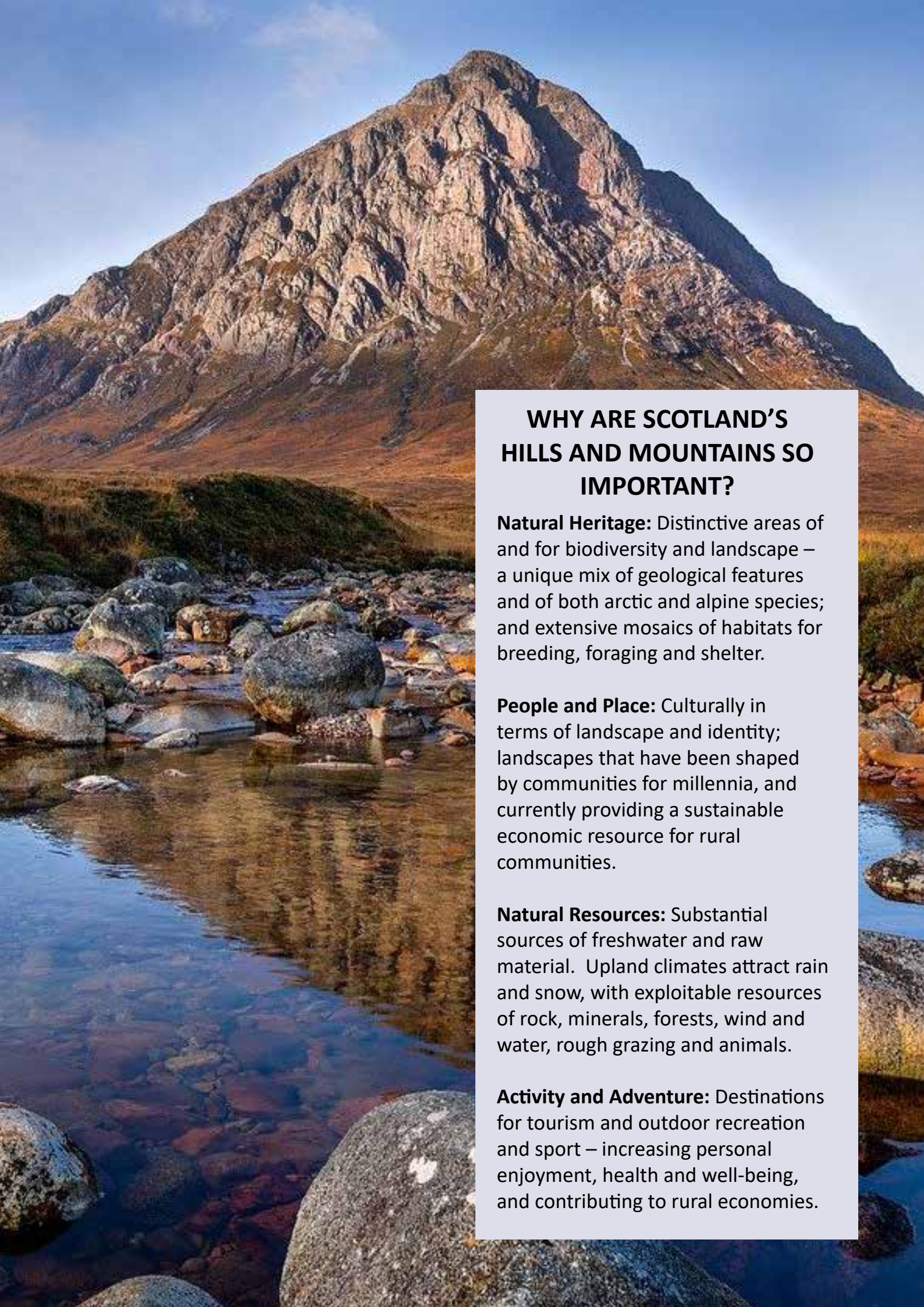


**MOUNTAINEERING  
SCOTLAND  
MANIFESTO FOR  
THE MOUNTAINS**





## WHY ARE SCOTLAND'S HILLS AND MOUNTAINS SO IMPORTANT?

**Natural Heritage:** Distinctive areas of and for biodiversity and landscape – a unique mix of geological features and of both arctic and alpine species; and extensive mosaics of habitats for breeding, foraging and shelter.

**People and Place:** Culturally in terms of landscape and identity; landscapes that have been shaped by communities for millennia, and currently providing a sustainable economic resource for rural communities.

**Natural Resources:** Substantial sources of freshwater and raw material. Upland climates attract rain and snow, with exploitable resources of rock, minerals, forests, wind and water, rough grazing and animals.

**Activity and Adventure:** Destinations for tourism and outdoor recreation and sport – increasing personal enjoyment, health and well-being, and contributing to rural economies.

