

MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT GLENMORE LODGE SATURDAY, 2 ND OF JUNE 2001.

Present:

Members recorded their presence on a list as they entered. Those recorded were:-

John F. Donohoe [President , Glasgow Glenmore M.C.], John Millar [Treasurer & I.M.], Nick Halls [Hon. Sec. & I.M.], Brian Dickson [Orion M.C, Glasgow.], Martina Ostercom [Orion M.C., Glasgow], Helen Carabine [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], Clodagh Nicholson [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], Iain Crickland [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], W. MacDonald [Glenrothes Hill Walking Club.], Duncan Gray [I.M.], G. Shirlaw [I.M.], Mairie Donohoe [Glasgow, Glenmore Club], Margaret Darby [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], Davina Plank [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], Alfie Ingram [M.R.C. of S. & Carn Dearg M.C.], Tony Viveash [Carn Dearg M.C.], Chris Townsend [I.M.], Eilidh Scobbie [Cairngorm Club.], Archie Bryce [Cairngorm Club.], R. MacKenzie [I.M.], P. Evans [I.M.], Malcolm Duckworth [I.M.], Louise Duckworth [I.M.], Kevin Howett [N.O. & SMC.], Beryl Leatherland [Edinburgh, JMCS.], Carol Simpson [Inverness M.C.], Alastair Kinghorn [Inverness M.C.], Ewan Findlay [Lost Sheep M.C.], Laura Alexander [Lost Sheep M.C.], Nic Bullivant [Scottish Midweek M.C.], Diane Giulianotti [Cairngorm Club.], Lydia Thomson [Cairngorm Club.], Gary Wardope [Cairngorm Club.], Malcolm Gibson [I.M.], Kenneth J Thomson [I.M.], Tom Leatherland [JMCS], Bob Sharp [Lomond M.R.T.], Ian Turner [I.M.], Jane Palmer [Cairngorm Club], Malcolm Noble [Frazerburgh H.W.C.], Brian Harrison [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], Kate Ross [Ladies Scottish Climbing Club.], Bill Crabb [Grampian Club.], Joy Ingram [Carn Dearg M.C.], Peter Willimot [Kirkintilloch M.C.], Heather Willimot [Kirkintilloch M.C.], William Robb [Cairngorm Club.], Moira Viveash [Carn Dearg M.C.], James Gray [I.M.], Andrew Young [I.M.], Margaret Robertson [Upperward M.C.], David McLellan [Upperward M.C.], J. Kinghorn [Inverness M.C.], Fred Belcher [Cairngorm Club.], D. Beverley [Cairngorm Club.], Ian Shiel [I.M.], Tim Walker [National Mountain Training Centre, Glenmore Lodge.], John Brittain [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], W. Robinson [N.H.C.], Mike Newbury [Forth Valley M.C & I.M.], Allison White [Glasgow Glenmore Club.], Ian Bryce [Glasgow Glenmore Club & Cairngorm Club.], Martine Young [Young at Heart, Fort William.], Leen Volwerk [Lochaber M.C.], Richard Lucas [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], John Prinn [Nevis Hill Walking Club.], Ingrid Parker [Glasgow Glenmore Club.], June Ross [Ladies Scottish Climbing Club.], Iain W. Davenport [Sport Scotland], Neal Beggs [Artist in Residence], Pet Thomas [Administrator], Mike Dales [Access & Conservation Officer].

1] Apologies.

Apologies were received from:

Pam Volwerk [I.M.], Bridget Dales [I.M.], The Creagh Dhu Club, Nick Kempe, [Red Rope, & I.M.], John W. Leftley [I.M.], Frank McGavigan [Kirkintilloch M.C.], Keith Miller [I.M.], Charles Stupert [Edinburgh JMCS.], John Mackenzie [SMC], Fran Potheary [MSA]. Jeff Thorley [S&T Committee], Tayside Fire Brigade Hillwalking Club, Bill Park [I.M.], Ali Morgan [S.M.L.T.B.], Noel Humston [I.M.], Gordon Adshead [BMC], Peter O'Neill [MCofI], Pat Clews [Perkins Slade Insurance], Alastair Dempster [sportsotland], Roger Payne [BMC], Robert Balfour [SLF].

