

**Mountaineering Ireland AGM**  
**The Springhill Court Hotel, Kilkenny**  
**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2017**

**Present:** As per attendance list.

The meeting was chaired by Irene Sorohan, Honorary Secretary of Mountaineering Ireland who welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Agenda:**

1. Adoption of Standing Orders
2. Adoption of Minutes of the last AGM
3. Chairperson's Address
4. Honorary Secretary's Report
5. Presentation & approval of Financial Statements
6. Appointment of Auditor for 2017
7. Election to membership of Clubs and Associated Organisations
8. Nomination of Representatives to other organisations

**Adoption of Standing Orders:**

These were proposed by Patrick O'Sullivan and seconded by Mike Maunsell.

**Adoption of Minutes of the last AGM:**

These were proposed by Alan Tees and seconded by Shay Walsh.

**Address by Paul Barron, Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland:**

The AGM is an essential part of our corporate governance arrangements. It serves an important function of ensuring that the Board is accountable to the members of Mountaineering Ireland for its stewardship of the organisation.

The Board's role is to oversee and take responsibility for everything that Mountaineering Ireland does and to provide structure and strategic direction for the future development of the organisation. The Board is made up of 13 members from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of skills and experiences. We share a deep commitment to the advancement of all aspects of mountaineering on the island of Ireland. It's an honour for me to be Chairperson of the Board since our last AGM and it's a pleasure to serve with such talented and dedicated Board members.

The past year was a busy year for Mountaineering Ireland. In the Annual Review, there are detailed reports on the many events and activities that occurred in our different programme areas - Access & Conservation, Youth, Talent Development, Mountain Training, Communications & Member Services and Get Ireland Walking.

Time does not allow me to mention or even try to summarise all that happened during the year but there are a few things that stand out in my mind.

One of the highlights of the year was the purchase by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of some 4,900 acres of land (almost 2000 hectares) in the Dublin Mountains adjacent to the Wicklow Mountains National Park. Mountaineering Ireland was part of a broadly-based

campaign for the retention of this land in State ownership and we were delighted that the Government made the necessary funds available. It will bring the overall size of the National Park to 22,000 hectares, making it the largest in the country, and will ensure long term public access to and enjoyment of this unspoilt landscape.

In contrast, Mountaineering Ireland was most concerned at the implications of an award of €40,000 to a hillwalker injured in a fall on a boardwalk section of the Wicklow Way. The ruling was a source of worry for farmers and other landowners and had the potential to lead to restrictions on access for outdoor recreational users of the countryside. It is a testament to Mountaineering Ireland's standing as the representative body for hillwalkers and climbers that the State authorities requested that our Hill Walking, Access and Conservation Officer, Helen Lawless, act as a witness in the appeal of the decision to the High Court. In setting aside the award a few weeks ago, the High Court endorsed the principle that hillwalkers, climbers and other people engaging in outdoor recreational activities must take responsibility for their own safety.

Safe and responsible mountaineering doesn't just happen. It relies on sound practice built up through experience and training. Mountaineering Ireland oversees a range of training courses, for both personal skills development and leadership roles. Courses are delivered by approved providers around the country and are supported and monitored by BOS, our mountain training sub-committee, and our professional Training Officer, Jane Carney. Training for Clubs is also provided during the year. I strongly encourage Clubs and individual members to take up the training opportunities that are available.

During 2016, the International Olympics Committee decided that climbing will be included as a trial sport in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The three disciplines of Sport climbing, Speed climbing and Bouldering fit in well with the Olympic objectives of "Higher, Faster, Stronger". Ireland is well placed to step up to the challenge of Olympic participation. Indoor Climbing is rapidly developing, particularly among young people. We have seen very impressive individual achievements by Irish climbers at all levels. For example, Eimir McSwiggan, recently took a silver medal at the UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup in South Korea. At the other end of the scale, three of our youngest competitors, 8-9 year olds, two from Cork and one from Belfast, took the three top places in the U.K. and Ireland finals in Scotland last May. This is in no small part the outcome of dedicated work by Damien O'Sullivan, our Talent Development Officer, and a committed group of volunteers who drive our youth program throughout the island. Mountaineering Ireland has begun the process of seeking affiliation with the Olympic Council of Ireland. This is an important first step in facilitating Irish climbers who wish to compete at the next Olympics.

One of Mountaineering Ireland's strategic objectives is to be the voice for Ireland's mountains. This includes encouraging responsible use of and improving access to the hills, crags and other wild places. We are all aware of the growing threats to our hills, whether in the form of afforestation, wind farms, phone masts, access roads or otherwise. The unresolved matter of a new path in the Mahon Valley in the Comeragh Mountains provides a stark example. We need our Clubs and members to be vigilant and to notify us of fresh concerns. Please don't assume that we already know about new threats in your area.

