



MOUNTAINEERING SCOTLAND

The Granary
West Mill Street
Perth PH1 5QP
Tel: 01738 493947
email stuart@mountaineering.scot

Board Meeting – Approved minutes

Wednesday 29th May 2019 – The Mercure Hotel, Perth, 5pm

Directors: Jonathan Binny; Avril Gall; Steve Gough; Kat Jones; David Montieth; Mike Watson (Chair). Ron Neville

CEO & Company Secretary: Stuart Younie. **Observers:** Megan Griffiths (sportsotland); Alistair Todd (Associate for Snowsports Touring), Nigel Clark (Associate for Mountain Safety), Lucy Fraser

Papers: ++ for information / discussion; ## for decision; Other items: verbal update or papers to follow

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were noted from Jennifer Cardno & Jo Dytch

Mike welcomed Lucy Fraser to the board meeting and the directors in attendance introduced themselves and explained their role on the board. LF outlined her professional background in IT, as well as her experience as volunteer Trustee, Director and Company Secretary of a charitable organisation, and as chair of her local school Parent Council for the last 5 years. Her eldest daughter is a keen climber who has been competing in the YCS series for the last 2 years and Lucy has been a volunteer at the events and has an interest in the work that Climbscotland delivers.

2.0 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interests were noted.

3.0 Draft Minutes of the meeting of 28th February 2019

The minutes were approved without amendment.

4.0 Actions and matters arising not tabled elsewhere in the agenda

- Under item 7.1.1 SY confirmed that Mountaineering Scotland had emailed sportsotland to express an interest in applying for the intermediate equality standard by Sep 2020.
- Under item 7.5.4 SY noted that the launch of the conservation strategy was due to take place on Sat the 8th June with 20 confirmed attendees.
- Under 8.3 SY had contacted AG to discuss succession planning for the directors' post (Climbscotland) and as a result Lucy Fraser (observer) had expressed an interest in attending the board meeting to find out more about the role.
- Under 8.5 SY noted that the draft terms of reference had been considered at the meetings of the Climbing Advisory Group and the Snowsports Touring Advisory Group.

5.0 Call for AOCB

No additional business items were raised.

6.0 Finance Report – Confidential Item restricted to board members and CEO

6.1 Treasurers Report - Management accounts Quarter 4 2018-19 and end of year report

SY reported that due to careful management of expenditure and a 1.9% increase on budgeted income from membership fees the year end position was showing a surplus of £5,683 to 31/03/19.

Membership income was higher than budget for both individual and club memberships, however it was noted that club membership income is down 6% compared to last year indicating a shift from club to individual memberships. It was noted that the year end position was a significant improvement on the £10k deficit that was originally budgeted for this year and SY paid thanks to Denise for all her efforts in helping to deliver this result.

6.2 Budget update 2019 – 20

Following approval of the draft budget in February which forecasted a £23k deficit, SY provided an updated forecast based on the actual figures for the year end 18/19. As a result of improved income figures and identified savings, the budget now showed a £2k deficit which the board welcomed as a much-improved position. SY noted that prudent approach had been taken and the aim is still to deliver a balanced budget and thanked Denise for all her work in updating the figures.

SY also advised that work had been done to assess the impact of increasing the membership fees and changing the DD discount to meet the rising costs of the organisation over the next few years. MW supported an increase in the fees by 6% as they have remained static for several years and he felt that MS can demonstrate the organisation has been successful in containing costs. It was noted that this included employing a full time Access Officer a role that generates no income. SY highlighted that our membership fees have historically followed the BMC who have had a substantial increase to £39 compared to £30.50 for individual membership fees. KJ supported the reduction in D/D discount, and AT highlighted that a perceived benefit to joining the BMC maybe access to insurance benefits although this was not the case as MS members can access the same benefits. The board agreed to consider proposals for increasing the membership fees at the 2019 AGM and asked SY to continue to work on a longer-term financial plan for the organisation.

Action: SY to continue work on a longer-term financial strategy and update the FAG and board in August.

6.3 Annual pay award 2019-20

Following discussions at the February meeting the board had agreed in principle to an annual pay award of 2% and SY then left the room whilst the board considered their final decision. SY was then invited to return to the room and it was confirmed that a 2% increase had been approved. As a result of discussions at the FAG relating to the review of Mountain Safety MW also asked SY to consider a wider organisational review of pay and remuneration, including the type of issues which should be explored e.g performance related pay and the financial impact of any changes.

Action: SY to prepare a discussion paper on staff pay and remuneration for the August Board meeting.

