



Appendix III-B-7 Scottish Mountaineering Huts Position Statement



This statement was approved by the Board on 7 September 2017

1. Introduction

1.1 Mountaineering huts in Scotland

There are over twenty huts throughout Scotland belonging to club members^[1] of Mountaineering Scotland, which are made available on a reciprocal basis to both Mountaineering Scotland and British Mountaineering Council (BMC) club members. Places in some huts are available to individual members of Mountaineering Scotland.

Mountaineering Scotland trustees and nominated representatives participate in the management of the Scottish National Huts: The Alex MacIntyre Memorial Hut (AMMH), the Glen Brittle War Memorial Hut (GBMH) and Mill Cottage. Mountaineering Scotland, together with the BMC, has trustees^[2] on the trusts which own and oversee the management of the AMMH at Onich and the GBMH on Skye. Mill Cottage in Glenfeshie is owned by an independent trust that has six trustees, two of whom are *ex-officio* the President and the Treasurer of Mountaineering Scotland.

1.2 Access to huts furth of Scotland

Members of Mountaineering Scotland have access to huts in England and Wales on a reciprocal basis. A list of these huts is available from the BMC website – www.thebmc.co.uk

1.3 The co-ordinating role of Mountaineering Scotland

Mountaineering Scotland co-ordinates a reciprocal arrangement between those clubs that own or manage Scottish mountaineering huts and those who wish to use them. This co-ordination involves:

- a) Maintaining an up-to-date directory (huts list) of Scottish clubs' huts, which is available at www.mountaineering.scot/huts
- b) Acting as arbiter in cases of abuse of hut facilities or non-payment of fees and making all hut committees aware of the outcome, especially where it was necessary to apply sanctions (see 5).

1.4 Recognition of autonomy

Mountaineering Scotland recognises the complete autonomy of individual clubs to manage their own hut(s) as they see fit. However, Mountaineering Scotland encourages hut management committees to adopt the principles and guidelines detailed in this position statement.

^[1] According to the Articles of Association of MCoS Ltd, clubs are 'Members of the Company' and are referred to as 'Club Members'.

^[2] Two Mountaineering Scotland office-bearers (President, Treasurer) and also the Convenor of the Huts Advisory Group are *ex-officio* trustees of the Alex MacIntyre Memorial Hut and one office-bearer (President) is *ex-officio* a trustee of the Glen Brittle War Memorial Hut. The chairperson of the GBMH, who may be a member of Mountaineering Scotland or of the BMC, is also *ex-officio* a trustee.

1.5 The need for low cost accommodation

Mountaineering Scotland recognises the need for low cost basic accommodation in the mountain areas of Scotland. There is, however, a shortage of suitable accommodation in some popular areas and there are some areas not covered by the present distribution of club huts.

1.6 The distinct roles of independent hostels and club huts

There is a network of commercial independent hostels in Scotland covering many of the popular mountain venues. Mountaineering Scotland commends such developments since i) they fulfil a need for accommodation and ii) they benefit the local economy in rural areas.

However, Mountaineering Scotland believes that there is also a need to expand the existing network of club huts available solely to club and individual members of Mountaineering Scotland and to those with reciprocal rights. In most cases club huts do not operate in competition with private hostels.

1.7 The Mountain Bothies Association

Mountaineering Scotland liaises with the Mountain Bothies Association (MBA) on an informal and as-required basis.

2. Mountaineering Scotland and Scottish mountain huts

2.1 The Huts Advisory Group

Mountaineering Scotland operates a Huts Advisory Group (HAG), which reports to the Mountaineering Scotland director responsible for club activities. The main functions of the HAG are:

a) To publish a huts directory:

The HAG collates information on Scottish mountain huts and it is available to all club and individual members at www.mountaineering.scot/huts. The information in the directory includes details of all facilities offered at each hut. Where possible, information will be provided for disabled people regarding ease of access and any special facilities.

b) To provide information and advice to club members:

This includes the publication of an occasional *Huts Newsletter*, topical articles in Mountaineering Scotland's magazine, *Scottish Mountaineer*, and holding a seminar on a regular basis to review technical, legal and other matters relevant to the management of huts.

c) To liaise with the BMC's Huts Group:

The HAG collaborates with the BMC on the production and publication of a series of information papers, *Hut Guidelines*, on topics relevant to hut management. The guidelines are available on the website (see 6). Mountaineering Scotland encourages club members to follow those guidelines.

2.2 A strategy for hut development

The HAG will identify geographical gaps in the provision of huts within Scotland based on an assessment of both present and evolving needs and will do what it can to facilitate developments in those areas.

2.3 Appropriate locations for development

Mountaineering Scotland considers it inappropriate to develop mountain huts in remote or wild land areas, or at altitude, unless use can be made of existing property (possibly in a derelict or ruinous state) and where use in this way would enhance that property. As a general rule, it is considered that new huts should be based near existing habitation and, ideally, should be easily accessed by public transport or by car.