The increasing numbers taking to our mountains is having an impact on paths and the environment generally. Remedial action is needed, particularly in so called "honey pot" locations. Mountaineering Ireland has been promoting the Helping the Hills initiative with the relevant Government agencies. To date, we have not managed to secure a steady

source of funding for path repairs and visitor management, but we continue to lobby for appropriate investment.

Following the AGM, we will have our Members Forum which will include a discussion on a new draft Vision Statement on the Future Ireland's Mountains. I encourage you to contribute your thoughts and aspirations.

The Get Ireland Walking initiative, which we manage on behalf of Sport Ireland, made significant progress during the year. The team is now providing support to about 400 walking groups around the country. Additional staff and funds have been provided by Sport Ireland for two special projects that will encourage walking as an activity in the Men's Shed movement and, secondly, to embed a culture of walking in schools. I'm also pleased to say that a local walking group set up under the Get Ireland Walking initiative has recently applied to become a registered Club with Mountaineering Ireland. We look forward to further membership growth via this initiative.

All of our many achievements during 2016 were made possible through a combination of Government support, on the one hand, and the energy and commitment of our staff team and volunteer workers, on the other.

I would like to express our appreciation for the financial support that we received from Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland during 2016. Our thanks also for the once off funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund towards Get Ireland Walking and also for a pilot project to introduce young people from disadvantaged areas to indoor climbing.

We are deeply indebted to our staff team - Murrough, Helen, Jane, Damien and Ruth in our office in Dublin, to Anne in Tollymore, to our Get Ireland Walking team - Jason, Michelle, Emer and David. Sincere thanks also to our team of coaches and the many other volunteers who sit on board sub-committees or who represent Mountaineering Ireland on a wide variety of groups and bodies.

Thank You to each and every one of you for all that you do, day in and day out, to support our membership and to promote the interests of hillwalkers and climbers throughout the island.

There were two staff departures during the year. Terry Canavan retired after fourteen years of dedicated service as our Accounts Administrator. We wish her a long and happy retirement. Ruairi O'Conchuir returned to his adopted homeland of the Burren. We thank him for his contribution to Mountaineering Ireland over many years in a variety of roles. And within the last few weeks, Rozanne Bell, who helped to organise this weekend, also took her leave of us to take up a new challenge. We wish her every success.

Many thanks to our hosts, Tyndall Mountaineering Club, for their superb organisation of this event. Particular thanks to the Club Chair, Jim Healy and his team, the guest speakers, walk leaders, and many others behind the scenes, not forgetting Ruth Whelan from the MI office.

Finally, may I wish all members of Mountaineering Ireland a safe and adventurous 2017.

#### **Report of the Honorary Secretary, Irene Sorohan:**

It is the duty of the Honorary Secretary to report on the governance of Mountaineering Ireland during 2016. There were seven meetings of the Board in 2016. I would like to complement my fellow Board Members for their diligence and time that they have

dedicated to Mountaineering Ireland over the year. As you can see later there have been a number of changes in the board for the past year. This is a healthy thing. Good governance dictates that there should be a regular turnover of board members to ensure that there is new perspective and energy brought into the board dynamic on a regular basis.

As a Board member and for any of you who are on boards, you will understand the huge time commitment this is – and for the President and Chair this time commitment can be easily double or trebled. For this time and energy commitment I would like to thank all my fellow Board members.

I would also like to welcome Murrough McDonagh, who took up the position of CEO of Mountaineering Ireland in July. Mountaineering Ireland is a company limited by guarantee and is a sporting organisation supported by both the Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland. I wish to report to the Members that all the directors are very focussed and clear about our duties to Mountaineering Ireland. And with that in mind, we are cognisant that we act at all times in the best interest and to the best of our capability with regard to the Mountaineering Ireland organisation, its members and other stakeholders. Good governance is critical to the sound management and sustainability of the organisation and I believe that governance within Mountaineering Ireland is appropriate.

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland will continue to uphold its focus. To overview Mountaineering Ireland's broader governance structures during 2016, I wish to report that the last Annual General Meeting / Spring Gathering was held in March 2016 in The Burren, Co Clare and hosted by Clare Outdoor Club. The Autumn Gathering in 2016 was held in Killorglin, Co. Kerry and hosted by Laune Mountaineering Club.

I would further assure the Membership that: All legal and procedural requirements have been followed, including reporting and submissions to the Companies Registration Office;

The Board has taken full account of the necessary skills base in terms of voluntary Governance and will continue to refine this; the directors of Mountaineering Ireland have a very close working relationship with the staff, members and other stakeholders and work continuously to improve this.

The report was adopted by the members present.

