

Annual Review: President's Introduction

By Brian Shackleton

THE period covered by this annual review, from the start of April 2020 to the end of March 2021, saw two long spells of lockdown restrictions put in place by government to contain the coronavirus pandemic, with a short period of relative normality for most of us during the summer months of 2020.

The usual activities of Mountaineering Scotland staff and members were severely impacted by the lockdown measures for many months and even as I write this piece in early July 2021, some restrictions remain. Many of the staff continue to work at home with the office in The Granary in Perth likely to remain closed until September 2021. The restrictions also continue to impact how club meets can take place, how courses can be delivered, how indoor climbing wall activity can operate and how we can travel to the mountains in other countries.

Mountaineering Scotland is particularly grateful to our members and clubs for your continuing support over this difficult year. Despite initial fears, membership has held up well, although there has been a drop in the numbers from student-based clubs which has impacted the total number of members. Along with the support we have received from sportscotland, this has meant that we could continue to work on your behalf throughout lockdown restrictions. The office staff led by our CEO Stuart Younie have grappled with the constantly changing government legislation to keep our guidance for hillwalking, climbing and ski touring for individuals, groups and clubs as up to date and as clear as possible, and to communicate this to members and clubs regularly as events have unfolded. We have often joined with other outdoor organisations, our partners in the Mountain Safety Group and other sports bodies in pushing government for relaxation in restrictions for safe participation. And, as we emerge from the restrictions, we think that our reputation is enhanced as a leading voice for the Mountaineering community in Scotland.

When delivery of training and courses was not possible, our Mountain Safety and ClimbScotland teams worked in innovative ways to deliver safety and skills messaging across a number of platforms, with several ideas likely to be retained in the longer term. On the Access, Conservation and Landscape Planning fronts, the need to safeguard access and encourage good conservation practice while maintaining vigilance when inappropriate developments are brought to our attention, is work that has continued without interruption. The pressures on the countryside during summer 2020 after easing of the first lockdown restrictions, saw us increasing our messaging

on responsible behaviour following incidents of 'dirty camping' and concerns being raised by rural communities following a sudden influx in visitors. There are already signs that similar pressures have returned in summer 2021 with a clear need for improved infrastructure which will require government and local authority funding, and we continue to work with the National Access Forum and visitor management groups to represent the interests of our members.

Many of the planned events to celebrate our 50th anniversary after March and into the second half of 2020 had to be cancelled but a special 100-page edition of the Scottish Mountaineer magazine was produced in the autumn as a celebratory issue. With increasing challenges in meeting rising printing and distribution costs, we are reviewing options for producing the magazine including reducing the number of printed editions, and a change in format for digital editions. The way in which we communicate with our members is certainly changing with existing trends being accelerated as a result of the circumstances we have been through over the past 18 months, however we acknowledge that many of our members still prefer printed and face to face communications over digital.

The Mountaineering Scotland AGM, held in November 2020, had by necessity to be held online, the first time in our history that this has happened. The format was kept as simple as possible and it allowed some members to participate who would not have been able to attend the more familiar gathering that has taken place in previous years at Glenmore Lodge. Changes at board level saw Hazel Meehan take over as Treasurer from Jennifer Cardno, Dominic Hall taking over from Jonathan Binny as Landscape & Planning Director and Iona Turnbull taking over from Steve Gough as Governance, HR and Equalities Director. Our thanks and our best wishes go to Jennifer, Jonathan and Steve for their contributions as volunteer directors. Additionally, Alistair Todd was confirmed as Snowsports Touring Director having attended board meetings for several years in a co-opted capacity. The current board is now updating the Strategy for Mountaineering Scotland for 2021-2024 (and beyond) and will be sharing this with members, clubs and key partner organisations ahead of the 2021 AGM in November. We hope, if circumstances



allow, to revert to a face-to-face AGM in November, but at the time of writing this is not yet clear.

This introduction to our annual review of 2020-21 cannot close without mention of the deaths of Hamish MacInnes and Doug Scott, both of whom contributed so much to mountaineering generally and helped inspire

many to take up the sport to make it special for so many of us today.

There was also much to be celebrated across our community and some particular highlights and outstanding individual performances from the period of review which includes part of our 50th anniversary year:

16th July Previous part time Mountain Safety Advisor with Mountaineering Scotland, Ian Stewart completes his Cairngorms "parkrun" in the first recorded continuous ascent of all 58 Munros in the Cairngorms national park.