2.4 Assistance for clubs planning to develop a new hut

Mountaineering Scotland is aware that some club members that presently do not own or manage huts have a desire to do so. Through the HAG, Mountaineering Scotland will give guidance and assistance to member clubs that are planning to establish a new hut, including provision of information on possible sources of grants and written support of applications to funding bodies, provided that such plans are in accord with the current position and strategy of Mountaineering Scotland.

2.5 Conversion or new build?

Mountaineering Scotland considers that new huts may be provided either by:

- a) Conversion of existing property where this does not conflict with the interests of the local community, or
- b) New build.

In either case, due consideration should be given to the potential economic impact on any established independent hostel(s) in the area.

2.6 Standards and guidelines for design, building and accommodation

The design of huts should be visually attractive and in keeping with the vernacular architecture in the area; due consideration should be given to the landscape and to environmental impact, particularly in the siting of new build huts, and to related issues such as car parking, water supply, sewage treatment and rubbish disposal.

3. The operation of the National Huts

3.1 The National Huts as exemplars

The National huts (see 1.1) should offer the basic but high-quality facilities that are expected by mountaineers. These huts should be exemplars for the operation of other huts. They should comply fully with the appropriate planning and building regulations, energy conservation guidelines, health

and safety regulations, appropriate child protection guidelines (see 6) and, where practicable, comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) and the guidelines provided by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (www.equalityandhumanrights.com), as well as following the Mountaineering Scotland equality policy and advice for clubs (see 6).

3.2 The use of the National Huts by individual members

It is the view of Mountaineering Scotland that places in the National Huts should be freely available to its individual members. Individual members may book places at the AMMH, the GBMH and Mill Cottage. A number of club huts listed in the huts directory also offer places to individual members and Mountaineering Scotland encourages the managers of other huts to consider offering places if it is feasible to do so.

4. The development and management of new Mountaineering Scotland huts

Mountaineering Scotland will consider the acquisition and development of its own huts should the opportunity and funding become available. Such huts will be owned and managed by a trust. The majority of the trustees shall be drawn from the directors of MCoS Ltd *ex-officio* and there shall be at least one other independent trustee who will be a person with knowledge and experience of the use and management of mountaineering huts.

Annual statements of the financial position of such trusts will be made available to the Mountaineering Scotland Board and published on the website. The constitution of the trusts will require the investment of money to cover maintenance costs and future major refurbishment or extension of the building or infrastructure.

4.1 Leasing

If suitable property becomes available for long term lease in a mountain area, for example National Trust for Scotland property, then Mountaineering Scotland shall consider the feasibility of leasing if this is either:

- a) The most economic option, or
- b) The only way of securing suitable property in the area.

4.2 Joint developments

Mountaineering Scotland will give consideration to joint developments or leasing of property in collaboration with other bodies and clubs provided that this is agreed by the Mountaineering Scotland Board as the best option for securing provision of accommodation for a particular area.

5. The misuse of huts

Unfortunately, there are occasionally cases involving the misuse of huts, such as physical damage to the fabric, fixtures and fittings, deliberately exceeding the maximum capacity, unacceptable behaviour or non-payment of fees.

This is normally a matter for hut custodians to deal with. However, in cases where reparation for such misuse cannot be agreed between the culprits and the hut management committee, Mountaineering Scotland may act as arbiter if requested to do so. If it proves impossible to achieve a satisfactory settlement then Mountaineering Scotland, if so requested, shall consider at Board level the imposition of sanctions against offenders whether club members or individuals. Such sanctions may include:

- a) Suspension of clubs or individuals from membership of Mountaineering Scotland for an indefinite period and therefore loss of all associated privileges, including those offered by the BMC
- b) Notification of the decision of Mountaineering Scotland to i) the management committees of all Scottish huts ii) bodies representing independent hostels (see 1.6) and iii) the BMC, with a recommendation that the offending party(ies) should be barred until further notice and
- c) The publication of full details of each case in *Scottish Mountaineer* and on the Mountaineering Scotland website.

6. Further information

The following useful resources are available via the Mountaineering Scotland website:

1. The current Mountaineering Scotland *Directory of Scottish Huts*:
www.mountaineering.scot/huts
2. The current BMC/Mountaineering Scotland *Hut Guidelines* – a series of guidance notes on practical and legal aspects of hut management:
www.mountaineering.scot/clubs/huts/guidelines-for-hut-managers
3. Mountaineering Scotland Equality Policy and advice for clubs:
www.mountaineering.scot/about-us/business-matters/equality-policy
www.mountaineering.scot/clubs/advice-and-resources/club-insurance-and-legal/equality-act-advice
4. Advice to clubs concerning the legal, insurance and practical implications relating to the membership and involvement in club activities of children (people under the age of 18 years) and the Mountaineering Scotland Child Protection Policy Statement:
www.mountaineering.scot/about-us/business-matters/child-protection-policy
5. Clubs are eligible for free employers' liability insurance for volunteers or paid staff who undertake work on their behalf, for example on mountaineering huts. Information on the limitations of this cover and how to apply for it:
www.mountaineering.scot/clubs/advice-and-resources/club-insurance-and-legal/club-insurance
www.mountaineering-scot-insurance.co.uk/organisers

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