



**Press Release**

**28 January 2021**

**For immediate release**

## **Covid and mountain safety**

### **Advice for walkers, climbers and skiers on keeping it safe**

For outdoor enthusiasts, so far this has been the best of winters and the worst of winters.

While there is no shortage of snow in the mountains – ideal conditions for winter walkers, climbers and skiers – COVID-19 restrictions on travel have meant that for most people access to the high mountains is either limited or totally out of reach.

However, many people are being creative and venturing out to explore and enjoy what their local area has to offer, although some are still unsure how far they can travel for outdoor recreation and exercise or what clothing, equipment and skills are needed to enjoy the outdoors safely in the current winter conditions.

A summary of the current travel guidelines for outdoor recreation and exercise in Scotland is available on the Mountaineering Scotland website ([www.mountaineering.scot/coronavirus](http://www.mountaineering.scot/coronavirus)) along with further guidance for walkers and climbers which highlights the additional considerations to be aware of in the presence of COVID when taking part in outdoor activities

With more winter weather on the way, Mountaineering Scotland and Scottish Mountain Rescue are reminding people to keep within their limits, be aware of the extra challenges of winter conditions, and to remember the Scottish Outdoor Access Code applies in winter too.

Indeed, making thorough preparations and ensuring you have appropriate skills, knowledge and equipment is more important than ever, along with remembering to park responsibly, take litter home and avoid disturbing sheep and other grazing animals.

Stuart Younie, Chief Executive Officer of Mountaineering Scotland said: “There are fewer people about in the hills and mountains because most are adhering to the travel guidelines and tending to choose less busy areas, meaning climbers, walkers and skiers need to be far more dependent on their own skills and resources. The unusually cold start to this year has also brought full winter conditions to the lower hills and paths, which means we have seen skiing and winter walking taking place in areas where we wouldn’t normally see so much activity, especially in the hills accessible from the central belt.

“The basics of heading to the hills in winter are explained on our website at [www.mountaineering.scot/thinkwinter](http://www.mountaineering.scot/thinkwinter) - and that’s free advice available for both members and non-members.”

Some recent incidents have highlighted the situation where hill goers have travelled further than the travel restrictions allow and have then required assistance to get off the hill safely, resulting in charges and fines for the breach of travel regulations. It is important to stress that support from mountain rescue volunteers is available 24/7 for anyone getting into difficulties in the hills by calling 999 and asking for Police, then Mountain Rescue.

Damon Powell, Chair of Scottish Mountain Rescue, added: “Despite the challenges the current situation is putting on our volunteer members, Scottish Mountain Rescue Teams remain ready to respond to anyone who gets into difficulty in the outdoors, wherever that may be. If you are lost or injured and can’t get off the hill call 999, ask for Police then ask for Mountain Rescue.”

**Ends**

**Notes for editors:**

**Image:** Travelling the hills between Glen Almond and Strathbraan. Photo by Helen Gestwicki.

<http://www.mountaineering.scot/assets/contentfiles/media-upload/HG1.jpg>

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**About Mountaineering Scotland:**

- Mountaineering Scotland is the national representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers and ski-tourers in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.
- The Mountaineering Scotland is a membership organisation with over 14,500 members and is funded through a combination of membership subscriptions, non-governmental grants and investment from sportscotland, which supports public initiatives and services in mountain safety, mountain training and the development and promotion of mountaineering activities.
- Mountaineering Scotland also acts for 75,000 members of the BMC or British Mountaineering Council on matters related to Landscape and Access in Scotland.
- Mountaineering Scotland landscape and access work is supported financially by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust and the BMC
- Mountaineering Scotland also runs the ClimbScotland initiative to encourage young people to participate in climbing and support their progression.
- Mountaineering Scotland is the national governing body for sport climbing. It offers pathways to climbing coaching, organises and promotes a range of regional and

national climbing competitions, and manages the Scottish climbing and bouldering teams. It contributes to the management of the GB teams with the ultimate aim of seeing a Scottish athlete achieve a podium position in the Olympic Games.

- The MCoFS is a not for profit company limited by guarantee and incorporated in Scotland. Company number SC322717.
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