and the communications industry.

MCofS members have told us that more should be done to support children and young people. So in June we also appointed a Club Development Officer – **Jamie Smith** (right) – part of whose role will be to

help develop membership pathways for young people to progress from school, youth organisations and student clubs to membership of adult clubs. We have also been highly active in organising climbing competitions and coaching for youngsters, with podium positions for Scots gained at the IFSC European Youth and World Championships.



You can read more about all these items in the body of the Annual Report below but, before you do, it's worth highlighting that finances are healthy and we won't be looking for an increase in the annual subs for 2014-15. That's always welcome news!

A final point: the directors and staff of the MCofS look forward to meeting you at the General Meeting on 12 October, held this year at Forthbank Performance Sport Centre in Stirling. If you haven't been to General Meeting before, it is a great opportunity to meet the MCofS and your fellow-members.

President's Review of the Year

by **Brian Linington**

This last year has been another busy period which has also been very productive. Our general company health is good. We are in a robust financial position, and the company procedures and documentation which I refer to as 'boilerplate' is now complete, but inevitably subject to regular review.

I indicated in my last annual report that I expected landscape issues, and in particular wind farm planning applications to be prominent. So it has proved. In concert with other organisations we have pressed the arguments in favour of preservation of wild and mountainous land with government officials, councillors and planners. Ron Payne and Dave Gordon will provide more detail of this uphill struggle later.



The business of systematically reviewing our strategic approach to key work areas has continued. We have completed reviews of our mountain safety and mountaineering development strategies, the latter taking us into new and exciting territory. During discussions with sportsotland about increasing participation in mountaineering, particularly by young people, it became clear that additional funding might be available to support a full time Development Officer to work with

clubs. We applied for and have obtained sufficient additional funding to employ this new full time post for a four year period. At the same time the Board has decided to alter our structure with the introduction of a full time Communications Officer. Further detail is provided in Graham Boyle's report.

We have completed a second membership survey. The results did not offer any shocks, and it was pleasing to note a very high level of support and approval for landscape, access and mountain safety work. However, it is apparent that some aspects of our activity, such as the organisation of competitive climbing events, need to be better explained so that members have a clear explanation of the rationale and funding for such activities.

Our future tenure of the office in West Mill Street, Perth may be in doubt. Our landlord, the National Trust for Scotland, has obtained planning consent to convert the office into flats. We were offered first refusal to purchase, and are now considering the available options. It is likely the matter will be concluded by the end of the calendar year.

This last winter has been unusually cold and snowy, and there have been a number of avalanche-related fatalities. The resultant press coverage has been extensive and in some instances debate has been fatuous and error-riddled. With other agencies directly concerned, for example, rescue, the avalanche service, and training, we have recently set up a Communications Working Group to examine what might be done to improve communication with mountaineers and the media. The first meeting has indicated that our community does believe there are good and sensible things to be done, and we look forward to helping to ensure that both mountaineers, and press and media are well informed.

Thanks to all the volunteers and staff who make the MCoFS run. This includes members of the Board who have put in an immense volume of work, equating in many cases to having a part time job. The membership survey indicated a significant number of members would be willing to help where skill sets and time permit. Where possible we hope to explore this further. Lastly, we are always pleased to hear opinion. Feedback, good or bad provides insight and guidance.

Treasurer's Report

by Robert McMurray

The MCoFS maintained its strong financial position in 2012-13. As with the previous financial year, 2012-13 demonstrated good performance, increased income and an overall reduction in expenditure. As a headline figure, the end of year accounts show a surplus of £26,185, which matches a similar surplus of £26,365 in 2011-12. Both figures contrast sharply with the small deficit of £2,702 in 2010-11 and the larger deficit of £35,212 in 2009-10.

As noted in my report last year, I believe this position reflects not only the continued growth of the organisation, but also the Board's prudent, cautious and conservative approach to financial management.

The detail is at [Income and Expenditure Account 2012-13; and Budget 2013-14](#)

As you will read elsewhere in the Annual Report, 2012-13 has been a busy one for MCoFS and its volunteers in many areas but steps have continued to be taken to improve both our internal accounting practices and to provide better financial transparency to members of the Board and, most importantly, to our membership.