17th July - Finlay Wild breaks his own Tranter round record and then goes on to set new Ramsay round record on 31st August.

18th July - Katie Henderson sets a new female record for completing the Cairngorm 4000s.

19th August - Kelli Roberts sets fastest female Cuillin traverse.

2nd September - Donnie Campbell completes the fastest ever Munro round in just under 32 days.

28th September - Aberdeen climber Max Milne takes second place at the British Climbing Cup.

8th December - Climbing is officially confirmed for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

2021

January and February - Ski tourers all over Scotland enjoy some of the best winter conditions for years.

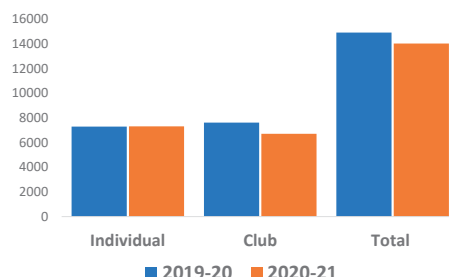
March - First Ascent of King Capella 9b+ by William Bosi and the first ever dry-tooling club (Scottish Dry Tooling Club, see page XX) is set up, based at Glasgow Climbing Centre.

These highlights illustrate the range of activities we cover in Mountaineering Scotland and what is possible even in times of restriction. Each of us will have our own special memories or highlights to look back on over the past year to keep us positive in outlook for what lies ahead.

Brian Shackleton

Our membership

Individual, club and total members
2019-2020 vs 2020-21



- Membership was impacted by the Covid pandemic, with overall membership falling 6% compared to the previous year, from 14,913 to 14,024 members at year end.
- Individual membership did decline during the first lockdown but recovered significantly once Covid restrictions were relaxed and with the resulting increased participation in hill walking and outdoor recreation as a whole.
- Club membership was impacted most, with a significant drop in membership of university, college clubs and youth climbing clubs which had very little activity during this financial year due to the Covid restrictions.

“Mountaineering Scotland is always there to help when required.”



Supporting our members

- Successfully negotiated the inclusion of hill walking and climbing activity in Phase 1 of the exit from the first national lockdown.
- Represented the interests of members and the mountaineering community in discussions with Scottish Government, outdoor sport governing bodies, mountain safety organisations and other partners in relation to Covid measures and guidance.
- Produced the official guidance for hill walkers, climbers and mountaineers during Covid in advance of the end of the first national lockdown, with regular updates in response to the many changes to the Covid measures in Scotland.
- Delivered the 2020 AGM online, with 81 members attending and equally represented by clubs and individual members.
- Produced four issues of Scottish Mountaineer magazine, one printed and three in digital format.



- Worked in partnership with social media supporters to reach more diverse audiences and promote membership through sharing campaigns and benefits of Mountaineering Scotland membership.
- Over 350 members responded to give their views on Mountaineering Scotland and ClimbScotland communications, providing useful insights into how members prefer to receive information both on and offline.
- Continued to provide regular news, updates and offers for members through the monthly members e-zine, website and social media in addition to Covid-specific communications and updates.

Supporting affiliated clubs

- Welcomed four new clubs which were affiliated during 2020-21 - Inverness Backcountry Snowsports Club, Scottish Dry Tooling Club, International Mountaineers of Edinburgh and Black Dog Mountaineering Club.
- Conducted short surveys of affiliated clubs in April and November 2020 to assess the impact of Covid on clubs and the challenges they faced including closure and maintenance of club huts, uncertainty about indoor climbing facilities reopening to groups, restrictions on travel and club membership. Several clubs reported an increase in new member registrations following the easing of lockdown and resumption of outdoor group activities.
- Annual club survey in February 2021 had a record 71 responses and gives insight into how the clubs have managed a challenging year, their goals moving forward and the support that will help them achieve those goals.
- Produced specific Covid guidance for clubs to support a safe and manageable return to activities which is regularly updated to keep clubs informed of the latest

guidelines and Covid regulations.

- Worked in partnership with the BMC to produce guidance for hut managers to support them in reopening club huts safely.
- Supported clubs to continue networking and sharing knowledge through the club organisers Facebook group, a new Covid officer Facebook group, and online meetup attended by 36 club representatives.