2] Guests

Peter O'Neill [MC of I], Frank Nugent [MC of I], Roger Payne [BMC], Alfie Ingram and Bob Sharp, in their capacity as representatives of the M.R.C. of S., Tim Walker in his capacity as the Principal of Glenmore Lodge and Iain W. Davenport in his capacity as Observer on behalf of Sport Scotland.

The President opened the meeting by introducing and welcoming the guests, and thanking them for their contribution to the work of the MC of S and the Annual Gathering.

3] Adoption of the Minutes of the AGM on 03 June 2000.

The Minutes were adopted as an accurate record of the 2000 AGM.

4] Matters Arising.

Proposal to change the name of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

The National Officer, Kevin Howett, reported on responses received in letters, e mails and to questionnaires sent out by Richard Canham, who undertook research on behalf of the MC of S, as part of his post graduate studies. The sample was under 100 and showed 40% supported a name change but 60% did not believe a change of name would materially effect the profile of the MC of S. No alternatives to the name 'The Mountaineering Council of Scotland' received majority support, and most respondents thought the word 'Council' to be important in defining the democratic nature and function of the organisation. The small number of responses seems to indicate changing the name is not something which greatly exercises members.

The Executive recommended no change to the name be initiated at this time as it may result in confusion during the consultation on Access legislation, during which the profile of the Council must be maintained. In support of the recommendation the President reported one side effect of the F&M outbreak has been that the status and authority of the MC of S has been enhanced, and the economic contribution made by the membership to the rural economy has been demonstrated. The Council is seen as responsible, authoritative, well informed and competent to represent its membership.

It was agreed to retain the existing name for the forth coming year, to continue the process of consultation, but to reduce the priority of activity, as changing the name has not received overwhelming support from the membership, nor does it seem to be a matter of wide spread concern.

The consultation demonstrated a majority opinion that the logo should be updated. The AGM was shown some suggested alternatives, none of which gained significant approval. The Office Bearers asked if work should continue on identifying a new logo. The feeling of the meeting was that it is not worth spending further officer time, or scarce resources, on redesigning the logo. It was suggested the wording around the existing logo could be removed, but on putting the question the meeting agreed it should remain.

The name and logo will not be changed.

5 Annual Report.

The President referred to restriction of access during the F& M outbreak. The Council initially, voluntarily colluded in the suspension of members' access rights in deference to the concerns of the rural community, because officers were not well informed either about the means of transmission of the disease, the extent of its possible spread or the immediate adverse impact the restrictions would have on the rural economy. Communications were opened up with the Scottish Executive and local Councils, and the MC of S became involved in drafting the 'Come Back Code'. Officers then worked with activists in local communities to restore unhindered access to the primary winter climbing areas, then the popular winter summits. The policy adopted was to record on the web site areas which were accessible rather than those where visitors remained unwelcome. The MC of S web site became a preferred source of information for hill walkers and mountaineers.

Collaboration with local business people and local mountaineers slowly got restrictions removed from many areas, which were immediately publicised, thereby restoring tourist spend to the area. Some custodians of the land are still reluctant to allow visitors to return and are restricting access using F&M as an excuse. As more information has become available the Office Bearers have become persuaded, as has the Scottish Executive, that many of the remaining restrictions are unjustifiable.

The President paid tribute to the timely establishment of the Web site, and e mail facilities, without which it would have been impossible for the MC of S to deal effectively with the ramifications of the F&M outbreak. Particular thanks was extended to Duncan Gray, the voluntary MC of S 'Web Master', without whose help at all hours of the day and night, the web site could not have been maintained up to date.

E mail proved to be invaluable, and enabled Officers to be kept informed of developments. It became obvious visitors to Scotland do not come to stay in hotels, and visit attractions.

They come to walk and when they can not walk [cycle etc.] they do not come. The scale of informal recreational land use, and its economic contribution to the rural economy has been well substantiated. The land is the main economic asset, and farming and sporting estates are not necessarily the most economically viable means of gaining value from it. Use of the land for informal recreational activity has been demonstrated to be one of the main contributors to the rural economy.

The NFU have recognised farming will never be the same again, a significant change must take place in the rural economy and in the attitudes of custodians of rural land. Restricting access to vast tracts of unenclosed land because of its use as rough grazing, grouse moor, deer forest or managed woodland is unjustifiable and against the wider public interest.

