

Annual report 2023

Report from the Board

2023 was a challenging year for MTUKI. Fortunately, I can say that as I write this introduction to the Annual Report – a sense of calm has returned. A huge thank you must go to all Mountain Training staff and Council members for helping us through the prolonged absence of our Chief Executive Officer, who, I am delighted to say, is firmly back in post.

During 2023 we welcomed three new Directors – Sean Wood, Ellie Ablett and Philip Anderson (Treasurer), and would like to thank Emily Thompson for her service from 2019 to 2023. Also, a special thanks to Stephen Saddler, my fellow director who I first met on our MIC (WMCI) course (along with John Cousins) in 1986, and who has been a great contributor and sense-checker for me personally and for MTUKI.

In 2023 MTUKI returned a deficit budget of approximately £50k, which, because of close financial controls, was a significant improvement on the budgeted position. Very productive, overdue, and helpful negotiations with the national Mountain Training organisations to revise the charges applied to candidate registrations and course delivery will result in a much improved financial situation for future years. It should also be noted that, thanks to the Treasurer, the MTUKI banking facility was moved to Virgin Money.

Demand for courses – as can be seen in various data within this report – was maintained at an encouraging level. Staff now have access to sufficiently detailed data to analyse who candidates are and where they are from – crucial information if we are to continue our drive to ensure our courses are accessible to all. Of note was the completion of the first cohort of Performance Coaches – the end result of a lengthy, high-quality pathway. As we continue to provide an ever more diverse ranges of qualifications (Bouldering Wall Instructor being the most recent development) we are noticing a decline in demand for some awards. This is as we would expect with a broader range of specific and fit-for-purpose qualifications available.

The Mountain Training Association report illustrates how well our membership service is performing, with continuing growth and high member-retention. Clearly the services provided are meeting a real demand amongst qualification holders.

The Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor review stalled due to staff absences but is back on the agenda for 2024 and beyond. Linked to this will be the continuous review of winter qualifications, where uncertainties brought about by climate change appear to be having an impact.

I believe that the time is right for a Mountain Training services review – to consider our own business efficiency, what we provide for candidates and how we provide it, with a focus on quality

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and accessibility of course-delivery, environmental impacts, and the effectiveness with which we provide support. I would hope that economies of scale, identification and removal of duplication, and perhaps some more pooling of resources will help to ensure our shared goals of quality, equality and sustainability.

As always, I urge you to set aside time to give this report a thorough read. The work we – you – all contribute to is something we should all be proud of.

It is the end of my term in June 2024. Where did those 6 years go? My lasting memory will be of a dedicated team of staff and volunteers all involved for the right reasons. At the core is a love for our activities, and a desire to ensure sustainable, responsible, and safe participation. I look forward to watching from the sidelines (well, actually from the crags and mountains!) as Mountain Training in all its forms thrives in the years ahead.

Finally, I would like to thank the dedicated staff team in Siabod Cottage for always responding to demands, producing high quality output, and being the backbone of our service.

Adge Last

MTUKI Chair, June 2024.

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Finance report

After several years of uncertainty, thankfully 2023 was a relatively quiet year for the finances. A cautious budget was set, based on 2022 actual figures, as adjusted for inflation. This anticipated an operating deficit of £147,939 with an overall deficit of £102,939 (considering Sport England grant of £45,000) with reserves reducing to £152,695 from £256,634 at the start of the year.

As the year progressed it became apparent that people were keen to get back to the outdoors and MT schemes showed true resilience during an increasingly challenging global financial climate, putting increasing pressures on our candidates' disposable income, slowing sales of publications, MTA membership renewals and increasing overhead costs. Despite all these challenges income came in just above budget and overheads were tightly controlled, the end of the year resulted in a deficit of £49,782, rather than the budgeted £102,939