At the beginning of this year, significant work was put towards submitting and then subsequently agreeing, a longer-term (4 year) investment for Scottish mountaineering. As a result, increased funding totalling £215,300 has been confirmed by sportscotland for the next four years. The additional £60k per annum includes full funding for a new Club Development Officer, increased funding of £8k (now totalling £28k) for Mountain Training Scotland (MTS), and additional support for coaching development.

Subject to the achievement of our current sportscotland investment agreement targets, and an acceptable business plan, a further investment of £70k per annum may also be available for the recruitment of two Regional Development Officers from 2015. Particular thanks and appreciation should go to David Gibson for all his hard work and efforts here.

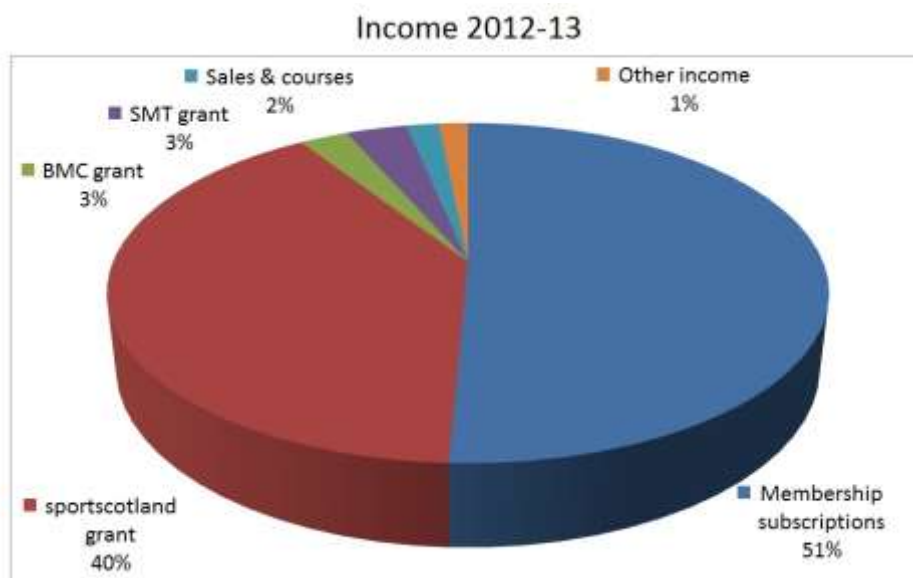
Access and conservation work continues to be supported by both the Scottish Mountaineering Trust (SMT) and the BMC – which have confirmed their support for the next 3 and 4 years respectively. The SMT has also provided further grants in 2013-14 to support student safety and visually-impaired courses. Grants were also given by the Mountain Safety Trust and the Mill Cottage Trust for winter mountain safety lectures for student clubs in 2012-13. The charity Mountain Aid kindly funded the programme of winter safety lectures.

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

As with the detail provided last year and in response to feedback from some clubs asking for greater clarity on how subscription levels are set and where subscription monies are spent, the charts which accompany this report provide detail on the cost of the main activity areas undertaken and the proportion of a member's subscription that goes towards them. The figures contained in this report are based on the 2012-13 accounts certified by our accountants, Johnston & Co.

Income

Sources of income are shown in the following chart:

