



## MI Annual Review 2009

Mountaineering Ireland (MI) is the representative body for hill walkers and climbers in Ireland. It is recognised as the National Governing Body for mountaineering by both the Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland. Mountaineering includes hill walking, rock climbing, rambling, bouldering and alpinism. MI currently has over 9,750 members, comprising more than 140 clubs and 1,400 individual members. Membership of MI is open to both clubs and individuals.

### The key aims of MI are to:

- Represent the interests of walkers and climbers
- Improve and secure access to the Irish hills and crags
- Promote mountain training programmes and qualifications
- Encourage responsible and sustainable use of the mountain environment
- Support members, and especially young people, in skills development
- Provide appropriate services to members

Mountaineering Ireland is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, elected by the membership. We have a professional staff team based at Sport HQ, Park West Business Park in Dublin and at Tollymore Mountain Centre in County Down. MI maintains close cooperation with international organisations such as the British Mountaineering Council (BMC), the Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS), International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) and the Union Internationale des associations d'Alpinisme' (UIAA).

MI is currently implementing its Strategic Development Plan 2009 – 2013. The plan focuses on 7 key areas: Youth, Access and Conservation, Membership Development, Performance Development, Training and Safety, Communications and Services and Resource Utilisation. Youth and Performance Development will see a determined effort during to 2010. The appointment in 2009 of an all island Coaching & Talent ID Officer has allowed for greater youth development on a regional basis. Access and Conservation and Training and Safety have continued to be core activities of MI in 2009 and this will be renewed in 2010 with the appointment of highly experienced Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer and Training Officer.

Implementing the plan requires prudent management of finances and this challenges MI to continue to improve upon a service of quality within existing resources. The continued support from the Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland, hopefully, reflects the growing recognition of the importance of our sport as an enabler of community development and individual well being.

Karl Boyle  
Chief Officer



Mountaineering Ireland gratefully acknowledges the funding it receives from  
The Irish Sports Council • Sport Northern Ireland • Women in Sport



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*"It is vital that the board is supported with new blood and with greater levels of regional representation of both genders."*

## Chairperson's Address

It has been a tremendous privilege to serve as Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland (MI) during 2009 – a year of unprecedented growth and change for the organisation. MI has moved from what was basically a volunteer body – almost entirely volunteer run and managed - to one with paid staff running a professional and highly respected national governing body. This period of transition to a professionally run, yet volunteer centred organisation, serving upwards of 10,000 members, has not been without major difficulties and set-backs. Indeed, it would be unrealistic to expect such a fundamental change to be made, without such problems. MI has lost three key staff members during 2009. Our hard working Chief Officer, Mr. Stuart Garland stepped down in May and our highly respected Training Officer Mr. Tim Orr stepped down in October. Our Access and Conservation Officer, Ms Aodhnait Carroll also moved on during 2009. All were deeply committed to MI and the Board and membership alike owe them a deep debt of gratitude. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated and professional staff. Exceptional new staff members are now in place, headed by a new Chief Officer, Karl Boyle. This includes two entirely new positions. The year ahead looks bright and very promising and it is hoped that the five year Strategic Development Plan will be fully implemented.

MI also has a deeply committed voluntary Board who have continued to work to renew and strengthen the core values and guiding principles of MI. I want to thank all Mountaineering Ireland volunteers - those who sit on the Board and its various committees including the Access and Conservation Committee, the Youth Committee and Board Oilúint Sléibhe (BOS - the Irish Mountain Training Board). There are a great many others who represent MI on numerous bodies and who give so generously of their time and skills. They are what make this organisation so strong.

The Board is proud of the achievements made by MI during 2009 which are outlined in considerable detail in

this annual review. Ultimately, however any organisation is only as strong as its membership base. We need new board and committee members, new trainers and new service providers at a national and regional level. We need the support of those who want to give back to the sport and we need more volunteers to drive the sport forward. Most importantly of all we need committed people to take up leadership roles within clubs to support and encourage the young and the not so young out onto the hills.

I also want to thank the Dingle Hillwalking Club for hosting in excess of 150 people at a wonderful Autumn Gathering in West Kerry. I want to thank all who supported the provision of Leave No Trace, mountain skills and leadership training and those who supported the summer Alpine meet. In particular, I want to pay special thanks to Angela Carlin, formerly our Youth Development Officer and now our Talent Identification Officer, for supporting, through her work, so many young people to get actively involved in climbing and bouldering. In addition, I want to thank Una Feeney and Terry Canavan, our Administrators for their loyal support. They continue to help you as a member to get the most out of your membership.

