



# Mountain Training

England



Picture credit: The Climbing Hangar



# Mountain Training England

## CONTENTS:

- Mountain Training England, The People - Page 3
- Chair's Report – Page 4-6
- Treasurer's Report – Page 7-9
- Executive Officer's Report – Page 10-14
- The Year in Numbers – Page 15-19



## Mountain Training England 2024 – The People

Member Organisations	Representatives
Association for Physical Education	Nicky Scott
National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme	Nicholas Parkin
Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres	Gareth Davies
Association of Mountaineering Instructors	Paul Smith / Dan Wilkinson
British Association of International Mountain Leaders	Scott Smith
British Association of Mountain Guides	Rob Spencer
British Mountaineering Council	Cressida Allwood/ Nick Colton
Duke of Edinburgh's Award	Lizzie Usher/ Matt Woodcock
Institute for Outdoor Learning	Elsbeth Mason
GirlGuiding	Tarja Wilson/ Ruth Bint
Joint Services Mountain Training Centre	Dan Wilkinson
Mountain Rescue England and Wales	Ian Bunting
Outdoor Education Advisors Panel	David Armstrong
Plas y Brenin	Dave Evans
Scout Association	Ivor Lewis/ Jess Kelly
Board of Directors	
Chair	Peter Stacey
Vice Chair	Sue Manns
Treasurer	Neil Adshead
BMC representative	Sharon Kennedy
Independent Director	Jan Doyle
Independent Director	Joanna Corris Wright
Director	Kelvyn James
Staff	
Executive Officer	Guy Jarvis
Development Officer	Mark Walker
Training Officer	Jon Garside
Finance Manager	Kriszti Watts
Governance & Equity Officer	Cath Luke
Customer Service and Operations Manager	Becky Jeffrey
Partnerships Liaison Officer	Maddie Sweetman
Provider Support Administrator & Skills Course Development Co-ordinator	Katherine Thomas
Customer Service Team	Laura Griffiths, Susan Gathercole Sam George, Ashley Cartwright Megan Griffin, Rich Snaith



## **Chair's report – Peter Stacey**

I started to think about this report whilst walking up Tal Y Fan in the Northern Carneddau last weekend. A dry but cool day on the hills by yourself is always better than sitting down to write reports, but equally the hills do give you the space to create a format for reports and other things that eventually need attention.

2024 was very much a year of slow burn developments for MTE and Mountain Training in general. It was recognised that we needed to build more resilience into the management structure and after discussions with MTUKI, we agreed to joint fund an Operations Manager post. Rich Jones started work in May 2024 on an 18-month contract with a brief to provide support to MTE and MTUKI managers and covering a number of specific projects.

One of the projects Rich was asked to review and update is our risk register. If you know what risk management is, then you'll know that the next step to managing risk is strategically working to control the potential issues that are most likely to occur when you're managing a project. Therefore, you should have a risk analysis mechanism in place to collect potential risks and map out a path to mitigate risks and get the project back on track, should those risks become realities. So does MTE have risks? We ask our providers to train and assess candidates to operate in potentially risky environments and activities. Whilst the risk might be controlled by competent, experienced trainers, an incident cannot be ruled out, any more than an IT outage might impact on our operational capacity and finances. So things are reviewed and updated as a planned and routine activity.

Some issues that have been reviewed through the risk register process, have been our office systems. It was agreed that all staff at Siabod Cottage from all three Boards will move over to Microsoft Teams systems. This migration will be complete in 2025, and Board Trustees will also move to having an @mountain-training.org email address, so that we can retain our information in a continuous record. Other issues included developing a vexatious complaints policy, which the Board agreed and then shared with other Boards, with the aim of ensuring as much as possible a common framework on

policies. This is not a new approach. Boards have shared policies frequently, often to share resources and speed up development.

Within MTE, we have reviewed and updated our compliance requirements with Ofqual for the various awards we have registered with them. My thanks to Cath Luke for her work in ensuring we remain compliant. We also took time to review our EDI and other funds used to deliver our charitable aims of increasing participation among minority communities. We will continue this work because it enables more people to access the cliffs, climbing walls, countryside, moors and mountains; having more diverse trained instructors, coaches and leaders means that everyone can enjoy the walking and climbing experiences that have not always been available.