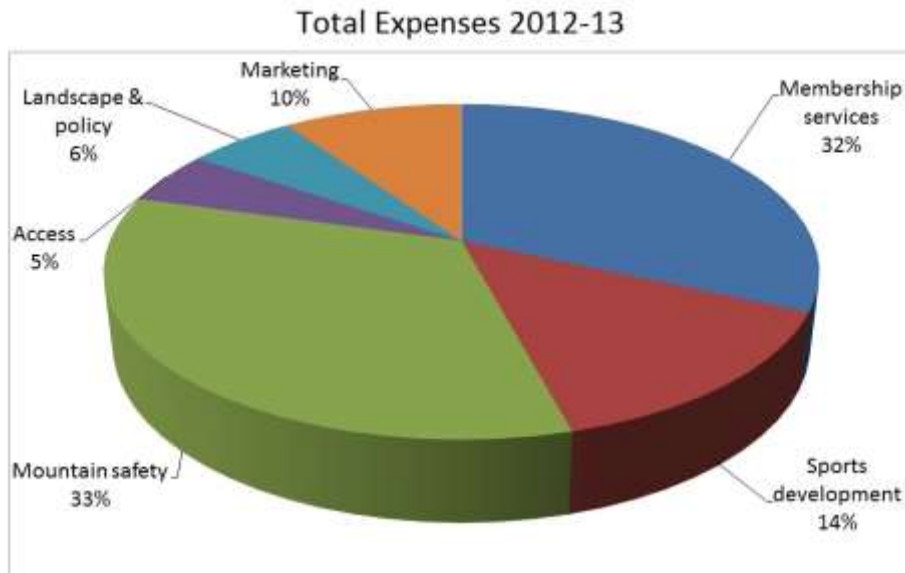


MCofS income increased by 1.5% to £380,216; of this, membership income increased by 6.4%, reflecting an upward trend in membership numbers. With sportscotland investment being dependent upon membership growth, amongst other key criteria, it is essential that we maintain this upward trend over the four years of our current investment agreement.

On income, it is also worth mentioning the large saving compared to budget on sports development costs. In 2012-13, there has been a much greater focus by the Board on the planning and cost control associated with sports development and mountain safety activities and this is proving successful.

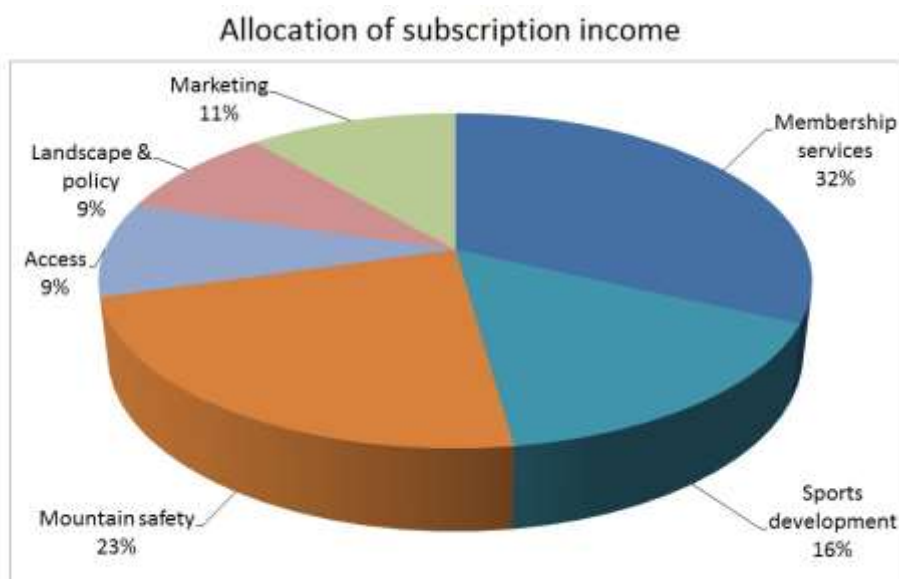
Expenditure

Expenditure was allocated to the activity areas in the proportions shown in the following chart:



Total expenditure in 2012-13 was 5.3% positive to budget, which represented a saving of over £20,000 on budgeted expenditure. Most of the expenses are positive to budget with the large increase in the professional fees category occurring due to the Board's decision to part-fund beneficial improvements to the MTS on-line registration service relating to MCoS membership. This was a cost which was originally unknown and, therefore, not planned for in the budget.

Members' subscriptions were allocated to activity areas as follows:



Reserves

At its annual review of reserves, the Board agreed to increase the level of reserves to £130k. The reserve funds continue to be banked in a high interest deposit account. The total capital and reserves as at 1 April 2013 stood at a healthy £198,555.

Budget and Subscriptions 2013-14

As with the previous year, the Board has sought to take a comprehensive, albeit cautious and conservative approach to the budget for 2013-14, which is based as before on a fully-costed operational plan.

An important outcome of this approach is that we will not be asking members to consider an increase in annual subscriptions for the financial year 2014-15.

While most areas of the budget remain largely unchanged from 2012-13, the principal changes are to income, to reflect the increased sportscotland investment; and to salary costs – to reflect the new posts created in the organisation, the background to which are described elsewhere in the Annual Report.

There is still much to be done and there will be further challenges in 2013-14. In particular, decisions have to be made by the Board in relation to The Old Granary and our future office premises. I hope you will concur however, that the MCoFS is in a healthy, strong and vibrant position. The current Board is therefore well placed and with the required expertise, to continue taking our important work and organisation in the right direction.

The [Directors' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2013](#) is available for download.