Income

Income for the year was 2% above our budget, coming in at £484,954 and much improved on the previous year (2022 £467,613). With grants from Sport England totalling £45,000 (2022 £45,250) this meant our effective income was £529,954. Direct registration income from MTUKI schemes, at £44,030 (2022 £33,782) was 31% higher than budgeted £33,722. It is encouraging to see these numbers in the very specialist MTUKI qualifications continuing to show growth,. Income from subscriptions and registrations from national Mountain Training organisations was more in line with expectations and we finished the year with £54,380 (2022 £52,748) slightly up on our budgeted figure of £52,575 Sport England's grant of £45,000 was a vital element of our income and we thank them for their support. Income from the Mountain Training Association's membership was on budget as membership numbers recovered, being 8% up on the previous year (2022 4%) Publication sales fell slightly to £51, 239 (2022 £53,948) 92% of budgeted figure.

Expenditure

Expenditure in the year was tightly managed and totalled £579,736 (2022 £519,632) This was 7% less than budgeted, saving of £43,178 and was due to reductions in budgeted salary spending, reduced direct costs and reduced office costs as our blended office continued. Finally, it is good to note that there has also been a good start to 2024, which we hope will continue.

Annette Greenwood, Finance Manager

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Executive Team's report

Having secured our investment funding from Sport England for the period of April 2022 to March 2027, in our joint bid through the BMC, along with Mountain Training England, the Association of British Climbing Walls, and the National Indoor Climbing Award Schemes, we have allocated funds to support digital resources and workforce development:

Digital resources: We employ a full time Digital Engagement Coordinator, Huw Jordan Tatlock, who supports our digital strategy and creates resources that support our providers, candidates, association members, and the public alike. In 2023 Huw provided assistance to our partners at the National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme. We moved our e-learning platform to 'Articulate', began to create micro learning resources, did preparatory work on our branding and a new website and attended a conference of digital developers from across the adventure sport sector.

Other funds will be utilised to support the development of the Coaching Scheme and in particular the Performance Coach, as well as reviewing the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor pathway. The training pathway

Candidate numbers: Overall, 2023 has been a great success, with registration and course attendance rising well above pre-pandemic rates of growth (with 2022 and 2023 exceeding 2019 figures) across all our schemes and all Mountain Training organisations:

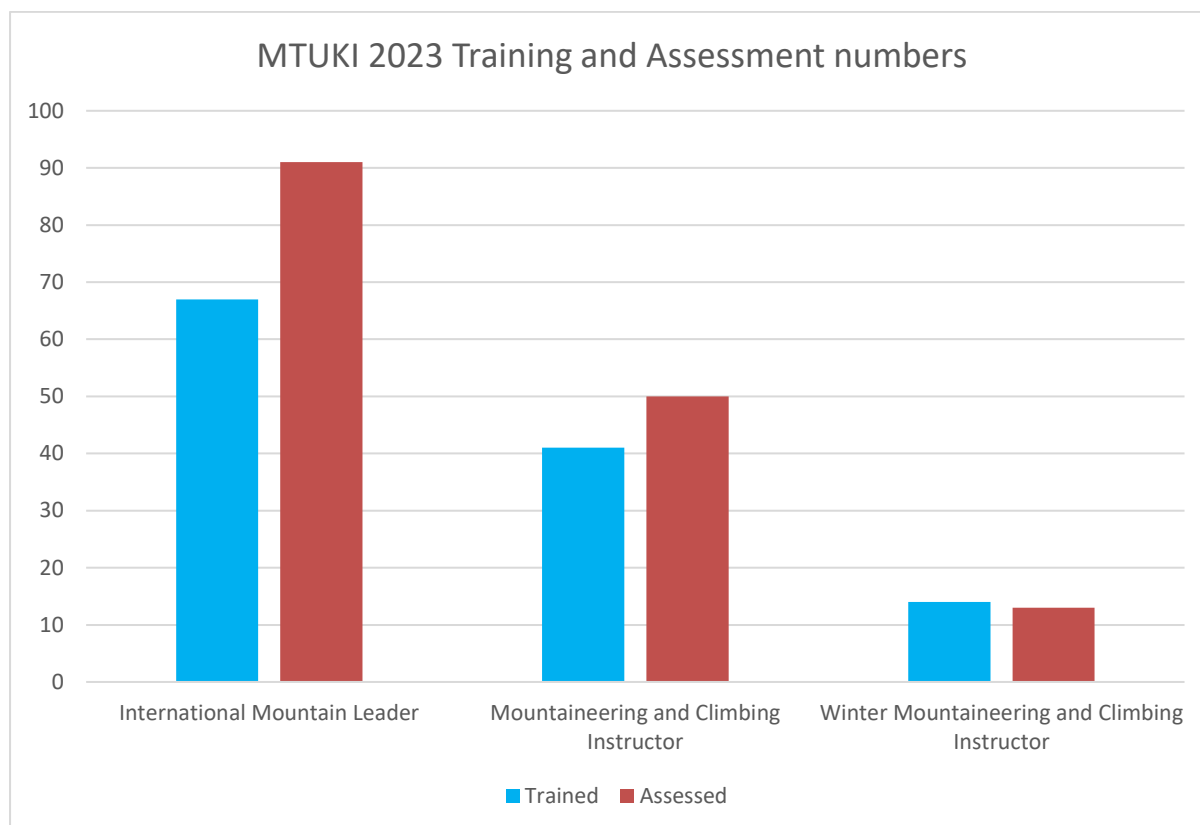


International Mountain Leader and Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor Schemes: The legacies of Covid and Brexit lingered into 2023 with candidates for our most involved qualifications still catching up after previous years' disruption. This was highlighted by the fact that during the year we assessed more International Mountain Leaders (IML) and Mountaineering and Climbing Instructors (MCI) than we trained; the Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (WMCI) scheme had one more trainee than it did assessees. Many of IML group benefitted from an MTUKI

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‘reasonable adjustment’ that allowed them this winter to take IML winter assessment before the normal initial summer assessment. An intervention that ended at the end of 2023.



The Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor and International Mountain Leader schemes are delivered by two providers namely the National Outdoor centres of Glenmore Lodge and Plas y Brenin with the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor programme also being delivered by Tollymore. Both our winter providers are to be commended for their resilience and adaptability over the last three seasons. There has been endless rescheduling, re-booking, alternate venues, non-residential adaptations, and staffing challenges as well as the more familiar problem of the fickle nature of winter itself. The latest cohort of Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructors and International Mountain Leaders are the essence of what we rely on these national centres for, and it is so very welcome to see candidates coming forward and achieving such good pass rates. Let's hope it encourages more candidates to come forward.

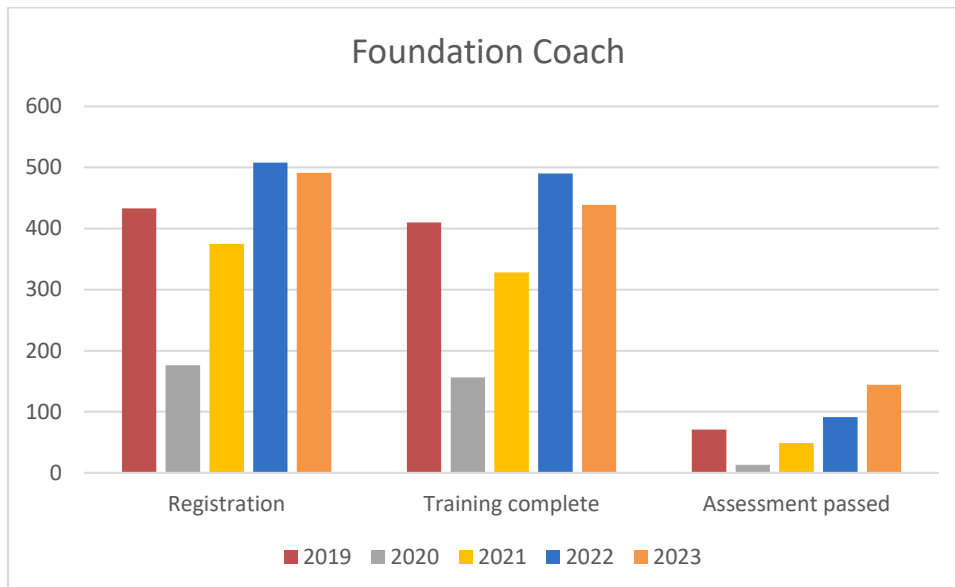
The MCI Pathway Review continued. Five-year aggregated statistics (2018- 2022) demonstrate a first-time pass rate of 45% and a completion rate of those who have been assessed of 79%. Improving the first-time pass rate remains an ongoing priority. Tracking and exploring the reasons