We also took time to review and update our reasonable adjustments policy, for those candidates who have limitations of mobility or other disability affecting their capacity to match other candidates at training or assessment. This is not about adjusting down the assessment criteria, but more about giving them the opportunity to demonstrate they are competent without being disadvantaged because of their different abilities.

In terms of candidates being assessed, it is pleasing to report an upward trend on assessments and passes being awarded. We have since 1964, registered over 200,000 candidates for all schemes, and many retain an active engagement and involvement in leading groups in the hills, mountains and countryside, or on crags and climbing walls. We are indeed a lifelong activity sector that benefits Sport England's aim of Active Lives.

Our moderation programme led by Mark Walker continues to benchmark provider delivery of all our awards across England – thanks to Mark and his team. Some providers deliver courses well away from our office in Wales, so moderators are based in regions as well to reduce the travel burden, as well as having that local knowledge of venues to benefit providers' delivery.



All of this happened in 2024, whilst Mountain Training collectively took a first step towards exploring our current structures, our purpose, how we function and operate, and what our options for a sustainable future might look like. An organisational review was agreed by all Boards, and in 2025 an independent person will bring the review to conclusions about our options and recommendations for our future shape.

• Picture credit: Emily Law

This is coinciding with MTE starting to look back at what we have achieved in our current strategic plan and what our next plan might include in goals and targets. The next plan will come into effect in 2026, so it might seem a long way away, but the Trustees have started already with a review session of what we have achieved and where we think we are heading. This work will continue in 2025 for completion by autumn that year and will build on the information and data that our most recent Impact Report has provided. This valuable analysis by Martin Chester is an essential element in our thinking of our future. Martin has done a fantastic piece of work and our thanks to him.

I reported last year that we hoped the Bouldering Wall Instructor Award would be launched in 2024. Some delays meant we were unable to deliver this on time, but these delays led to more detailed development, so that In November 2024, the award was agreed by all Boards and a launch of April 2025 will now happen. Our thanks to Guy Jarvis for leading on this development.

2024 saw some arrivals and some departures within MTE. I have mentioned Rich Jones already, whilst we decided to bring our finance management in-house. Kriszti Watts joined us and we are already seeing the benefit of her accountancy skills and financial knowledge, as well as improved reporting and analysis of all types of data including registrations, which provide the bulk of our income. We said a sad goodbye and farewell to our Treasurer, Neil Adshead who completed his full period of office. Neil safely steered our finances through the pandemic, and we greatly benefitted from his stewardship. Equally, Sue Manns stepped down as Vice-Chair after nearly 4 years. Our thanks to both.

We also saw the departure of Jon Garside from his role as Technical Officer. Jon has been involved with MTE for over 20 years and he has been involved in many of the developments throughout that period. Our thanks to him.

I remain fortunate to benefit from a strong Board of Trustees who give sound counsel and advice; we look to build the Board after Neil and Sue's departures to face future challenges and achievements. My thanks to my fellow trustees, to all our staff at MTE.

Peter Stacey  
Chair, Mountain Training England





## **Treasurer's report 2024**

Sadly, this year saw our previous treasurer, Neil Adshead, stand down at the end of his second term; we'd like to record our gratitude and admiration for the excellent service he gave the organisation, and I'm personally grateful for such a detailed handover.

During the year we also saw Kriszti Watts (KW) join the team on a full-time basis taking over responsibility for Mountain Training England from Annette Greenwood. I'm indebted to her for her support in my introduction to the role of Treasurer.

As an elected Trustee I am currently serving as Interim Treasurer whilst the Board of Trustees (Directors) review our recruitment requirements.

### **Overview**

The income for the year (excluding Sport England (SE) grant) was 3% below budget at £449,528. However, this was matched by a 3% below-budget expenditure of £455,205, generating a deficit of £2,343.

Variances in historic budgeted income and expenditure have been identified by the Finance and Audit Committee (FAC) and KW is restructuring the way these are calculated and detailed for 2025.