“We have noticed a significant change in the level of support that is provided for clubs and over recent years we have been made to feel a valued membership of the organisation”

Our communications

- 35,500 website visits per month
- 17,500 email newsletter subscribers
- 22,800 Facebook page likes
- 16,900 Twitter followers
- 6,400 Instagram followers
- 171 entries in mountain writing competition
- 12 Press releases
- Launched a new promotional video celebrating our 50th anniversary

Our people stats

- 7,315 Individual members
- 6,709 Club members
- 163 Affiliated clubs
- 120 volunteers
- 81 Associate members
- 12 staff
- 10 directors



Mountain skills and safety

- Delivered 14 mountain skills courses (when restrictions allowed) to 160 members, including navigation skills, scrambling, summer mountain leader training and winter skills.
- Worked with 10 affiliated clubs to provide bespoke skills and safety training for their members including navigation, ropework, scrambling and winter skills.
- The Mountain Safety Advisory Group, chaired by Mountaineering Scotland, was more active than ever before, meeting regularly on-line to support the production of guidance for the mountaineering community and support a safe transition back to outdoor activities following lockdown.
- Worked in partnership with Scottish Mountain Rescue, Glenmore Lodge, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland, Snowsport Scotland and Mountain Training to deliver ThinkWINTER 2020/21, reinforcing winter safety messages along with Covid guidance through social media, print and online media.
- Produced 5 winter safety videos in partnership with Tiso, and supported by Rab, for use on social media and website as part



“Ben was fantastic and covered everything we asked.”

of the ThinkWINTER! campaign, and reaching more than 85,000 viewers.

- Responded to more than 20 media enquiries relating to mountain safety issues and incidents including 8 live TV and radio interviews.
- With the support of St John Scotland, the newly appointed mountain safety instructor Ali Rose provided mountaineering skills training for 4 University and College clubs during autumn 2020.

“I was genuinely very impressed by the whole experience, it couldn't have gone better!”

Our thanks go to...

All the members and freelance instructors who support our courses, Craigdon Mountain Sports, Tiso, Rab Equipment, DMM, Glenmore Lodge, Herald & Times, Mill Cottage Trust, The Munro Society, St John Scotland, Scottish Mountain Rescue, Scottish Mountaineering Trust, sportscotland, Cotswold Outdoors, Winter Sports Legacy Trust, Police Scotland, Mountain Weather Information Service, Met Office Aberdeen, Mountain skills and safety Scotland, Scottish Avalanche Information Service.

“I thought the trainers were excellent and did a good job adapting to the Covid restrictions.”

Delivering mountain skills and safety online

Covid brought many challenges for the Mountaineering Scotland Mountain Safety team, Heather and Ben. Unable to deliver the intended program of group skills courses face to face for many months, they had to adapt to new ways to deliver mountain safety and skills information and events:

- 16 on-line mountain safety events including Facebook Live Q&A sessions, presentations to clubs, quizzes and webinars.
- 4 Facebook live Q&As covered the 'return to the hills' post-lockdown, summer/autumn skills and safety, winter skills and ski touring, reaching over 40,000 viewers
- 18 members benefitted from one-to-one telephone calls with Heather Morning to answer their mountain safety questions and queries.
- 200 people attended a navigation webinar, which has since had over 4,000 views on YouTube.
- Winter skills and spring 'Skills for the hills' webinars replaced the annual winter and spring lectures tours, attracting over 1,000 people in total, around half of which were existing members.



Respecting Scotland's mountains

- Mountaineering Scotland continued as an active member of the Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance (SORA), supporting the publication of a joint 'Manifesto for the Outdoors' which was sent to the main political parties and prospective candidates in advance of the Scottish parliamentary elections. SORA actively engaged with the Scottish Government's Visitor Strategy Management Group looking at how best to manage the increase in visitors to the countryside during Covid-19.
- Responded to the Scottish Government's position statement on the review of National Planning Framework 4, in defence of wild land areas as a national asset.
- Wild Camping position statement was approved by the Mountaineering Scotland Board to inform the public debate on wild and roadside camping.
- Produced a briefing for MSPs on wild camping to inform a parliamentary debate in September 2020 and responded to a parliamentary petition requesting the introduction of new legislation to allow local authorities to introduce no wild camp zones in Scotland. This petition has now been closed.
- Drafted a Grouse Moor Management statement, to inform responses to the Scottish Government Grouse Moor Management Group Report.
- Launched 'A Tree a Trip', a new initiative for members to help mitigate their personal recreational travel carbon emissions by planting an ecologically appropriate tree in a highland estate which will store carbon for the length of its lifespan, while providing biodiversity benefits for the area.
- Participated in the mountain biking community's Scottish Gathering conference in an online panel discussion on the ethics of riding and walking in wild country.