The President felt the responsible behaviour of the informal recreational land user and the self interested and xenophobic behaviour of some custodians of the land will have implications for the consultation on Access legislation.

The President thanked the Vice Presidents, whose term of office has now come to an end, paying a particular tribute to the contribution made by Helen Geddes to Cairngorm issues, and the contribution of Kate Ross to all aspects of safety and training. **Kate Ross will continue to serve as Chair of the Scottish Mountain Safety Forum.**

The Hon. Sec. reported the move to the new offices in the Old Granary, has been undertaken successfully, and has proved to be fully justified. The office systems have been brought up to date, with a web site and e mail capability. The back log of administrative work which arose as a result of the move has now been overtaken, and things are getting back to an uncertain even keel.

He reported on his involvement with the consultation on the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park and his disappointment at the SNH recommendation that the southern part of the Argyll Forest Park be excluded from the proposed national park. He expressed his belief that exclusion of large areas of highland on the western edge of the park, and the scale of the park recommended by SNH, would make it too small to achieve its declared purpose. He felt it would discredit Scotland in the opinion of other European countries, whose commitment to the protection of their mountainous heritage by means of National Parks is strong and whose efforts seem to be meeting with some success. He felt Scotland would come to regret the current lack of vision, the more so as the National Park may be established during the Year of the Mountain.

Members expressed concern about the proliferation of poorly constructed ATV tracks throughout the forestry area managed by F.E. It was explained these were constructed to aid the extraction of deer carcasses, culled in an effort to achieve the recommendations of a Report on improving Bio Diversity of land managed by F.E.. The feeling of the meeting was that poorly constructed vehicular encroachment is counter to the values underpinning the cull. **The Executive was asked to continue to pursue the issue with F.E.**

Concerns were raised about the proliferation of mobile phone relay masts on the hills beside the main arterial roads through the Highlands. It was explained that representations to the Executive have been made, and there are plans to alter the National Planning Guidelines [NPG's]. Phone companies are taking the opportunity to get networks established before new NPG's come into force. This activity will probably be reduced in the near future, but it may be many years before existing masts are removed and landscape scars may remain for decades. **The Executive was asked to work for full restoration of the land.**

The Hon. Sec. solicited opinion on the numerous planning applications now being made for wind farms, many of them to be situated in remote areas of upland, invisible from the road, but not from informal recreational land users. He expressed concern about the industrialisation of wild areas of Argyll, which he feared would be left with the industrial

debris long after the wind farms cease to operate, drawing attention, as an example, to the degradation by hydro electric works of the land between Loch Lomond and Loch Awe, which remains after six decades. The MC of S has a conflict of values, in that while it supports sustainable generation of electricity it is also constituted to ‘protect the mountain environment.’ **The Executive will appreciate guidance from the membership.**

The Treasurer reported on the accounts, drawing attention to deficit of £405. which is less than had been forecast. He paid tribute to the people who have helped to establish the web site, and the publication of the Scottish Mountaineer, which has resulted in a significant increase in membership income. Income increased by £5,000 but expenditure increased by £4,000 due to salary increases in line with inflation, increased rent for the offices and exceptional expenditure on upgrading the office equipment and the publication of The Scottish Mountaineer.

He paid tribute to all paid staff, the National Officer, Kevin Howett; the Access & Conservation officer, Mike Dales; the Mountain Safety Adviser, Fran Potheary and the Administrative Assistants, Lorraine Nicholson and Petula Thomas, all of whom have shown care in husbanding resources, generating income and raising the status and reputation of the MC of S. He particularly thanked Petula Thomas for her diligence in following up subscriptions.

Questions were raised about items in the accounts

Civil Liability Insurance. The Treasurer explained this is the premium paid for all members of the MC of S to be covered by Civil Liability Insurance, one of the benefits of membership. The insurance covers all members in the event of an accident to another participant arising from their actions. It was emphasised that non members are not insured. The Treasurer drew attention to his involvement with the **Mountain Heritage Trust** and the existence of exhibition space at the Rhegedd Centre near Penrith, available those who wish to put artifacts on display or to organise a temporary exhibition. Any body wishing to become involved to contact the Office.