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for deferrals continues with this information being collated and shared with the Providers and the MCI Review Working Group.

Coaching scheme: The Coaching scheme has continued to grow in participation, reputation, and content:



Having completed the Performance Coach scheme pathway in 2022 we were able to run our second, specialised training course in 2023, delivered by our own Martin Chester and Tom Greenall. We also

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held a Coaching Provider workshop on line. Coaching scheme moderation was lacking in 2023, with many courses being run in-house (and published online too late to visit), so we have adopted the model used by several national Mountain Training organisations and will now task key, experienced, providers to moderate others, in a what we aim to be a mutually beneficial (more akin to mentoring) role.

Mountain Training Association: Mountain Training Association's membership increased by c.10% (from 8440 to 9245 increase of 822) over the course of 2023. However, membership was at 6648 in January of 2022 so there has been an overall increase of approximately 39%, in the last 2 years. The Association presented their second round of volunteer awards, with winners being:

- the founders of the ClimbOut Festival for Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity;
- Alan Elwood for Positive Steps Outdoors a new social enterprise in Northern Ireland for Wellbeing,
- Charlotte Ditchburn for her work with the Calvert Trust for Accessibility and
- Jim Langley from Nature Works for the Environment.

Regional volunteer winners were

- David Tainton, Regional Coordinator and Philippa Sanders (Assistant Regional Coordinator) both from the England, Central and London (North) region;

and overall Volunteer of the Year winner was

- Emma Holland, one of the Association's Mentors.

The Association will hold their 2024 Conference at Plas Y Brenin (the king's mansion), National Outdoor Centre, Capel Curig the weekend of Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th October, 2024.

The Association currently have 50 regional Mountain Training Association volunteers throughout the UK and Ireland and have recently recruited two for the Republic of Ireland for the first time ever. Activity throughout the regions is thriving, and as well as night navigations and climbing socials there are sessions on Mountain Leader ropework, working on steep ground, flora and fauna, geology and specialist talks and presentations from experts in their field: recent talks have included cold water immersion, wildfire management, white tailed sea eagle introduction and soil structures throughout the uplands. We also have set-up a Lowland leader Working Group made up of regional volunteers looking to widen knowledge and understanding of this qualification and the range of specialist skills it encompasses.

Staff Team: Fran Jones and Almaas Yusuf left during the year and we have been joined by Sam George and Kriszti Watts. Special thanks go to Guy Jarvis, Martin Chester and Libby Peter who between them covered much of the work normally carried out by our Chief Executive.

Future Investment: We have continued to work closely with the BMC and Plas y Brenin to present a hill walking strategy and manifesto to Sport England. By their own measures hill walking is the fastest growing single activity in the UK with 3.58 million regular participants; and one that we feel needs greater support to ensure it is pursued safely and sustainably. We reached agreement with

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the national Mountain Training organisations to revise the contributions to central overhead costs in respect the proportion of candidate income to goes to MTUKI.