Get campaigning

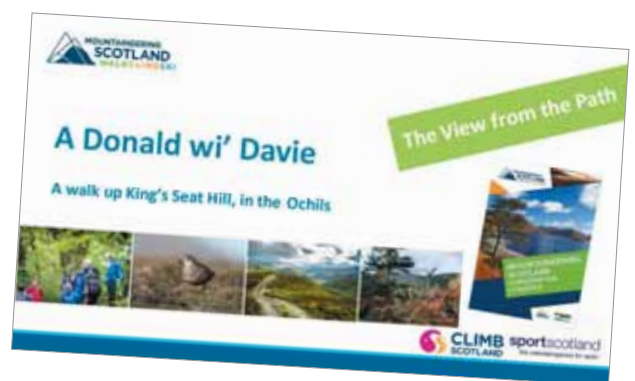
- 79 access-related enquiries from members
- 81 responses to planning applications and proposals
- 5 objections to windfarm planning applications, out of a total of 24 received
- 97 people attended 'A Donald wi' Davie' webinar, a virtual walk Kings Seat in the Ochils
- 50 people attended 'Nature of the Hills: Introduction to Access and Conservation' webinar



Donate a tree to our grove every time you make a trip to walk, climb or ski

Championing access

- Enquiries in early summer 2020 were mostly seeking advice on Covid-19 measures and what was permitted, along with blocked car parking areas and signage, locked gates, and being verbally dissuaded from taking legitimate access. Matters not compliant with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code were reported to local authority Access Officers, but in some cases took longer to resolve than expected because of furlough and restrictions on site visits.
- Responded to several enquiries regarding access for ski touring during winter 2020-21, as the Covid-19 travel restrictions and extensive snow cover encouraged more skiing activity locally in places not normally accustomed to it. General response was that ski-touring is an activity covered by access rights, but car parking isn't.
- Wrote to Perth & Kinross Council about the consequences for hillwalkers of parking restrictions on long stretches of rural roads.
- Attended and contributed to regular National Access Forum meetings, and participated in a sub-group reviewing guidance on managing camping with tents.
- Produced deer fence access criteria to inform comment on new forestry fencing proposals including where crossing points should be and of what type, following a number of reports of access issues relating to forestry plantations with no easy way over locked gates and high deer fences.
- Nesting bird updates for climbers continued but with some gaps in information due to inability of volunteers to conduct site visits to popular crags.
- Investigated a complaint of excessive vegetation clearance and bolting of outcrops on a crag by Kingussie. It appeared that bolting was for a range of easy ascents for family and beginner excursions, and had avoided established routes, but timing and extent of vegetation clearance could have been more sensitively handled.
- Investigated a query about bolts appearing on Glen Croe boulder routes, but was unable to establish who was responsible. Local consensus was that they should be removed, and they were.
- Assisted with a request to replace stakes on climbing routes at Rosyth Quarry.



Promoting responsible access

- 'Considerate Camping' was launched as a campaign in summer 2020 to raise awareness of responsible behaviour while camping – this was aimed more at new entrants to the activity who may not be aware of good practice.
- The **Tak It Home** anti-litter campaign was continued with 1,000 reusable sugar cane bags distributed to keen hillwalkers and climbers. The campaign received the bronze award in the 'Campaign of the year' category of the TGO magazine awards 2020.
- **Nature of the Hills: Introduction to Access and Conservation** webinar covered some key areas of our work in these areas, including responsible access, Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the impact of human land management and climate change on upland areas.



Developing the sport of climbing

- Worked closely with the Association of British Climbing walls (ABC) to produce and submit guidance to the Scottish Government to allow indoor climbing facilities to reopen in Scotland following the first lockdown.

- Delivered 7 RealRock sessions for young members as soon as restrictions allowed, with additional Covid measures in place in line with Scottish Government guidance. This included two sessions working with our partners at Urban Uprising and providing the only group sessions in the whole year for the young people they work with from disadvantaged backgrounds.

- Working with national partners (ABC, BMC and Mountaineering Ireland), ClimbScotland hosted a 'Floorwalking' webinar aimed at indoor climbing wall managers and staff throughout the UK and Ireland, which aimed to support them in the return to indoor climbing though addressing skill fade and looking at the impact of Covid on their roles as floorwalkers. This was attended by more than 500 people, and the success of these has led to a further series of webinars and continued partnership working.