The Treasurer reported that Alastair Sutherland is willing to continue auditing the MC of S accounts. June Ross proposed that he be reappointed as auditor, Ingrid Parker seconded the proposal. **Alastair Sutherland was appointed as auditor.**

7 **Proposal to increase subscriptions.**

The Treasurer rehearsed reasons for an increase in subscriptions, referring to the deficit in the accounts, the requirement to meet the full annual cost of rent for the Old Granary, the cost of the production and distribution of four issues per year of the The Scottish Mountaineer and the inevitable increase in administrative costs which will arise from inflation. He emphasised that costs have been contained in line with expectations and the increase is that which was estimated at the last AGM.

It was agreed the subscriptions for the year 2001 / 2002 will be:

	2001/2002 (agreed)	2002/2003 (estimated)
I.M. [Ordinary]	£16.50	£18.00
I.M. [Youth]	£ 8.00	£ 8.50
Concession. [UB40, OAP, Student.]	£11.00	£11.00
Joint. [2 persons at same address.]	£28.50	£30.00
Family. [+ 2 children under 18 yrs.]	£28.50	£28.50
Club. [per head.]	£ 6.00	£ 6.50
Associate.	£55.00	£60.00

8 **Corporate Plan Years 2001 - 2004.**

The National Officer spoke to the contents of the corporate plan, the final draft of which was issued at the meeting. He explained it contained the work plan for the period and

formed the basis of applications for Grant in Aid to both Sport Scotland and SNH. Comments from the membership will be welcomed.

The Corporate Plan was endorsed.

9 Elections to the Executive Committee.

President.

John Donohoe [Glasgow Glenmore Club.] was reelected for a further two year term at the AGM of 2000. He has one further year to serve.

Vice Presidents.

Nominations for the positions of Vice Presidents were requested.

Helen Geddes [L.S.C.C.], Chair of the Access & Conservation Sub Committee, resigned during the year due to pressure of other commitments. The Chair of the Access & Conservation Sub Committee was taken over by John MacKenzie [S.M.C]. The Executive Committee recommended he be appointed as Vice President. [He was unable to attend the AGM owing to an obligation to preside over a Clan gathering.]

John MacKenzie was elected as Vice President & Chair of the Access & Conservation Sub Committee.

Kate Ross [L.S.C.C.] has served as Vice President, and Chair of the Safety & Training Sub Committee, for two periods of two years and is ineligible for reelection.

Bob Sharp expressed a willingness to take over the Chair of the Safety & Training Sub Committee, and, after some pressure, agreed to stand for the position of Vice President. He was unopposed.

Bob Sharp was elected as Vice President & Chair of the Safety & Training Sub Committee.

Honorary Secretary.

The Honorary Secretary must be reelected annually. Nick Halls [I.M.] is currently Honorary Secretary. He expressed a desire to vacate the position, but was prepared to stand for a further year. No other nominations were made.

Nick Halls was elected as Honorary Secretary for a further year.

Another Honorary Secretary will be required for 2002 onwards.

Honorary Treasurer.

The Honorary Treasurer must be reelected annually. John Millar [I.M.] is currently Honorary Treasurer. He expressed a strong desire to stand down at the end of the coming year. No other nominations were made.

John Millar was elected as Honorary Treasurer.

Another Treasurer will be required for 2002 onwards.

Ordinary members of the Executive.

Scott Muir and June Ross have a further year to serve.

Mark Wrightham, John Davies, Lindsay McKay and Frank McGavigan all found it necessary to resign during their term.

Joy Ingram [Carn Dearg M.C.] and Beryl Leatherland [JMCS] have both completed a two year term, but are eligible for reelection for a further two years. They both expressed a willingness to serve a further term.

Laura Alexander [Lost Sheep M.C.] was coopted to fill a vacant position on the Executive, and expressed a willingness to be elected to the Executive.

Fred Belcher [Cairngorm Club], Bill Crabb [Grampian Club], Colin Simpson, [Inverness M.C.] Lesley Gordon [?] and Alison Whyte [Glasgow Glenmore Club] were nominated for election.

Joy Ingram, Laura Alexander, Fred Belcher, Bill Crabb, Colin Simpson, Lesley Gordon and Alison Whyte were elected to the Executive unopposed.