Partnerships: The Associations Collaboration Working Group continues to engage in putting together The Professional Mountaineer magazine, but the associations have also worked together on insurance and CPD initiatives. We continue to reach out to and support new partners and community groups to engage with Mountain Training as well as reach reciprocal arrangements with commercial organisations to reach new audiences. This has allowed us to consult widely and gather feedback from numerous diverse voices across the sector on a range of changes and proposals. New or closer relationships have been forged with a range of diverse partners including NNAS, HARVEY Maps, All The Elements, Everybody Outdoors, The Outdoor Partnership and Climb2Recovery. To assist in the promotion of our mission and to improve communication with partners, we now circulate a quarterly Partnership newsletter and continue to add contacts and subscribers to this in order to better disseminate information

Work ahead: We now look forward to 2024 and the development of a new indoor bouldering instructor qualification, responding to a strong demand from the sector. We will be updating our website in late 2023 and increase our digital resource offer, including with regard to our mentoring programme (some of these resources could become income generating from a wider audience). We will continue to work with our partners to deliver our EDI strategy and promote safeguarding throughout our sector. Finally, but very importantly, we want to promote our members and qualification holders to the public, through partners such as the Mountaineering Councils while supporting club and community group activity.

John Cousins, Chief Executive

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Mountain Training UK & Ireland 2023 Member Organisation and their representatives	
Mountain Training Board of Ireland (2 votes at MTUKI Council meetings)	Dawson Stelfox, Joan Mulloy, Jane Carney (Training Officer)
Mountain Training Cymru (2 votes at MTUKI Council meetings)	Andy Newton, Allan Gibbs, Simon Patton (Executive Officer)
Mountain Training England (2 votes at MTUKI Council meetings)	Pete Stacey, Neil Adshead, Sue Manns, Guy Jarvis (Executive Officer)
Mountain Training Scotland (2 votes at MTUKI Council meetings)	Ryan Doherty, Mhairi Crawford, Marie Dignam George McEwan (Executive Officer)
BMC (1 vote at MTUKI Council meetings)	Fiona Saunders
BMC Cymru (1 vote at MTUKI Council meetings)	Neal Hockley
Mountaineering Ireland (1 vote at MTUKI Council meetings)	Dave Ayton
Mountaineering Scotland (1 vote at MTUKI Council meetings)	Stuart Younie, Ross Cadie
Association of Mountaineering Instructors	Rob Pugh
British Association of International Mountain Leaders	Steve Davies
British Association of Mountain Guides	James Thacker
Glenmore Lodge (Sport Scotland's National Outdoor Training Centre)	Ian Sherrington, Shaun Roberts
Plas y Brenin (Sport England's National Outdoor Centre)	Helen Barnard, Dave Evans
Tollymore (Sport Northern Ireland's National Outdoor Centre)	Kieran O'Hara

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MTUKI Trustees & Mountain Training Publications Directors	
Chair	Adge Last
Director	Emily Thompson (departed June 2023)
Director	Lucy Vincent
Director	Stephen Saddler
Director	Sean Woods (appointed June 2023) Director
Director	Ellie Ablett (appointed June 2023)
Director	Phillip Anderson (appointed June 2023)
Staff	
Chief Executive	John Cousins
Finance Manager	Annette Greenwood
Media and IT Development Officer	Nicola Jasieniecka-Evans
Digital Engagement Coordinator	Huw Jordan Tatlock
Operations and Commercial Manager	Becky Jeffrey
Governance and Equity Officer	Cath Luke
MTA Membership Strategy and Communications Officer	Mike Riley
MTA Development Officer	Belinda Buckingham
Customer Service Team	Laura Griffith Rich Snaith Megan Griffin Fran Jones Sue Gathercole Sam George

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Our representatives	
Mountain Training Trust – MTUKI's nominated Director	Stephen Saddler
BMC National Council, Partners Assembly & Funded Partners	John Cousins/ Guy Jarvis
SRA Outdoor Pursuits Division	Jon Garside
Snow and Avalanche Foundation of Scotland	George McEwan
British Association of Mountain Guides Board of Directors (observer)	John Cousins
Association of British Climbing Walls	Guy Jarvis
Adventure UK & Adventure Activity Industry Advisory Committee	John Cousins
MTT and BMC Safety Committees	John Cousins
BMC Safeguarding and Equity steering groups	Cath Luke
Funded Partners Equity Diversity & Inclusion Group	Guy Jarvis, Cath Luke

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