- GB Teams selection (Senior, Junior National Development Squad and Ice team) took place in partnership between BMC and Mountaineering Scotland.

- National Development Squad members were carried over into 2021 without a further selection event due to the impact of Covid.

- Willis Morris, Matt Foot, Neil Blake and Caitlin Connor were selected to be part of a new GB Ice Climbing Team, but unfortunately due to Covid restrictions were unable to travel to any of the events through the winter.

- Celebrated Volunteer Week by highlighting the dedication of the 27 ClimbScotland volunteers that play a huge part in supporting and developing climbing in Scotland.

- Interviewed Hannah Smith, one of the most inspiring young athletes in Scotland for International Womens' Day 2021.

Some 2020-21 Climbing highlights

- 28th Sept 2020 Max Milne took second place at the British Climbing Cup
- November 2020 ClimbScotland volunteer Ian Rendall selected as a Coach Official Volunteer Champion by sportscotland
- 13th November – BBC The Adventure Show features some of Scotland's best young Climbers in action at Super Crag at Gairloch
- 27th Nov 2020 Will Bosi through to finals at the IFSC World Cup in Moscow
- 8 Dec 2020 - Climbing officially confirmed for Paris 2024 Olympics
- March 2021 First Ascent of King Capella 9b+ by William Bosi
- March 2021 The first ever dry-tooling club (Scottish Dry Tooling Club) is set up, based at Glasgow Climbing Centre.



Keeping climbers connected

As the nation went into lockdown, the ClimbScotland team went into overdrive and came up with some fun ways to help young climbers stay active and connected.

- Climbing challenges – the team set some amazing challenges on social media during lockdown to keep climbers of all ages engaged and psyched to return to climbing, reaching over 8,500 people on social media.

- Quarantaining – During the start of the first lockdown, launched the 'Quarantaining' challenge. Every day at 4pm a word would be announced on the ClimbScotland social media channels. Each letter of that word related to an exercise which needed to be completed. People were tasked with submitting their own videos of themselves completing the different challenges to inspire others. The team put out over 80 social media posts and reached over 120,000 followers.

- Quizzes – Youth climbing club members organised and hosted a series of fun quiz nights during lockdown which allowed them to stay connected with other youth clubs, groups and young climbers across Scotland's youth climbing community.

- Give Covid the boot – ClimbScotland and Mountaineering Scotland members, board and staff got involved in this campaign early in the first national lockdown, with our own video reaching over 9,000 people and a lot of fun being had in the making of it.

- ClimbScotland saves Christmas – This blockbuster video was premiered across the world and features many young climbers who helped Santa recover all his gifts just in time for Christmas!

Get climbing

- 6600 downloads of ScotRock, the ClimbScotland podcast
- 500+ people attended a 'Floorwalking' webinar
- 80+ Quarantaining social media posts during lockdown
- 27 young people moving from indoor to outdoor climbing
- 7 RealRock sessions delivered

Creating a sustainable organisation

- Revisited the 3-year financial plan and budgets to take into account the potential impact of Covid on income from membership and other sources and to manage the increase in cost of the public liability insurance cover for members and clubs.
- As a result of retaining our membership base, tight management of expenditure and a reduction in costs due to a move to online delivery, we achieved a surplus this financial year. This will help reduce the impact of the insurance cost increases over the next 2 years.
- Utilised existing IT infrastructure and invested in additional online applications to ensure all staff could work remotely and continue supporting and communicating with members, clubs and partner organisations effectively.
- Successfully delivered the 2020 AGM online, with over 80 members attending and voting on the day, and 42 proxy voting forms received in advance from clubs and individual members.
- The Climate Response Action Group (CRAG) explored various actions that the organisation and individuals could take to address greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on climate change. A calculation of the carbon burden of Mountaineering Scotland staff business travel mileage was undertaken, to provide a benchmark for future travel decisions. Staff produced 11,100 kg CO₂ equivalent in business travel for the previous financial year.