### **Income**

Registrations were down 7% in 2024 – we consider this to have been an outcome of the registration fee increase in 2023 impacting January 2024 as the remainder of the year was comparatively as forecast. Registration number decline has been somewhat countered by the fee increase but overall trends show a lower level of course registrations.

### **Expenditure**

Direct expenses are 8% below budget.

This is largely accounted for in variations associated with staffing changes and staff unpaid leave.

Purchases were 9% below budget.

This included approximately £1,220 of written off certificates and associated cost decline in line with the reduced course registrations and fees.

Overheads were 22% above forecast.

This notably includes a £3,689 increase in office expenses due to under-invoicing in 2023, higher than budgeted (£2,376) committee expenses and increased bank charges.

Staff training budget was not used; this has been added to the 2025 training budget.

### **Project Funding**

SE grant expenditure for the year was £45,593.

Bursary Training Fund budgeted at £5000 actual spend £869

Disability Fund budgeted at £3000 actual spend £690

Designated funds (£15,000); have been restructured and EDI expenditure added. Actual spend was £8,832 with a closing balance of £6,168.

### **Investments**

Total value of investments is £166,165. This is a 2% increase across 2024, with a dividend of £3,333.

The FAC has noted that the overall trend in our investments is poor against inflationary growth expectation and a review has been scheduled for Q2 of 2025.

### **Reserves**

The reserves are available for the furtherance of the charitable objectives of the charitable company.

The calculation of the required level of reserves is an integral part of MTE's strategic planning, budgeting and forecasting. The level of income can vary due to, for example, grants received, membership registrations and wider economic factors. Similarly, expenditure can also vary, along with investment valuations. The company therefore holds reserves that enable it to continue its activities whenever the need arises and irrespective of any financial or operational difficulty the company may be experiencing at the time.

The level of reserves is reviewed annually.

Reserves at the end of 2024 stand at £517,508 compared to £519,851 end 2023. This meets and exceeds the requirements of our reserves policy.

## Forward look

2025 will see changes to our budgeting processes and reporting methodologies – hopefully continuing the trend of a strong financial responsibility within the organisation. The new bouldering qualification will launch, and work is underway to look at further synergies with other parts of the wider mountaineering community in the UK.

Kelvyn James  
Interim Treasurer, MTE



## Executive Officer's report – Guy Jarvis

2024 proved to be a more challenging year than 2023 with the effects of our price rises and the cost of living appearing to reduce some engagement with our schemes. Despite this, more candidates gained a greater range of qualifications than ever before. 33% of those passes were by women.

MTE	2023	2024	% change
Total qualification registrations	5427	5081	-6%
Total qualification training attendance	3184	2949	-7%
Total qualification passes	2251	2292	+2%
Total female qualification passes	724	758	+4%
Total Skills course attendance	999	923	-8%

Our current strategy supports the increasing diversity of participation in our activities. We continue to work within our five strategic areas:

### The training pathway

Much work was undertaken in the year to research, consult on and develop the new Bouldering Wall Instructor qualification which launches in 2025. This qualification will introduce a national standard for instruction to the indoor bouldering industry, now the fastest growing sector of our sport.

To support this qualification, and all our qualification candidates, we developed an online e-module on 'Leader Responsibilities'. This resource explains instructors' and leaders' duty of care to others and provides guidance on good practice when managing groups on adventurous activities.

We incorporated our leadership model into the climbing qualifications after its successful integration into the walking qualifications. Now all our qualification schemes train and assess these more holistic, more measurable and inclusive competences. We also developed, and now deliver, an online 'remote supervision' course that has proved

very popular for leaders supporting D of E expeditions and other independent challenges.

We continued to work closely with the National Trust supporting 64 trainee walk leaders from ethnic backgrounds through our qualifications on their Walk Together pathway. To support this, we commissioned research into the need for lowland walking training to increase confidence in diverse community groups. The results of this research will guide our thinking, and partnership work on walking skills in 2025 and beyond.