7.0 Strategic & Operational reports

7.1 CEO Report

SY updated on key areas of activity this quarter highlighting the review of Mountain Safety, the office refurbishment, and a successful staff away day which was held in April. Feedback from the staff had included a request for more opportunities to engage with the board, and SY had suggested that all staff would benefit from the opportunity to attend a board meeting as part of their CPD. SG felt there should be a clear reason for staff attending the board, and MW suggested that staff could use the opportunity to present their operational reports and any key initiatives / ideas. JB also suggested setting up a joint staff and board away day after the AGM based around the strategic plan, with the purpose of reviewing the current plan and identifying future priorities.

Action: SY to look into appropriate opportunities for staff to attend the board meeting, present on their work, and organise a joint staff and board away day session following the AGM.

SY highlighted difficulties with the transfer of payroll services from sportscotland to French Duncan which had taken up more time than anticipated this quarter but was now resolved. SY had also met with Alison Johnston MSP to discuss the work of Mountaineering Scotland and it was felt to have been a very positive meeting with an offer to assist in promoting campaign work, particularly around access and legislation issues. A partnership proposal which had been submitted to DMM for the provision of technical climbing equipment was also circulated for information.

7.1.1 Company Staffing Structure & review of mountain safety

SY provided an overview of the staffing structure as it was in early 2018 and presented an updated version, recommending that the structure is altered to reflect the 4 main activity areas more clearly and making two suggested changes for the consideration of the board. The first was to review the job description for the Team Leader ClimbScotland position which was out of date and did not reflect the current scope of the role. The second was linked to the review of Mountain Safety which would be dealt with in more detail under item 7.2.3. It was recommended that the Mountain Safety Officers role was regraded and a new senior role was created, better reflecting the scope and remit of the post at a level which reflected the current Team Leader salary banding. The new structure was welcomed by the board and the suggested changes approved subject to more detailed discussion in relation to the review of Mountain Safety.

7.1.2 Directors report - Human resources and Equality

SG reported that he and SY had met with Brodies solicitors to seek advice on a number of HR issues and to discuss the updates to the staff handbook. He confirmed that the current Equality standard expires in Jan 2020 and following a training session with Plan for Sport, and in discussion with the CEO, it had been agreed to apply for the Intermediate standard in Sep 2020. There was a requirement to update both the equalities action plan and the current policy. Advice was being sought from the Scottish Canoe Association who already hold the intermediate level. As part of the next level the issue of mental health had been identified as a focus area and it was noted that the BMC website had some good information on this issue, and that the Ramblers had also been proactive in promoting physical and mental health. A future consideration will be promoting mental health awareness training

for staff and board members. RN offered to provide any support with accessing health contacts if it would be beneficial and SG thanked him for that offer.

Action: SG to provide an updated to the next board meeting on the Equality Action Plan

7.2 Mountain safety

7.2.1 Directors Report – Mountain Safety

DM updated on the most recent Mountain Safety Group (MSG) meeting highlighting a recent initiative by the BMC to record and publish near misses and incidents online, and plans to host a parliamentary reception in late 2019 with Scottish Mountain Rescue. KJ asked whether it would be possible to hold another reception in 2020 to tie in with the 50th year celebrations, but it was felt this would be difficult with the planned timing in Nov 2019. At the last Mountain Training UK Meeting (MTUK) meeting it was noted that the Mountain Instructor Award and the Mountaineering Instructor Certificate had been renamed the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor, and the Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor respectively. The minutes from both the MSG and the MTUK meetings had been circulated with the papers for information.

7.2.2 Operational report by Heather Morning

The report from Heather Morning was noted with SY confirming that the course programme was going well with summer bookings performing strongly. Interest in the new club sessions was building with 5 sessions delivered and another 5 planned and although taking time to set up, the feedback from clubs had been very positive. The new “Spring Skills for the Hills” lectures delivered in partnership with Craigdon had proved particularly successful in attracting non-members and new membership sign ups.

7.2.3 Review of Mountain Safety

SY had circulated a copy of the proposal to review the Mountain Safety programme with the first phase to establish the operational and staffing requirements. The second phase involved reviewing the wider role of the Mountain Safety Group and identifying opportunities for partnerships to help develop the programme. A review of the current pricing of courses had been undertaken with the aim of supporting the development of the staffing structure needed to sustain delivery in the longer term, whilst remaining at an accessible price point for members. A spreadsheet identifying potential additional income of approximately £7k had been circulated for information and the implementation of these increases was approved by the board. As discussed under item 7.1.1 the first proposal was to create a Senior Mountain Safety Officer role to co-ordinate the programme whilst also retaining input into the direct delivery of courses. Further to the previous discussion at the FAG and under item 7.1.1 this was agreed by the board.