## SUMMARY

### **Scotland's hills and mountains are special places and are exposed to many competing demands.**

Mountaineering Scotland members care passionately about these hills, mountains, and crags. They are valued by walkers, climbers and snowsports tourers for the recreational challenges and enjoyment found there. They are also crucial for their benefits to the environment, culture, society and economy of Scotland.

We recognise the many and sometimes competing roles our mountains play and believe in the importance of balancing the differing interests where possible, while maintaining consideration and respect for mountain landscapes so they are there for future generations to enjoy and experience, safely and responsibly.

Our Manifesto for the Mountains aims to represent the views of our members in discussions on how the land is used and cared for. This may vary between people and issues.

### **In pursuing our aims we will:**

**Safeguard and promote recreational access** to Scotland's hills, mountains, and crags for a range of abilities, and seek investment to maintain the condition of this land for public access.

**Promote and support access rights and responsibilities** explained through the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the National Access Forum, taking account of the needs and interests of others.

**Understand and represent our membership's interests** and priorities for the hills and mountains.

**Support and promote climate change and biodiversity initiatives** for mitigating or adapting to the effects of rapidly changing environmental conditions.

**Work in partnership with others** to manage and maintain public access while increasing the wild and natural qualities of land and water, and support local community initiatives where they align with our members' interests.

**Scrutinise development proposals** for environmental and community benefit and challenge those with the potential to damage or degrade the experience of the hills and mountains.

**Provide opportunities to acquire skills to be safe and self-reliant** while enjoying the benefits of walking, climbing and snowsports touring in Scotland's hill and mountains.

**Support the development of climbing** in Scotland.

*“Mountaineering Scotland members care passionately about these hills, mountains, and crags. They are valued by walkers, climbers and snowsports tourers for the recreational challenges and enjoyment found there.”*



## CONTEXT

**The beauty of Scotland owes much to its mountains and moorland. By world standards Scotland's hills and mountains may not seem impressive in terms of altitude, but the ancient rocks, shaped by ice-ages and exposed to mild, wet Atlantic weather patterns meeting cool, dry continental airflows gives our mountains a special character and makes for a rich and challenging environment.**

Definitions of what a mountain is vary, but mountain areas - the craggy and rumpled uplands - cover more than 50% of Scotland's landmass, along with their lochs, rivers and burns. Hills and mountains are appreciated for their aesthetic values of landscape, their 'wild' qualities and the cultural heritage that shapes the landscape, and the wildlife living there.

A fundamental aspect of hills and mountains is that although the landform may be mainly robust, mountain environments are particularly susceptible to changes in environmental and social pressures. Their soils are very thin and are readily susceptible to erosion by footfall and weather/climate related effects. They can be home to plant and animal species at the very edges of their natural population ranges, where small changes in environmental conditions can reduce that range.

The demands on mountains as a resource are complex and can interact or compete with each other at specific locations and times of the year. Mountain landscapes are subject to multiple pressures with multiple reasons for the importance of hills and mountain areas to our society.

Mountaineering Scotland acknowledges the need to inform our membership and other hill-goers on the importance of hill and mountain landscapes, the effects and responsibilities of our activities, and opportunities for minimising our impact and engaging in practical action.





# THE NATURE AND VALUES OF HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

## NATURAL HERITAGE

Hill and mountain landscapes are maintained by a complex mix of natural environmental and ecological processes, including human cultural activities. Mountains and crags look robust but the natural processes that maintain them are vulnerable to the changing climatic conditions and weather patterns.

Climate change may lead to unforeseen environmental impacts. There is considerable uncertainty as to likely changes in weather patterns in the complex mountainous environment of Scotland; however climate trends indicate an increase in temperature overall, with changing patterns of rain- and snow-fall, leading to more extreme weather events with the potential for erosion, increased run-off and flooding, and a reduction in the number of days of snow cover.

A significant new concept of land management to address climate change and biodiversity decline, and of special relevance to the hills and mountains, is rewilding and natural regeneration on a landscape-scale. The main outcomes are self-regulating environmental processes, including carbon sequestration through woodland regrowth and re-wetting peatland, and recovery of wildlife populations.

However, there are challenges for rewilding which are particular to the uplands due to severe weather conditions, higher altitudes, colder temperatures and slower rates of growth, the pressures of herbivore browsing, few people living there able to do the work, and importantly, a legacy of extractive land management approaches.

## PEOPLE AND PLACE

Rural communities of people who make a living from the land provide essential services and shape the appearance of the landscape. Mountains have influenced the culture of communities living there, and they, through adapting to the mountain environment, have in return influenced natural processes.

This influence includes knowledge and skills in land management, in harsh and variable conditions for crops and livestock, and the resilience and resourcefulness that come from this. Cultural creativity results from this with language and poetry and music, and the use of both Gaelic and Scots names in the naming of mountains and other landscape features.