I wish to convey my deep appreciation to our funders in the Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland. They have supported us through good times and bad and have encouraged us to follow the path mapped out in our Strategic Development Plan.

Finally, I want to remember those Mountaineering Ireland members who have died while mountaineering at home or abroad in 2009 – may they rest in peace.

Ruairí Ó Conchúir  
Chairperson

## President's Address

There are many positive and exciting things happening in Mountaineering Ireland at present. New clubs continue to join (4 in the last 3 months of 2009 alone) individual membership is steadily increasing, and a proposed link with Scouting Ireland, headed by board member David Batt, could provide us with the greatest challenge and opportunity in the recent history of FMCI/MCI/Mountaineering Ireland. Such a link up would give the scouting organisation a seamless pathway to adult mountaineering, access to the training skills of BOS, and provide us with a rich vein of enthusiastic and accomplished new members.

It has been a difficult year for MI, and there is little doubt that the departure of a couple of key staff has delayed the implementation of our 5 year plan. With my "self employed businessman" hat on, I would not regard the business model of professional staff managed by such a "Geographically well spread" group of volunteers (meeting every month), to be ideal, but given such a situation, it is vital to have the right person as a Chief Officer, interpreting the board, dealing with staffing issues, and most importantly, keeping the general membership happy. I think we now have such a person in Karl Boyle.

Being a National Governing Body means strict adherence to employment legislation, Health and Safety regulations, Child Protection, etc, and all the other constraints to which other Irish National Sporting bodies are subject, in order to comply with the ISC standards, and to benefit from the funding available through them. As a largely "social" member of Mountaineering Ireland, I have found all this red tape a bit tedious, and am grateful that we have such

an accomplished board to deal with these matters. It is vital that the board is supported with new blood and with greater levels of regional representation of both genders.

It has become clear to me that our sister organisations the British Mountain Council (BMC) and Mountaineering Council of Scotland work within similar constraints. Matters and problems discussed at the Mountaineering Co Ordination group meetings are ones common to all, and we are glad to benefit from their experience, and indeed we have shown we can add our own ideas and solutions to the common good.

There are always new challenges: competition climbing, performance coaching and the inevitable development of all this towards the Olympics is something with which the majority of our membership will not necessarily identify with, however, our funders will think it is important, and there is a new generation coming through, who might choose to set up their own organisation if we do not move with the times and embrace change. It is important that there is one responsible, rational voice to speak for the outdoor community, whether it is for issues that affect a minority of our membership or, indeed access, something that is absolutely critical to us all.

Alan Tees  
President



## Access and Conservation

### Access and Conservation Committee

The Access and Conservation Committee has been continuing its work to both resolve on the ground issues and influence the policy and actions of government. Much of the practical work in the last year has been through a series of 'environmental workshops' and direct 'leave no trace' workshop training to members. On particular issues raised, we have also been in correspondence with Louth County Council and Fáilte Ireland about what we consider inappropriate signage and a potentially hazardous route on Slieve Foye behind Carlingford village. Issues have also been raised about the signage on Brandon Hill, County Kilkenny. The issue of the damage being caused by recreational quads in the uplands still raises its head and there have been regular occurrences in both the Wicklow Hills and the Mourne.

On a positive level, we have also been engaging with the National Trust in Northern Ireland about potential climbing routes on the north coast and similar projects are being investigated in other areas also.

### Comhairle na Tuaithe (CnaT)

Mountaineering Ireland is officially represented on Comhairle na Tuaithe (CnaT). CnaT has had a mixture of success and failure this year with underlying concerns about financial resource levels.

The Walks Scheme, by which landowners/occupiers are paid for maintenance work on National Waymarked Ways or Fáilte Ireland Loop Walks, has been very successful. There are now 1300 farmers receiving payments that average about €1300 from CRAGA (Dept of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs). Further funding to widen the scheme in the current economic circumstances must be questionable.

Minister Ó Cuív has two pilot projects progressing for a similar scheme for the open mountain. One is a small area on Ben Levi (Mount Gable) in Galway; the other is the area along the main route up Carrauntoohil. The latter will embrace four townlands so climbing and winter routes on the north face of Carrauntoohil and the ridge to Beenkeragh will also be included. Mountaineering Ireland has been pressing for increased representation of recreational NGOs on C na T. We are also concerned that the sub-committees, set up to consider various issues, have not been meeting.