### Quality provision

The quality of our training, assessment, and guidance is the keystone to all we do. We have put considerable resource into training and updating our providers this year. In the spring we held our biennial two-day training conference for providers and their course staff.

Picture credit: Emily Law



A very significant initiative was changing the way that we recruit, screen and induct new course directors to deliver our courses. We have introduced a more inclusive process whereby successful applicants now become trainees and complete a part online, part face to face, training programme to be granted approval. This system allows us to cast the net wider for more diverse talent but also ensures more consistent

training and guidance on the role and skills of a MTE trainer and assessor.

The Mountain Training network has a strong learning culture and when an accident occurred on another board's course a full investigation process was completed and lessons learnt were shared throughout the network. In response to this we updated our guidance to all our providers and created a 'Delivering safely' course which examines the human factors that affect safety on all courses.

Our moderation programme, constant monitoring of course reports and regular dialogue with our very experienced providers all continues to reassure us that our reputation for quality training is being maintained.

## **Sustainable delivery**

Despite a small drop in overall registrations compared to 2023 we have managed to maintain balanced levels of income and expenditure resulting in a small deficit of £2,343. Our balance sheet remains strong with £517,508 of total funds at the end of the year. This is significant as 2024 marked the beginning of a new pricing model and financial arrangement with MTUKI, who provide our ‘central services’ including the customer service team, candidate database, marketing and website services. The result of this re-adjustment is that MTE’s income and expenditure both rose by 24% in 2024.

Our finance management now produces ongoing monthly reports of our performance and is developing three-year budgets. This gives us greater monitoring and control over our finances. Coupled to this the Board completed a review and reformulation of our risk register, including contingency plans, to ensure that we are adequately monitoring and mitigating our risks.

As we are adding a new qualification to our portfolio this creates a total of eleven qualifications and six skills courses that MTE directly administers. This increases pressure on all of the Mountain Training Organisations and the network has initiated an organisational review to determine if our structure, resources and decision making could be configured more efficiently.

We also continue to be grateful to Sport England for the financial and strategic support they give to many of our projects. Though our operations to administer our schemes are supported by our own income, the grants we receive from Sport England underpin much of our research and development allowing us to remain relevant in a rapidly evolving sector.

## **Supporting diversity**

A huge amount of work has been undertaken to support the diversity of participants on our schemes. Some of the projects we delivered to promote and support wider access to our skills courses and qualifications in 2024 were:

- The Women in Mountain Training conference <https://www.mountain-training.org/help/resources/blog/equity-diversity-and-inclusivity-actions-2014-2024/>
- Development of the Outdoor Her website with the BMC: <https://hillwalking.thebmc.co.uk/outdoor-her>
- Support of the Climb Out festival and qualifications week: <https://climbout.org/>
- Support of the Wanderers of Colour Climbing Festival: <https://www.wanderersofcolour.com/festival>
- Partnership work with National Trust on the Walk Together pathway: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/walking/walk-together-pathway>

- The Colour Up project in Bristol, supporting five candidates from ethnic backgrounds to gain their CWI qualification so they could work within their own communities.

With all the above we provided funding through our EDI fund or direct grants to individuals through our Skills and Training Fund and our Disability Fund. We also provided skills course training and guidance and advice on qualification training and assessment.

Picture credit: Emily Ward



Our mentoring programme paired up fifty trained mentors with fifty candidates to guide them through their qualification journeys. This has become increasingly digitized to improve scalability in the future. In addition to this we also;

- Created a series of four EDI training films for providers to promote more inclusive practice.
- Launched our 'What's Possible' film to showcase our disability fund – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbd6CSYVYcY>
- Consulted with Access Sport who trained over 150 climbing wall staff in disability awareness.

### **Promoting our mission**

In 2024 we re-branded with a new logo and new website. The new logo sets us apart from other providers and makes our role as an accrediting body clearer to the public. The website is easier to navigate, prioritises essential information and more clearly separates our skills courses from our qualifications. The whole exercise, not without risk, was implemented very smoothly and was well received.