Maintaining the cultural identity and value of communities in hill and mountain areas currently means ensuring a range of employment possibilities. These possibilities include service-based tourism and small-scale developments linked to crofting or rural businesses, or supporting community infrastructure, which includes traditional land uses of agriculture, forestry and field sports, along with their modern versions.



## NATURAL RESOURCES

Hill and mountain areas provide for a range of activities, with natural resources that have been harvested for centuries by human communities: rough grazing for animals, hunting; woodland products; fresh water for drinking and power generation; stone, aggregates and other mineral mining.

More recently there has been an increase in extensive renewable energy generation from wind turbines and hydro dams, and a demand throughout the year for outdoor recreation of varying types. The intensity of how natural resources are extracted or used for human consumption adds to impacts on landscape and wildlife.

Hills, mountains and wild land are intimately connected. Wild land in Scotland often finds its best expression in mountain areas, with 269 Munros and 177 Corbetts in Wild Land Areas (95% of all Munros and 80% of Corbetts), as mapped by Scottish Natural Heritage in 2014. Wild land is a national asset, and worthy of protection for future generations, with relatively low levels of visible infrastructure compared to the lowlands, and where natural processes may be more continuously intact.

On the other hand, these areas provide resources for economically fragile mountain communities and have been and still are intensively managed for livestock, field sports and forestry. The processes that take place in areas of wild land are dynamic, responding to environmental conditions and human activity, and are not in a passive and static state, devoid of human influence – re-peopling highland communities may alter the dynamics in differing ways depending on community activities.



## ACTIVITY AND ADVENTURE

The wild and challenging landscape of Scotland's mountainous slopes and summits, and rocky cliffs and outcrops, often remote from centres of population, are accessible for outdoor recreation – offering a wide range of hiking and scrambling opportunities, challenging climbing conditions and rolling uplands for snowsport touring.

Scotland's access rights make this attainable across the whole mountain area, but rights for public recreation come with responsibilities, and an understanding of the environmental impacts of our recreational activities. Access rights and responsibilities are applicable also to land managers.

Active tourism is an important feature of hill and mountain areas, with long views of dramatic landscapes in all seasons, aligned with personal benefits of health and well-being. These personal benefits encompass simply walking or cycling with mountains as a landscape backdrop, through hiking up to a summit or viewpoint, to the physical and mental challenges of winter mountaineering and everything in between, including wild camping for a couple of nights.

Active tourism can assist with maintaining local services, but it has to be acknowledged that concentrated tourism is having negative impacts, where overcrowding by visitors is detrimental

to both visitor and local community experiences with problems arising from parking, littering, trampling and toileting.

The increasing popularity of hillwalking and other hill and mountain activities has an environmental cost, with the impact of boots and wheels trampling and compacting thin, fragile surfaces and widening of existing paths, all of which have an impact on the habitats of upland plants, animals and birds that rely on them.

Additionally most trips into the hills are by private vehicles which are environmentally polluting and need places to park safely. Initiatives such as car sharing and active travel modes require continued promotion to counter the negative impacts on land and support local communities.

Assessing the economic impact of mountaineering in Scotland is not straightforward: Scotland's People and Nature survey 2017-18, estimated that there were 13.8 million outdoor visits that year in which hillwalking or mountaineering was the main activity, with an estimated annual spend from hillwalkers exceeding £65 million (2018 figures). These are aggregated numbers and attributing economic value at any one place or any sector of society is difficult.



## OUR PRIORITIES

**The hill and mountain landscape of Scotland is diverse and valued for its different features, and at its heart is a quality of experience which many hillwalkers, climbers and mountaineers seek when they head for the hills and crags.**

It is important that future generations be able to experience the physical, mental and emotional challenges, stimulation and relaxation that our and previous generations have enjoyed, and for a wider range of society to enjoy the outdoors and understand the responsibilities of participants in recreational activities.

These values and sensitivities of mountain areas to climate, land management and outdoor recreation leads to having to balance advantages for one aspect against disadvantages for another. Prioritising benefits and losses requires understanding the interests of Mountaineering Scotland members generally and representing these in respectful discussion with individuals, local communities, and policy-makers.

Conversely, understanding of these challenges and opportunities requires information and interpretation for the outdoor recreation community, many of whom do not live in such environments.

### **To this end, Mountaineering Scotland will:**

i) **Safeguard and promote recreational access** to Scotland's hills, mountains, and crags for a range of abilities, and seek investment to maintain the condition of this land for public access.

ii) **Promote and support access rights and responsibilities** explained through the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the National Access Forum, taking account of the needs and interests of others.

iii) **Understand and uphold our membership's interests** and priorities for the hills and mountains.

iv) **Support and promote climate change and biodiversity initiatives** for mitigating or adapting to the effects of rapidly changing environmental conditions.

v) **Work in partnership with others to manage and maintain public access** while increasing the wild and natural qualities of land and water, and support local community initiatives where they align with our members' interests.