### **Report of the Honorary Treasurer, Nicky Hoare and Presentation & Approval of Financial Statements:**

Nicky Hore presented the 2016 audited accounts. He outlined that Mountaineering Ireland's accounts reflect an income of €865,695 and expenditure of €915,843 with a deficit of €50,148. Nicky stated that 2016 was a strong Financial Year for Mountaineering Ireland in terms of coming in under projected year end budget and introducing new financial personnel and processes. He said that the Sport Ireland core grant remained consistent with 2016 allocation of €193,000, however the funding allocation from Sport NI was reduced by approximately €34,000. He confirmed that Mountaineering Ireland's financial management and governance is recognised as sound and we received no queries from our auditors or funders. Nicky confirmed that the board had reviewed these figures and were satisfied with the total turnover and reserves. He confirmed that the current reserves are in line with reserves policy. He also highlighted how the membership fee breaks down and stated that the online membership management system helped support cash flow and is more efficient. He also thanked Terry Canavan for her dedicated service to Mountaineering Ireland for the past 14 years, over which time she would have seen a huge amount of change and growth. Nicky wished her well in her retirement and future.

Approval of the financial accounts was proposed by Margaret Tees and seconded by Francis Hackett. The report was adopted by the members present.

#### **Appointment of Auditor for 2017**

David Buggy of Whiteside Cullinan, Chartered Accountants was proposed for re-appointment for 2017 by Alan Tees and seconded by Ursula MacPherson. The proposed was agreed.

#### **Election to membership of Clubs and Associated Organisations:**

The following clubs were proposed to be granted full membership of the organisation. Proposed by Margaret Tees, seconded by Patrick O Sullivan and agreed.

- Hardy Hill Walkers
- Kanturk Hillwalkers
- Galway Bay Hillwalking Club
- Hard Core Club
- American Women's Club Hillwalkers

#### **Nomination of Representatives to other organisations:**

The following persons were approved to represent Mountaineering Ireland on other organisations;

Adventure Sports Framework	Jane Carney
Coillte Social and Environmental Panel (West)	Eileen Brady
Coillte Social and Environmental Panel (North West)	Myles Gallagher
Coillte Social and Environmental Panel (West Munster)	Richard Kingston
Coillte Social and Environmental Panel (South Central)	
Coillte Social and Environmental Panel (South East Leinster)	Mick Monahan
Coillte Social and Environmental Panel (South Central - Cork)	Pat Lombard
Coillte Social and Environmental Panel (Midlands)	Olive Harrington
Comhairle Na Tuaithe	Helen Lawless
Croagh Patrick Stakeholders' Group	Karl Boyle
Dublin Mountains Initiative	Milo Kane & Dermot
Keane	
Errigal Stakeholders' Group	Helen Lawless/Dennis
Golden	
Galtee Steering Group	Maureen O' Brien
Irish Adventure Sports Training Trust	Ursula MacPherson
Mountain Rescue Ireland	Fiona Gallagher
Irish Uplands Forum	Georgia McMillan
Mountain Training NI	Dawson Stelfox
Mountain Training UK	Dawson Stelfox
National Committee for Commemorative Plaques in Science and Technology	
	Kevin Higgins
Northern Ireland Environment Link	Vincent McAlinden
STOP Mountain Scramblers (Cooley Mountains)	Nicky Hore
UIAA Access Commission	Jack Bergin

UIAA Mountain Protection Commission  
Wicklow Mountains National Park Committee  
Wicklow Uplands Council

Mike Maunsell  
Mairead Kennedy  
Jim Sheehan

### **Safeguarding and Anti-Doping Statements**

Irene Sorohan stated Mountaineering Ireland is committed to best practice and upholding and implementing appropriate levels of behavior, practice and conduct required from young participants, officials, coaches, trainers, mentors, parents/guardians and clubs. Mountaineering Ireland's Safeguarding Policy complements the joint Sport Ireland and Sport NI Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport. Mountaineering Ireland and affiliated clubs with youth members are committed to each appointing a person with the responsibility to safeguard the welfare of young participants, ensuring Mountaineering Ireland and clubs operate in an environment that welcomes and encourages children in the sport – this role is carried out by the Children's Officer. Mountaineering Ireland and affiliated clubs also appoint persons to liaise and report directly to the Statutory Authorities. This was duly noted by the meeting.

Irene Sorohan stated that James Hale is Mountaineering Ireland's Anti-doping Officer and confirmed that Mountaineering Ireland fully subscribes to the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) procedures and promotes a drug free sport. She added that Mountaineering Ireland is developing an anti-doping education programme for members of the talent development squad, those competing internationally and as part of coach education. This was duly noted by the meeting.

### **End of the Meeting**

Irene Sorohan then closed the meeting and thanked all for attending.