In response to rising Mountain Rescue call out statistics we established the Mountain Safety Forum for England and Wales with MTUKI, Plas y Brenin and the BMC, along with a range of national partners. This body will research, advise and message the public, government and organisations on mountain safety. It is hoped that this can become as successful as the Scottish Mountain Safety Group and attract government funding in the future.

The Mountain Training network has developed a UK wide digital strategy and as part of this we have begun to develop online micro-learning e-modules that are available free

to the public. These will promote skills, awareness and safety in the adventure activities we promote. Other more detailed e-modules, like the leader responsibilities module described, will support candidates through their qualification pathway.

Effective partnerships increase our agency and reach and our work with our strategic partners, Council members and community groups has been invaluable. We worked with many community groups to promote our schemes and our partnership with Cotswold Outdoors has allowed us to access many of its 1.5 million customers and promote our skills courses.

Finally, we have travelled the country to be present at events such as the Outdoor Expo in Birmingham, the Ten Tors Event in Devon, the ABC conference in Sheffield, and the Kendal Film Festival to name a few.

### **Work ahead**

After such a busy year of operations we now need to review and evaluate our strategy in order to develop it for the next five years. As part of this we will want to conclude the organisational review of the whole Mountain Training network. We will support the current coaching scheme review being run by MTUKI, which connects to our climbing qualifications. There will also be further developments with digital resources and skills course delivery.

I want to thank our partners, trustees and members, mostly volunteers, for all the guidance and support they have given us during this very productive year. I also particularly want to thank all the staff at Siabod Cottage and beyond who have worked tirelessly to implement all our developments whilst maintaining unstinting support for our providers and candidates alike.

Guy Jarvis  
Executive Officer, MTE





## The Year in Numbers

Our headline figures below demonstrate the effect of the cost of living, and our price rises in 2024, that are also reflected in the pattern of registrations throughout the year. We are finding that registrations in January and February are significantly down on previous years - reflecting candidates' disposable income at these times, when these used to be our strongest months.

MTE	2023	<b>2024</b>	% change
Total qualification registrations	6411	<b>6024</b>	-6%
Total female registrations	2245	<b>2207</b>	-2%
Total registrations under 18's	341	<b>388</b>	14%
Total qualification training attendance	3184	<b>2949</b>	-7%
Total qualification passes	2251	<b>2292</b>	+2%
Total female qualification passes	724	<b>758</b>	+4%
Total Skills course attendance	999	<b>923</b>	-8%

This explanation for the downward trend is further illustrated by the fact that the drop is found across all of our qualifications and skills courses. It is worth noting that the 1994 MLTB Annual report recorded 3,600 Mountain Leader registrations and that total registrations with two qualifications (ML plus the SPSA) were similar to today at around 6,400! We now have a much more diverse candidate population but which is apparently declining. The good news is that we are much more efficient at creating qualified leaders. In 1994 only 28% of candidates went on to assessment whereas in 2024 we qualified 45% of our candidates – more than ever before.