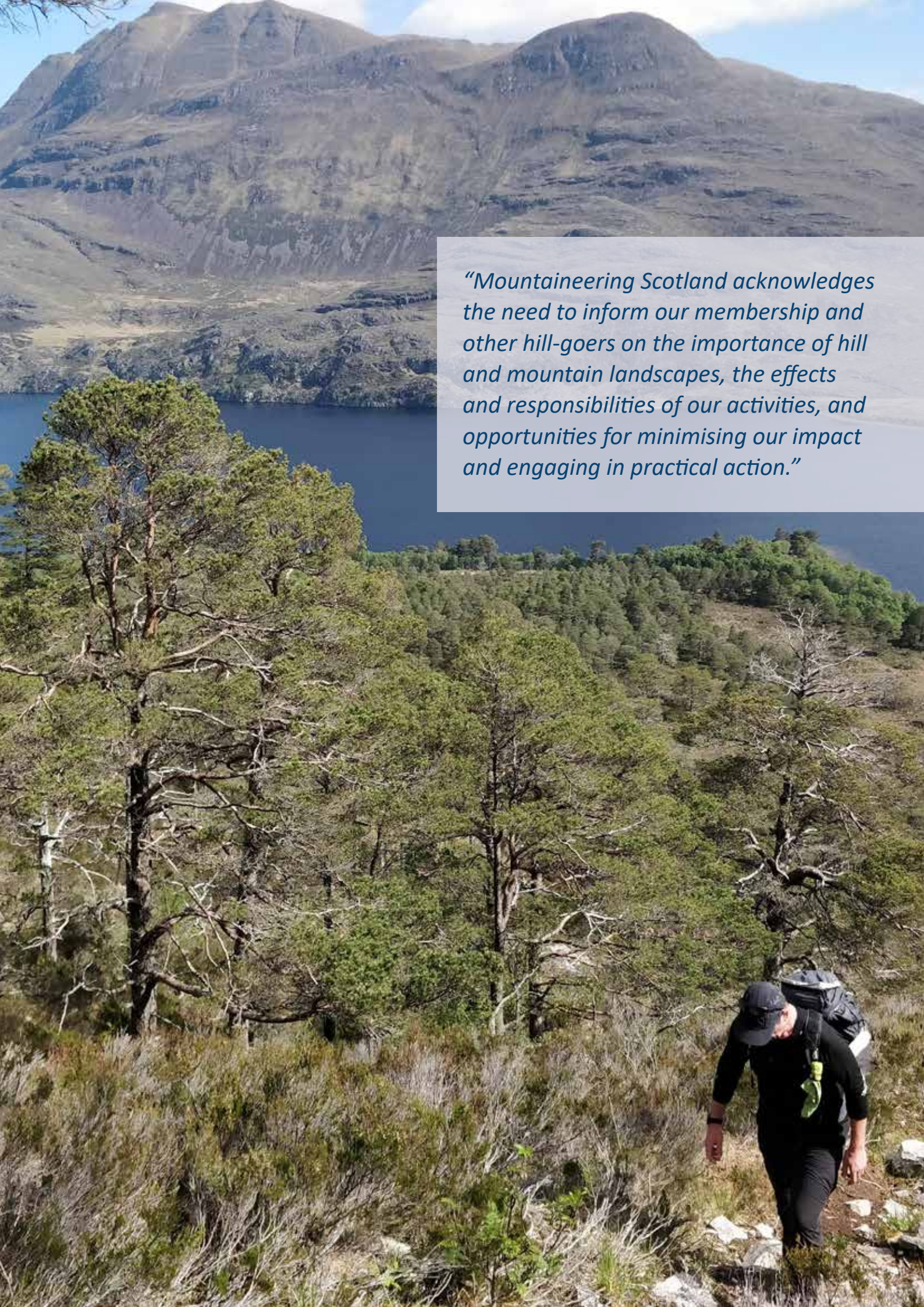
vi) **Scrutinise development proposals for environmental and community benefit** and challenge those with the potential to damage or degrade the experience of the hills and mountains.

vii) **Provide opportunities to acquire skills to be safe and self-reliant** while enjoying the benefits of walking, climbing and snowsports touring in Scotland's hill and mountains.

viii) **Support the development of climbing** in Scotland.

Our priorities are explained more fully in our Conservation Strategy and the suite of policy and position statements for land use, development and community need:

**[www.mountaineering.scot/conservation/policies](http://www.mountaineering.scot/conservation/policies)**



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