### Irish Uplands Forum (IUF)

Mountaineering Ireland has a significant member presence on the Irish Uplands Forum (IUF). Their first AGM will be held on 27th March 2010. IUF will shortly be publishing a Report entitled "Changes, Challenges and Opportunities" in the Irish Uplands with particular interest in the changes that have occurred since the Galway Conference in 1995.

### Wicklow Uplands Forum

Mountaineering Ireland is represented on the Wicklow Uplands Forum, which is engaged in a number of projects currently. In 2009 it launched the Co. Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Strategy, 2009 – 2013 with an agreed stakeholder vision for 2020 that:

"Wicklow will have a vibrant and sustainable outdoor recreation culture based on partnership, trust and mutual respect."

The strategy proposes that investment in recreation facilities be focused around four 'hubs' – Roundwood, Laragh/Glendalough, Rathdrum and Blessington.

### Dublin Mountains Initiative (DMI)

Dublin Mountains Initiative (DMI) continues to make an input to the Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP) on behalf of its member bodies. DMI is preparing an integrated recreation plan for the area, including facilities for walkers and other sports. Outcomes in the year included the inauguration of the Dublin Mountain Way, with a section near Ticknock. DMI co-operated with Mountain Meitheal in constructing a short further section to link Crone Woods with Massey Estate. A number of Volunteer Rangers have been recruited to assist in managing the DMP area, and a call is ongoing for further interested parties (see details on the DMP website). Dublin City Council joined DMP as the third local authority to participate. A new and detailed map covering the Dublin and North Wicklow mountains went on sale in 2009 with the involvement of DMP. Seven permissive access routes through the DMP area have been identified and a programme of signage is in hand. Through the summer weekends a minibus service linked the area with the Luas terminal at Sandyford, and it is intended to resume the service in Spring 2010.

### Leave No Trace

Mountaineering Ireland continues to be a firm believer and promoter of the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics program. Mountaineering Ireland continues to support the work of Leave No Trace and their recent funding shortfalls, a fall-out from the current economic climate, is of concern to us. We are now represented by one of our own Board Members on their Board.

We also have ensured a continuing presence at the National Ploughing Championship given its potential both to 'set out our stall' and to influence landowners and politicians on access matters.

Aodhnait Carroll, Mountaineering Ireland's first Access and Conservation Officer, left during the year and we wish her well in her studies and future career. We are in the process of recruiting a successor.

*"Mountaineering Ireland continues to be a firm believer and promoter of the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics program"*





## Youth

*"It is hoped that this system of close cooperation and assisting in the mountaineering skills of youth organisations will develop young mountaineers in parallel to the club format."*

Youth development in the Republic of Ireland is a priority for 2010 and beyond. The Winders club in UCD is a model that can be replicated elsewhere. There will be significant developments both in terms of youth hillwalking and climbing clubs. This has commenced with a reduction in the U-18 membership fee to €15, which includes insurance cover. There will be an all island youth competition by 2011 once a solid base of clubs with youth membership has been achieved. This will encompass both regional and national competitions that will provide a platform to showcase new talent and inspire more children to become involved in the sport.

The Northern Ireland Youth Development Programme has undergone some major changes in 2009. The appointment of a new Officer, Paul Swail has allowed a re-structuring of the programme into 2 separate areas - participation and performance. Our participation programme has expanded, both in its geographical spread across Northern Ireland and in the range of activities offered. We now have active clubs and programmes in Belfast, Newcastle, and Fermanagh, and have hopes to expand this further in the coming year.

Over the course of 2009, new Youth Climbing Clubs have developed in a number of schools around Hotrock and the Ozone climbing walls allowing weekly after-school climbing sessions to run throughout the school term. The 'Hanging Rockers' club and 'Girls Outside' project have had a fantastic success with their joint youth programme, which will allow young climbers in the Fermanagh and Sligo areas to have access to indoor climbing and mountaineering activities through the coming year. 2010 will also see the expansion of the schools programme, piloted in Belfast in 2009, into 3 more areas.

In Addition to running its own programmes, the Youth Development Officer can offer support, advice and training to climbing walls to develop their own youth programmes. This has included running training to instructors who work with young climbers at Queens University PEC and University College Dublin Climbing wall, Dublin.

The other area of major development is the ongoing link with Scouting Ireland, and specifically the development of their new nine stage hillwalking skills awards scheme, which we envisage as a lead in to the official Mountain Skills and Mountain Leader Award Schemes. It is hoped that this system of close cooperation and assisting in the mountaineering skills of youth organisations will develop young mountaineers in parallel to the club format. When the link with Scouting Ireland is completed there will be a focus on development with other youth organisations as outlined in the strategic development plan.