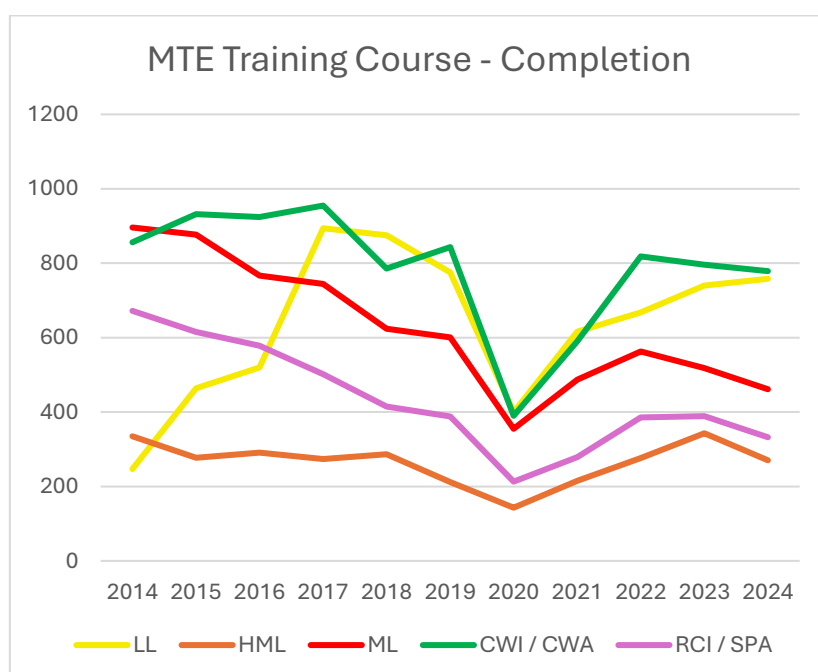
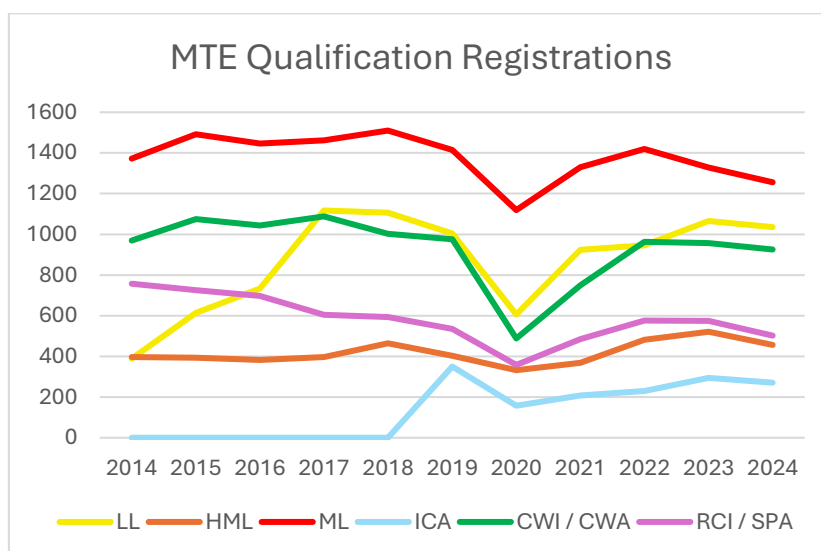
<b>Qualification Registrations</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>% reg change</b>
Lowland Leader	1065	1036	-3%
Camping Leader	430	402	-7%
Hill and Moorland Leader	521	457	-12%
Indoor Climbing Assistant	294	270	-8%
Mountain Leader	1328	1254	-6%
Climbing Wall Instructor	957	926	-3%
Climbing Wall Instructor Abseil*	984	943	-4%
Rock Climbing Instructor	575	502	-13%
Rock Climbing Development Instructor	38	31	-18%
Climbing Wall Development Instructor	219	203	-7%

<b>Skills Course Registrations</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>% reg change</b>
Hill & Mountain Skills	796	745	-6%
Rock Skills	441	373	-15%