Allocation of membership subscriptions

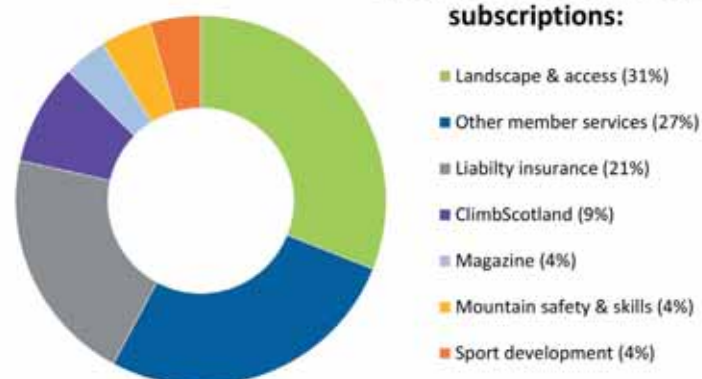
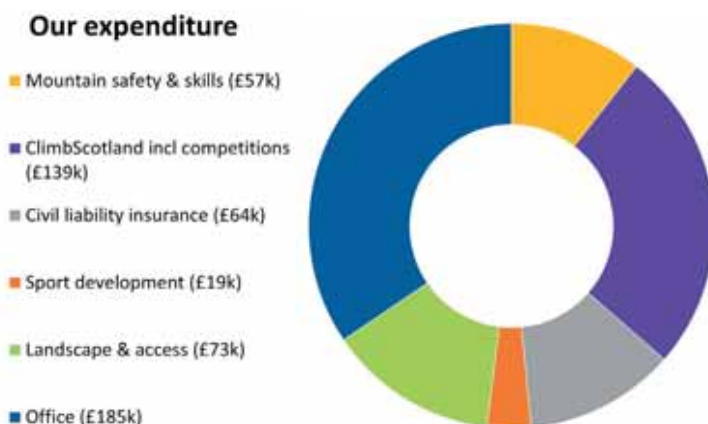
- As a not for profit membership organisation, we rely on your subscriptions to support the work we do on behalf of all our members.
- The majority of membership fees go directly towards access and landscape work, responsible access and safety campaigns, member services and combined liability insurance which all members enjoy as a key member benefit.
- See allocation of membership subscription chart (right) for the full breakdown.

Sportscotland Investment

- Sportscotland investment as of March 2020 was 3% up on the previous year from £215,000 to £221,000 which will assist in meeting increased staffing costs. This figure represents 35% of our total income, a decrease from 36% in 2019-20.
- This funding supports our mountain safety programme enabling us to deliver mountain skills courses and engage with the next generation of climbers (and future members) through the ClimbScotland programme.
- Practical support through sportscotland helps us be a more effective organisation and includes legal and HR support, the management of payroll, staff and board training and support to help us achieve

the equalities standard for sport. We completed a medium level development audit conducted independently by KPMG which confirmed our governance arrangements were at the second highest level "satisfactory with comments".

- Through sportscotland we also have many opportunities to work in collaboration with other governing bodies where there are common interests, working together on joint campaigns and sharing good practice. We have been an active member of the CEO Forum for sport which was created as a support network in response to the impact of Covid-19 and continue to promote the interests of outdoor sports through that group.





2021 AGM

Sat 20th November



2021 Annual General Meeting – update for members

By Stuart Younie

MEMBERS are invited to save the date for the 2021 Mountaineering Scotland AGM, which will be held on Saturday 20 November.

At the time of writing, it is unclear whether a return to a face-to-face meeting will be possible, therefore we are looking at the available options for holding the event. The final decision will depend on any physical distancing and restrictions on numbers for indoor gatherings which may or may not remain in place closer to the time.

The AGM in 2020 was held online and worked well, allowing members to submit questions and vote, as well as allowing members who may not normally be able to travel to the AGM to attend and contribute. It also provided some useful learning and feedback from members which will enable us to improve the format on last year if this is the chosen option for 2021.

We know that many members would like a return to a physical meeting, in a similar format to those held at Glenmore Lodge in previous years. This will of course be dependent on access to a suitable venue which can safely accommodate the number of members who wish to attend.

Whichever option goes ahead, we hope that many of our clubs and individual members will be able to join us. In preparation for the meeting, we encourage members to read the 2020-21 annual report which is published in this issue of Scottish Mountaineer and also available as a pdf on the Mountaineering Scotland website. In response to member feedback regarding the presentation of the accounts and financial information, we also aim to provide more detail than is present in the annual report in advance of the AGM.

Further details along with the agenda and voting papers will be issued in due course through the members ezine and the Mountaineering Scotland website.

▶ www.mountaineering.scot/agm2021

50th Anniversary MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND 1970-2020 2020 AGM and EGM

Introduction and welcome
Brian Shackleton, President

How the AGM and EGM will run
Stuart Younie, Company Secretary

- Zoom
- Questions
- Voting and Polls

Questions



www.mountaineering.scot/agm2021