MI would like to welcome Paul Swail to the role of Youth Development Officer NI. Paul is himself an excellent climber and is also a holder of a Mountain Instructor Award. His enthusiasm will undoubtedly be an asset to MI.

## Performance Development

Mountaineering Ireland has received an increase in funding from Sport Northern Ireland to fund a full-time post with a remit to develop Coaching and Talent Development systems on an all-Ireland basis. Angela Carlin, formerly the NI Youth Development Officer, was appointed in November to this post. Even prior to this appointment, 2009 had seen some rapid developments in relation to competition climbing. It is hoped, over the course of 2010, that regional youth squads can be established throughout the provinces.

In 2009 the Northern Ireland Youth Climbing Series, now an established annual event, became recognized as a qualifying region of the UK, allowing 10 young climbers to represent NI at the final in London. This 2010 YCS will commence at Hotrock Climbing Wall on 30th Jan, with an expected increase in both participation and the standard of climbing.

Mountaineering Ireland affiliated to the International Federation of Sport Climbing, (IFSC), the body which

oversees international competition in 2009. This allowed us, for the first time in a number of years, to enter an international event. In this case the event was the EYS competition at Ratho, where Rachel Cooper and Andrew Colligan competed for Ireland in the Youth B category. In October 2009 Mountaineering Ireland also held its first National Lead Climbing Championship at Play-at-Height, co. Kerry. The event was hugely successful and it will become an annual fixture with a National Bouldering Championship Event to be developed in 2010.

As competition climbing grows certain supports will need to be established to allow young climbers with an interest in this discipline to develop their potential. With this aim, Angela Carlin has also begun working with the MLTUK on the development of a UK and Ireland wide award in Coaching climbing and with a number of climbing wall-based youth initiatives. Angela, with 5 young climbers selected from the YCS entrants, also attended the first 'BMC Talented Climbers Day' at Manchester Climbing Centre.





## Training and Safety

*“With the appointment of the new Training Officer set for spring 2010, the Training Office will continue to develop its annual programme with the aim of increasing the uptake of all aspects of mountain training in Ireland.”*

The provision of mountain training is an integral part of Mountaineering Ireland’s core strategy. The Training Office works to supply information and advice on how to undertake both formal and informal mountain training, aiming to achieve this by providing access to a variety of both formal award schemes and informal training opportunities.

In 2009, the Training Office continued to implement its restructured administrative procedures leading to a more efficient process for applicants and participants on all schemes and workshops. Close co-operation with the large network of approved mountain training providers was also ratified; the success of this network is demonstrated by its continued growth in 2009. Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe, the Irish Mountain Training Board, now administers the largest number of approved providers since its inception.

The departure of the incumbent Training Officer in August 2009 necessitated the postponement of certain training events – these have been made a priority requirement for 2010, however. With the appointment of the new Training Officer set for spring 2010, the Training Office will continue to develop its annual programme with the aim of increasing the uptake of all aspects of mountain training in Ireland.

### NGB Scheme Awards

In 2009 the following registrations were processed for the NGB mountaineering award schemes: Mountain Skills Award – 800 (approx); Mountain Leader – 90; Walking Group Leader – 22; Single Pitch Award – 94; Multi Pitch Award – 5. Three Mountain Leader assessments took place in 2009 (March, October, November) with a total of 14 candidates passing the MLA in 2009. 37 candidates passed the Single Pitch Award assessment in 2009. No Walking Group Leader assessments took place in 2009.

The new Mountain Skills log book/syllabus pack, introduced in 2008, has been a resounding success among course registrants and providers alike. Feedback on the use of these packs has been hugely positive and it is clear that their implementation is a popular move across the board. As an inclusive award that aims to be as accessible as possible to all sectors of the community, conclusive records of participants on the MS scheme are not held by the Training Office. From the number of new MS packs ordered by providers, however, approximately 800 individuals undertook the Mountain Skills scheme in 2009.

### Workshops: VTO, Train the Trainers & Refresher Courses

The departure, in August, of the Training Officer led to a necessary scaling down of a number planned events and activities for the second half of 2009. A number of informal training events were regrettably postponed, the most notable of which were the Volunteer Training Officer (VTO) workshops.