It was agreed that Beryl Leatherland be coopted to the Executive to enable her to complete on going projects.

Past and present Office Bearers and Ordinary Members of the Executive were thanked for serving and for their work.

10 Mountain Article Competition Winners.

The N.O. reported some judges have not yet completed their evaluation. The standard of the contributions are high, and no clear winner stands out.

It was agreed that the winners would be announced in the September issue of The Scottish Mountaineer.

11 Membership Prize Draw.

The N.O. thanked the sponsor, **Famous Grouse, Highland Distillers**, for the prizes.

The person with the membership number 2000, is **Wendy Belk** [I.M.], who received a bottle of '**The MaCallum**' malt whisky.

A draw from all new members sponsored during the competition was made, the name drawn was **Violet Small** [Glenrothes H.W.] who was awarded a bottle of '**Famous Grouse**'.

A draw was then made from all people who sponsored new members. The name drawn was **G. Norrie** [?], who was awarded six bottles of '**Famous Grouse**'.

All those who involved themselves in the membership drive were thanked for their efforts.

12 Any other Competent Business.

12.1 Direct Debit arrangements.

Concern about paying subscriptions by direct debit were expressed.

The Treasurer reported that notice of a tentative plan for paying subscriptions by direct debit was presented in The Scottish Mountaineer. Arising from the article a member came forward offering assistance in setting up such a scheme. However, subsequent communications with the bank revealed the scale of the Councils' membership and its financial resources may not meet the Banks criteria for setting up a direct debit arrangement. Currently the F&A Sub Committee view is that the setting up of such an arrangement must await the establishment of a proposed 'central mountaineering services' organisation, which will handle the collection of subscriptions on behalf of all the Councils and Training Boards. It was reported Clubs would find a Direct Debit system inconvenient, as a large withdrawal from club accounts on a set date could put them into debt. Club Treasurers prefer to write a cheque when money is available.

It was noted Direct Debit arrangement might have benefits for Individual Members but Clubs would find such an arrangement inconvenient.

12.2 Public Profile of the MC of S.

The frustration of the membership at the relatively low profile in the media of the MC of S during the F&M outbreak was commented on. Members felt the MC of S has been overshadowed by organisations, such as the Ramblers and BMC. The Secretary admitted the MC of S does not have the resources to respond effectively in a 'reactive' way to media presentations of events. Office Bearers also recognised the MC of S lacks the experience of handling the media and the wide range of sympathetic contacts of other organisations. Experience has shown it is easy to make mistakes, to the detriment of reputation and effectiveness of the Mountaineering Council. The MC of S is involved in a 'longer game',

consultation on the access legislation is in progress and it will be necessary to maintain working relations with custodians of the land after the current crisis. The main objectives are to ensure responsibility for the spread of the disease can not be laid at the door of hill walkers and mountaineers, for informal recreational land user to be demonstrably 'responsible' and to expose the xenophobia and 'anti access' behaviours of many custodians of the land. It was decided to; keep a low profile, not to take up strong public positions which might be misrepresented or become involved in confrontational public posturing, be ultra 'responsible', to work to retain the respect and cooperation of key elements of the rural business community, and facilitate and coordinate the efforts of activists working to get access restored.

Use of E mail enabled the MC of S to get its point of view quickly and discretely to the network of people with direct responsibility. It was able to keep itself up to date and immediately make information available to members through the web site. The real issue to be addressed has now been revealed, it is surreptitious, creeping, unjustified restriction of access, rather than control of irresponsible informal recreational land users. The MC of S is now accepted as part of the responsible community of interest working for a 'solution' rather than, as formerly, 'part of the problem'.

13 Date and place of 2002 AGM.

The President explained why it would be desirable for all members to receive a copy of the Annual Report and Accounts, with notice of the AGM, in the June Issue of The Scottish Mountaineer, as this is the cheapest method of publication and distribution. The earliest date by which accounts can be audited is late May. He proposed the AGM take place in late June - on either Saturday, 22 June or Saturday, 29 June, 2002.

It was agreed the AGM should take place during a weekend in late June.

It was proposed the venue should be Glenmore Lodge.

It was agreed the AGM would take places either on the 22 or 29 of June 2002, at Glenmore Lodge, choice of date subject to the necessary facilities being available.