Action: SY to implement the agreed price increases and review the current Mountain Safety Officer Job specification to reflect additional responsibilities of the new post.

The second issue was in relation to the p/t Mountain Safety Advisor post and a request to match the current daily rate offered by Glenmore Lodge which SY explained was not possible to do within the

current grading structure for contracted employees. It was noted that the annual salary for the post was below the instructor rate paid by Glenmore Lodge, and as a result it had been difficult to attract applicants. The issue had been discussed at the FAG and the requirement for a more fundamental review of staff remuneration had been identified to better reflect the current market rates. This needed to be considered within the context of the overall staffing structure. SY was looking into alternative employment options based around a freelance arrangement which could result in the loss of some of the employee benefits provided under a formal contract. He requested approval from the board to take further legal advice and enter into negotiations with the employee and this was agreed.

Action: SY to seek further legal advice on extending the employment of the current P/T Mountain Safety Advisor and enter into negotiations with the employee.

7.3 **ClimbScotland**

7.3.1 Directors report – ClimbScotland

AG tabled a detailed report on participation in the Scottish Youth Bouldering Championships, Youth Climbing series and the GB Youth Squad and Senior Team. A significant increase in female participation had been identified alongside a drop in male entries and competitors from the upper quintiles using the Scottish Indicators of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Both Max Milne and Will Bosi had been competing internationally with a view to participating in the Olympic qualification events in August and November.

MG identified a need to better understand the reasons why participation by girls was so high compared to other sports. AG suggested a combination of factors including, mentoring support from more experienced climbers, the ability to compete on a level with boys as well as the social nature of indoor climbing. MG suggested some basic research which could involve a group discussion with competitors to establish the reasons for participating. LF highlighted the importance of the strong social group which had evolved among the girls and provided a positive support network. NC highlighted the need to also understand why participation by males was dropping.

Action: SY to follow up with MG and JS to identify a suitable approach to researching issues relating to gender and participation in indoor climbing.

7.3.2 Operational report ClimbScotland

The report by Jamie Smith was noted and SY highlighted that discussions were ongoing with partners to develop the participation pathways model, with most recent discussions at the Climbing Advisory Group. There had been ongoing challenges in deliver this years competition series due in part to the new format for the finals, and also the financial impact identified by some commercial climbing walls. The club development figures were below target and a more flexible model was needed to sustain both existing clubs and also develop new groups providing opportunities to participate. The team were considering this as part of the ClimbScotland review recommendations and new membership structure. The adventure show was planning to focus on climbing as part of a live broadcast from Ratho in July and the preparation for the European championships in October were going well.

7.4.1 Directors report – Membership

KJ confirmed that a workshop had been set up in late June to review the current membership structure and identify possible improvements to ensure it was simple and understandable. This was linked the membership strategy actions, and also included the introduction of new membership categories for indoor climbers.

7.4.2 Directors report – Clubs

JD had tabled a report identifying the key themes from the club survey results which had been circulated for information. These were:

- Our voice as part of Scotland's Mountaineering Community remains a key reason Clubs are part of the organisation.
- Maintaining Membership is a concern for many clubs (both recruiting new members and keeping existing members).
- Training is identified as an area we can help and support on.

A club meet event was planned for autumn 2019 and the positive feedback from clubs on their training sessions with the p/t Mountain Safety Advisor was also noted, demand for sessions was focussed on navigation and winter skills.

7.4.3 Operational report Member Services and Communications

The report from Helen Gestwicki was noted and SY reported that at year end, overall membership was just under target with individual membership up 4.3% on last year and clubs 8% down. Despite these results income from membership was £5.5k over budget thanks to better than expected income from clubs. The first month of this financial year was on target and clubs have been asked to complete their annual renewals by September (where possible) which will enable us to see earlier in the year how the club membership is performing. MG noted that this was a similar trend in other sports with participants moving away from the club model.

Social media activity peaked in Feb/Mar due to Glen Etive and mountain incidents and thanks were noted to both Heather and Neil for dealing with all the media enquiries so professionally as it had been a very busy winter season.

The Mountaineering Scotland and ClimbScotland logo redesign has brought them together visually while still keeping the essential elements there and next step was to start updating publications/banners etc over the next 3 months. A copy of the new logos was circulated for information. JB welcomed the move to using the "Walk, Climb, Ski" strapline and noted that the club survey identified individual interests extending to a range of outdoor sports including running and mountain biking.

The photo competition sponsored by f-stop gear and their brand ambassador Nadir Khan, had attracted 67 entries so far and although was open to anyone member engagement had been positive. Closing date 21 June.