People Resources

by Graham Boyle

Delivery of our Strategic Plan for 2013-17 represents a significant but achievable challenge and required a rethink of the previous staffing arrangements. With sportscotland's investment supporting the plan going forward, the Board was able to agree to a new staffing structure.

This will enable us to take a more focused approach to our communications, club and mountaineering development activities.

The importance that the media places on the MCoFS as the 'Voice of Scottish Mountaineering' has been well evidenced in recent months, with staff responding on a range of current issues. Our ability to maximise the opportunities to influence as well as raise public understanding and awareness will, we hope, be better achieved by pulling these responsibilities together under the single remit of a Communications Officer. Neil Reid, an experienced journalist and mountaineer, has recently been appointed to this post.

Kevin Howett, who now passes editorship of the magazine to Neil, is to be congratulated for the huge amount of work he put into the publication over the years. The organisational changes will



enable him to focus on mountaineering development, including building up the coaching and volunteer infrastructure which supports our sport development activities.

We view with importance the need to support our club network and to work with those clubs which wish to grow. The appointment of a Club Development Officer will provide focused support in assisting clubs to build their membership. In addition, the role will seek ways of increasing participation and membership and will specifically develop membership pathways for young people to progress from school, youth organisations and student clubs to membership of adult clubs. We welcome Jamie Smith into this role.

Mike Dales has been a familiar figure around the MCofS for many years and moved on at the end of his contract to pursue his own business interests. The Board would like to acknowledge Mike's contribution to the work of the MCofS in his different roles.

It is remarkable what a small team of dedicated people can achieve, pulling in the same direction for shared objectives, and we can be proud what the MCofS staff team under David Gibson's leadership are doing on behalf of those who value and enjoy the Scottish Mountains.

Landscape Strategy

by Dave Gordon

Decisions that affect landscape are often determined not on the detail of the specific case but on the broader circumstances – national policy, political values and expediency, public opinion, economics – that shape the rules and expectations underpinning the planning system. Opposing individual development applications when these broader circumstances are pro-development is extremely hard. The strategic element of landscape work aims to change the broader circumstances – to build appreciation of the importance and value of Scotland's wild and mountainous landscapes and awareness of their vulnerability.



We have raised our heads above the parapet and made some noise. This has led to a misperception that we are rabidly anti-wind. In fact MCofS has objected to only 6% of applications – a similar proportion to the RSPB, which is seen as pro-wind. We have met ministers, advisers, developers and landscape organisations to promote the message of our wind farm manifesto. We have encouraged members to approach their MSPs, since direct contact is a powerful influence upon political opinion.

This is slow and uncertain work. It is rarely possible to know which actions, by whom, are influential in policy decisions. Those trained in scientific logic and dispassionate evidence must accept that most decisions are shaped by political logic which draws on science to support a predetermined position.

When it became clear that even if Scotland generated all its electricity without emitting carbon, that the effect would be almost invisible against the global annual increase in emissions, political announcements changed to emphasising the investment and employment benefits rather than CO₂ reduction. The true value of these supposed economic benefits can also be questioned, but wishful thinking is virtually impossible to argue against using logic. Yet if we do not use logic and evidence, our interventions are dismissed as subjective or emotional. For those who are listening: we are emotional because we **care** about Scotland's mountain landscapes!

For most of 2012-13 it felt like we were getting nowhere. But in the first couple of months of 2013-14 there were modest but welcome signs of progress. That is for next year's report, by when we will know whether the signs are real.

Landscape and Access

by Ron Payne

It has been a phenomenally busy and challenging year as Director of Landscape and Access.

In the energy field last year we objected to four Section 36 wind farm proposals, responded to two Section 36 wind farm addendums, seven wind farm scoping reports, two hydro scheme scoping reports and objected to one hydro scheme. We have also responded to two forestry and one estate consultations.



Defending the landscape has never been more difficult. Only one wind farm to which we objected has been refused, although two will go to Public Inquiry. The great majority of wind farms are approved. A large number of scoping reports will soon mature into Section 36 applications. The upward trajectory is clear, and almost no landscape is safe from wind farm development. Even the Hill Tracks campaign has been frustrating, however we will continue to press for planning controls.

Despite the Land Reform Act (Scotland) 2003 access issues continue to be a concern, for example access across railways, and locked gates across dams are emergent issues. The Dumbarton Boulders have been cleaned up and we have fed into the Land Reform Review.

