



THE MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND
SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING HUTS
POSITION STATEMENT



1. Introduction

1.1 Mountaineering Huts in Scotland

There are presently over twenty huts throughout Scotland belonging to Club Members^[1] of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (the Council; MCoS) which are made available on a reciprocal basis to both MCoS and British Mountaineering Council (BMC) Club Members. Places in some huts are available to Individual Members of the Council.

The Council participates in the management of the Scottish National Huts: The Alex MacIntyre Memorial Hut (AMMH), the Glen Brittle War Memorial Hut (GBMH) and Mill Cottage. The Council, 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 which has four trustees, two of whom are *ex-officio* the President and the Treasurer of the MCoS.

1.2 Access to Huts Furth of Scotland

Members of the Council 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 the Council

Since its formation in 1970 the Council has co-ordinated a reciprocal arrangement between those Club Members that own or manage Scottish mountaineering huts and those who wish to use them. This co-ordination is effected –

- a) by the regular publication by the Council of a directory (huts list) of Scottish clubs' huts, which is available via the Council's website – www.mcofs.org.uk
- b) by the Council 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 may be necessary to apply sanctions (see 5.).

1.4 Recognition of Autonomy

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

1.5 The Need for Low Cost Accommodation

The Council recognises the need for low cost basic accommodation in the mountain areas of Scotland. There is a severe 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 Separate Roles of Independent Hostels and Club Huts

There is a network of commercial independent hostels in Scotland covering many of the popular mountain venues. The Council commends such developments since i) they fulfil a need for accommodation and ii) they benefit the local economy in rural areas. However, the Council believes that there is also a need to expand the existing network of club huts available solely to Club and Individual Members of MCoS 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

The Council liaises with the Mountain Bothies Association (MBA).

2. The Council's General Position on Scottish Mountain Huts

2.1 MCoS Huts Advisory Group

The Council operates a Huts Advisory Group (HAG), which reports to the MCoS director responsible for club activities. The main functions of 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 in electronic format (.pdf) via the Council's website. 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,** including publication of an occasional newsletter, *Huts Newsletter*, topical articles in the Council's journal, the *Scottish Mountaineer*, and holding a seminar on a regular basis.
- c) **To liaise with the BMC's Huts Group** and collaborate on the production and publication of a series of information papers, *Hut Guidelines*, on topics relevant to hut management. The Council encourages Club Members to follow those guidelines.

^[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 MCoS 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 (the President) is *ex officio* a trustee of the Glen Brittle War Memorial Hut.

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

The Council 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 they should be easily accessed by public transport or by car.

2.4 Assistance for Clubs Planning to Develop a New Hut

The Council is aware that many of its Club Members that presently do not own or manage huts have a desire to do so. Through its HAG the Council 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 Council's current position and strategy.

2.5 Conversion or New Build?

The Council 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 Council's view is that 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. Position on the Operation of the National Huts

3.1 The National Huts as Exemplars

The Council's position on the National Huts (see 1.1) is that they should offer the basic but high quality facilities that are expected nowadays 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 and the MCofS Equality Statement of Intent and Code of Practice (see 6.).

3.2 The Use of the National Huts by Individual Members

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

4. Position on the Development and Management of New MCofS Huts

The Council will consider the acquisition and development of its own huts should 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 MCofS 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 Council and published in the Council's magazine, the *Scottish Mountaineer*. 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 NTS property, then the Council 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

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

5. Position on 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 relevant hut management committee the Council may act as arbiter if requested to do so. If it proves impossible to achieve a satisfactory settlement then the Council, 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 the Council for an indefinite period and therefore loss of all associated privileges, including those offered by the BMC,
- b) notification of the decision of the Council to i) the custodians 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 the Council's magazine and on its website.

The Council's position on the misuse of huts is also published in the Council's huts directory and on its website.

6. Relevant Publications

The following relevant publications are available via the MCofS website –

1. The current MCofS *Directory of Scottish Huts* – 'the huts list' www.mcofs.org.uk/find-a-hut.asp
2. The current BMC/MCofS *Hut Guidelines* – a series of guidance notes on practical and legal aspects of hut management.
3. The MCofS Equality Statement of Intent and Code of Practice www.mcofs.org.uk/equity.asp
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 MCofS Child Protection Policy Statement – www.mcofs.org.uk/young-people-club.asp

November 2014