7.5 Access, conservation and planning

7.5.1 Directors report - Landscape and Planning

JB updated the board on the latest windfarm developments, with applications including new variations on old applications and extensions to existing sites driven by recent government commitments to address climate change. No new hydro applications had been identified since the stop in payments but the legacy from previous schemes continues. The example of Attadale was highlighted as the construction was so poor that both SNH and Highland Council had walked away from the project. Links with the Munro Society were ongoing to build a photographic evidence base on the impact of hydro schemes and JB had been in communication with them to highlight the challenges with the planning system and the length of time it took to see action on the ground. The Glen Etive hydro campaign had been well handled although the outcome was disappointing. KJ made the offer to connect with the head of planning at the RSPB to discuss next steps if that would be helpful although it was confirmed that SY had written to the head of planning and Scottish Ministers and they were not taking any further action.

7.5.2 Directors Report – Access and Conservation

Following input from DB and SY, RN tabled discussion paper on climate change for the consideration of the board. He briefly introduced the document and invited comments and feedback. KJ felt that the MS position on renewables needs to be clear and JB responded by referring to the policy on objections to windfarms and the position statement on hydro schemes which had adopted by the board. MW highlighted the need for consistent messaging in relation to renewables and ensuring links between the statements in Respecting Scotlands Mountains and the Conservation strategy was made. SG agreed there was a need for simple messaging on the issue.

Action: Directors to feedback comments to RN on the paper with an update provided at the next board meeting to agree next steps.

7.5.3 Operational report conservation, planning and access

The report by Davie Black was noted and SY reported that although the current focus was on the launch of the conservation strategy it had been a busy quarter with highlights including attendance at the launch of Scotlands Landscape Alliance, signing up to support the “Fight for Scotlands Nature” campaign and development of the “Tak it hame” litter campaign. A joint initiative had also been established with the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh to encourage climbers to help identify rare plants in remote mountain locations. 13 different access queries had been dealt with and the winter season at Strathfarrar had resulted in 30 requests an increase from 23 the previous year.

8.0 Governance

8.1 Review of articles & club voting procedure

SY had circulated the comments on the current articles from Harper Macleod following their review. Although nothing significant had been identified there was a need to clarify the articles in some areas in relation to membership and voting. It was noted that the first meeting of the group reviewing the club voting arrangements had taken place with the preferred option of those in attendance to retain the club voting

system with the allocation of a set number of votes rather than moving to one member one vote. Further discussion would be required following feedback from clubs unable to attend the meeting with the aim of reporting back to the board in August. AG asked to ensure that gender neutral language was used in the articles and SY agreed to raise this with Harper Macleod. MW proposed that any changes to the articles that may go forward to the AGM were segmented into different issues and considered by separate votes and this was agreed.

Action: SY and MW to review the recommendations from Harper Macleod and circulate recommendations to the board by email. SY to progress discussions with the clubs to seek a consensus on the way forward for club voting, to be reported the August board.

8.2 2020 50th Year Celebrations

SY had circulated a paper identifying a range of ideas for marking and celebrating the 50th year of Mountaineering Scotland in 2020. JB felt this was an important opportunity to raise the profile of MS and KJ added that it was important to look forward as well as look back and ask members what they want in 50 years time. JB added in the suggestion of a baton or relay around the highest peaks in Scotland and MW referred back to previous events which aimed to get someone on the top of every Munro in Scotland within 24hrs. SG suggested there was a need to agree a budget and this should be based on some indicative costs where its possible to obtain them. SY invited comments on the proposals in the paper and for Directors to identify some the projects which they would like to support to assist in prioritising which ones to take forward.

Action: Directors to feed back on the proposals in the document and identify suggestions they would like to see taken forward. SY to obtain indicative costs where possible for consideration by the board in August on how the celebrations should be funded.

8.3 Policies and Procedures Review Schedule status report

SY reported that there were still a number of outstanding actions in relation to the policies and procedures however he had been through the status report in detail to ensure it was up to date and identified priority areas. It was suggested that any updates and changes are considered and approved by email rather than taking up time at board meetings unless it was considered necessary and this was agreed.

Action: SY to identify priorities and circulate recommendations to the board for approval as appropriate.

9.0 Standing Agenda Items

9.1 Risk Register

The updated risk register was approved.

9.2 Health & Safety

Nothing to report

9.3 General Data Protection Regulation

Nothing to report

9.4 Child Protection

Nothing to report

10.0 Information Items

10.1 BMC update

MW provided an update on strategic links with the BMC and reported that he was awaiting a response to his last communication.

11.0 Future meetings

- Thurs 22nd August - The Granary, Perth
- AGM Sat 23rd November, Glenmore Lodge

Issued by Stuart Younie, CEO & Company Secretary

Draft – 26th June 2019