Looking back on the last year I have a number of personal highlights. Leading the case against the Allt Duine wind farm at the Public Inquiry, taking part in the Landward programme feature on Hill Tracks, meeting the Planning Minister, and being interviewed on Highland and Islands radio about our Landscape Manifesto.

This will be my last report as a Director, as I will stand down at the next AGM. The last four years have proved to be a busy but exhilarating period. My thanks go to my fellow directors and the staff of the MCoS for their support during my time on the Board.

Mountain Safety

by Michael Anderson

The President has already mentioned the Communications Working Group established in consequence of the events of the recent winter. I pay tribute to the staff for their very effective work in dealing with the demanding calls for input from the media over that period.

We are now executing the new mountain safety strategy also mentioned by Brian. This includes reforming our advisory group into something more member-orientated. A number of members have kindly volunteered to help. In the meantime, thanks



continue to go to the members of the existing group for their contribution.



Heather Morning continues to do excellent work as the Mountain Safety Advisor. In 2012-13 the fruits of her work reached over 1000 people. This included participation in a typically varied and extensive programme of courses for members and also another highly popular winter safety lecture series, which was open to all (with much appreciated support from Mountain Aid and Cotswold Outdoors).

A particular challenge for Heather was running the student safety programme brought back 'in house' in 2012-13. In light of that experience we have decided to cease providing free lectures for student clubs in favour of greater emphasis on skills training. We have also for the first time extended the reach to young people not in higher education. We are very grateful to the SMT for funding which, together with some extra resources of our own which we have been able to find, will enable us to deliver a full programme for the year ahead.

We continue to support the aims of the mountain training bodies. We have worked hard to ensure that the process of joining the MCoFS on the journey to registering for an award under the new electronic system is effective. Both MTUK and MTS are reviewing governance and we are supporting them in that.

MCoFS continues to manage the contract for the Scottish mountain weather forecasts currently provided by Geoff Monk and MWIS. The number of downloads continues to demonstrate the value of to all mountain users of this service. We are pleased that sportscotland investment for the forecasting service has been extended.

As well as those noted above, our mountain safety work benefits from the involvement of other partner organisations including the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland, Glenmore Lodge, the Association of Mountaineering Instructors and, last but by no means least, the support of our friends Paul and Helen Webster at walkhighlands.co.uk.

Sport Development

by Kevin Howett, Mountaineering Development Officer, on behalf of Pamela Millar, Director for Development

This report covers coaching, competitions and the Great Britain (GB) Junior Team activities. Our work is made possible by sportscotland investment and contributions from parents, and this year with a grant from the SMT, and sponsorship from the Interactive Design Institute (idi) and Summit Financial Services.

Our role is in organising and facilitating events, which we could not have done without the substantial voluntary work from parents at competitions and particularly by our Area Youth Coordinators, (Scott Forsyth and Avril Gall for South Scotland and John Donaldson and Donna Ryan for North Scotland). Avril merits special mention, acting as main coordinator for all the events.



Coaching



Coaching includes coaching development and delivery of events. We set up a Coaching Development Group chaired by Dr Ross Lorimer (Abertay University) with members from MTS, Heriot Watt University, the Scottish Government, Glenmore Lodge, and EICA. The group provides valuable assistance to help build coaching workshop content and resource information.

Working with colleagues in MTS, we input to the MTUK coaching working groups which are developing the UK Coaching Award, and, together with MTS, worked with the BMC FUNdamentals R&D group. In Scotland we delivered five FUNdamentals 1 Workshops for 42 attendees.

We held route-setter induction programmes and a safety training event, and a Coach Induction session, enabling us in turn to deliver coaching support both indoors and, most importantly, outdoors as follows:

- Grass roots – 34 indoor and outdoor sessions for 134 children.
- Scottish Squad - seven indoor events with 90 places were complimented by three week-long REALrock events.
- Scottish Elite Squad (including GB Team members) - six events with 50 places.

Climbing Competitions

Major climbing competitions attracted 1025 competitors, and included the Scottish Schools Climbing Competition, the Scottish Tooling Series, the Youth Climbing Series, and (supporting the BMC) the British Final, the National Bouldering competition at the newly opened TCA, Glasgow, and the Lead and Speed competition at EICA.

At international level we work with the BMC GB Team management and saw Scots climbers Jonny Stocking and William Bosi gain podium positions at IFSC European Youth and World Championships. All in all a great year!