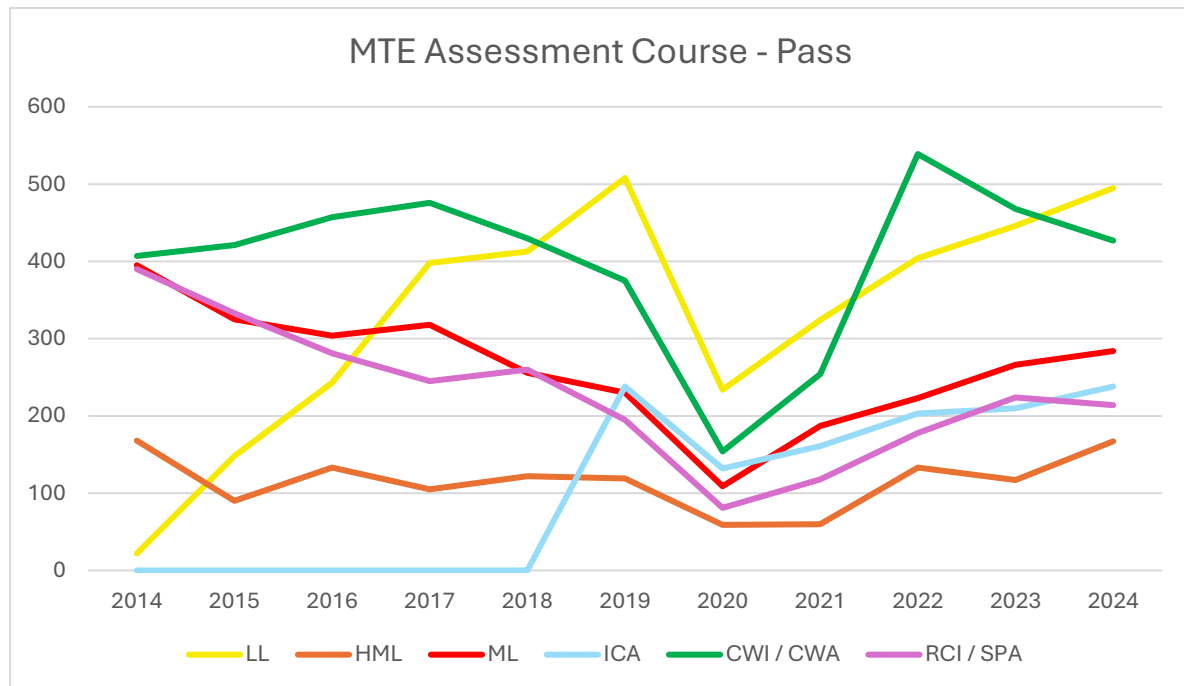
## Registration and course attendance trends 2014-2024

### Qualifications

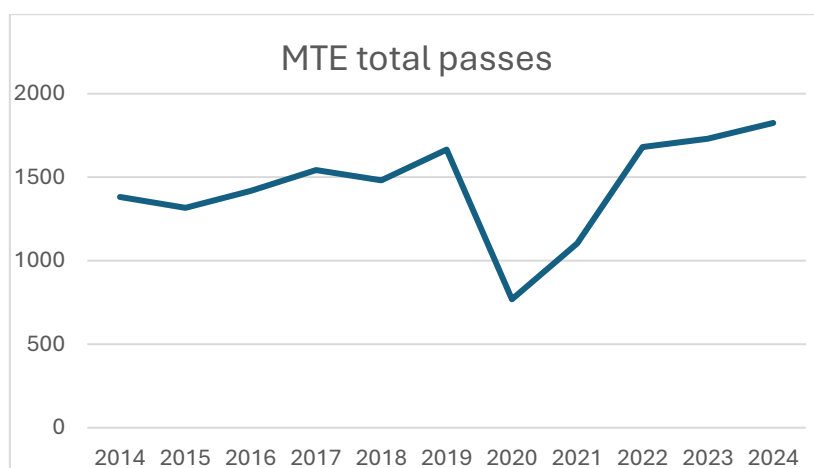
The following graphs illustrate trends over the last ten years for our six most popular qualifications. The 'Covid dip' in registrations and training course attendance can be clearly seen but when looking beyond this most qualifications are steady or in gentle decline over the period. The downward dip can be clearly seen in the last year, again probably due to our price rises and the cost of living.



By contrast assessment course attendance and passes are generally increasing. This suggests two things. Firstly, we are getting better at progressing candidates through to assessment and preparing them to pass. Without doubt the resources, support programmes and provider training that we have put in place over recent years have had a positive effect. Secondly, our candidates, on average, are more committed to gaining a qualification. The regulatory climate today is such that qualifications are sought and needed ever more, in order to be able to lead activity. Therefore, we may have fewer candidates registering to train for their personal development than in the past, but those who do so are more likely to complete to qualification.



The graph below shows the overall passes trend for all our qualifications combined.



## Skills courses

After strong growth from the 'pandemic boom' in participation, our Hill and Mountain Skills courses took a dip in 2024. We can only assume that this is due to the same economic factors as for our qualifications. However, MTE did not suffer as badly as other boards as can be seen in the 'all boards' graph. We will explore partnerships for delivery to improve access to these courses in 2025/6.