In 2008 the new VTO initiative was set up in response to clubs’ requests for members’ training. BOS’ aim was to have a nominated volunteer training officer in all Mountaineering Ireland affiliated clubs and, accordingly, ran two extremely successful weekend workshops in November. Interest in club training continues to grow and so the Training Office has made a firm commitment to rejuvenate this scheme in 2010.

Although the postponement of the VTO workshops represented a relative restriction on certain aspects of training provision, in other areas the Training Office continued to provide a wide range of training workshops to Mountaineering Ireland members. Single Pitch Award and Mountain Leader refresher courses were held

throughout 2009, and were well attended by participants both looking to undertake assessment, and also those looking to refresh their mountaineering skills.

In October 2009 a three-day ‘Train the Trainers’ workshop was run from Play At Height in Dingle. This course is designed to promote further progression through mountain training and to facilitate candidates seeking first-time BOS-provider approval. It is open to all current members of Mountaineering Ireland who have held the ML for a minimum of one year and can clearly demonstrate continued development as a qualified ML, working with a variety of different types of groups on a range of upland regions. Encouragingly, this was a sell-out course with 14 participants. This certainly bodes well for the continued growth of mountain training provision in Ireland and the Training Office looks forward to facilitating these individuals’ further progression toward attaining provider status.

### BOS-Approved Mountain Training Providers

At the end of 2009, 60 mountain training providers had been granted BOS approval to run a variety of awards from Mountain Skills to Multi Pitch. Of the 60 individuals approved to run formal National Governing Body award courses, 59 are approved to run Mountain Skills training, 18 to run Mountain Skills assessment, 10 to run the Single Pitch Award, 5 to run the Multi Pitch Award, 12 to run Mountain Leader training, and 5 to run Walking Group Leader training. This is the largest number of approved providers to date and indicates the continued vitality of the outdoors education sector. BOS-approved providers work in a variety of locations, from outdoor education centres to independently owned and run businesses.

BOS approved providers offer both formal training through the sequence of NGB mountaineering awards,

and informal training that supplements clients’ own requirements and skill levels. Suitably qualified BOS approved providers also undertake work year-round throughout the UK and Europe. During 2009 the new BOS Provider administration system was fully implemented. This offered providers a more streamlined approach to course reporting, provider renewal and advertisement of forthcoming courses.

In April 2009 the first MLA moderation was undertaken by the Training Officer. This represented an opportunity for both moderator and assessors to evaluate the procedure for assessment and led to a number of fruitful suggestions being made for the future delivery of the MLA. With the appointment of the new Training Officer in 2010, the planned moderation process for individual providers will be implemented. This will result in the moderation of each provider at least once in their three-year approval cycle. Moderation is intended to be a productive collaborative exercise for both provider and moderator and ensures the maintenance of a high standard of course delivery across NGB mountaineering award training courses.

As part of their provider approval process, training providers are required to attend a minimum of one full Continuing Professional Development workshop in any single three-year approval cycle. No CPD workshops were run by BOS in 2009, so this will be a priority requirement for the Training Office in 2010.

### Taster Sessions

The Training Office is committed to ensuring that as many people as possible have access to mountain activities. Following on from the very successful summer 2008 free taster sessions which saw many providers offering



their time to give free evening/weekend introductory climbing and hill-walking sessions to interested members of the public, the 2009 taster sessions were something of an anticlimax. A number of free hill-walking sessions were offered by a number of providers, however there was nothing like the provider uptake for the scheme in comparison to the previous year.

A number of factors can be cited for this. The summer months are often either provider's busiest time of the year or it is the period in which they undertake personal mountaineering expeditions. The absence of a number of key providers in summer 2009 therefore played a significant role in the lack of taster sessions on offer. The Taster Session scheme also relies heavily on the generous provision of providers' time free of charge and current economic conditions may have curtailed the proportion of their time to gratis training. However, with a renewed degree of encouragement from the Training Office such a volunteer scheme will flourish once more. For the summer 2010 Taster Session scheme, the Training Office will work to trigger provider commitment to this scheme much earlier, and will also look at incentivising the running of such courses. The free taster sessions are a very important means of introducing relative novices to their local uplands and, hopefully, to a new hobby that they will be encouraged to pursue.

#### Training Grants

Training related grants continued to be distributed to both club and individual members providing necessary support for training-related events.

#### International Links

Representatives from the Board of BOS attended a number of meetings and training seminars in 2009 organized by Mountain Leader Training UK and the Association of Mountaineering Instructors. This continued international affiliation promotes a well-run and resourceful link to other mountaineering federations' training systems.

#### Coaching Ireland

Previously called the Adventure Sport Instructor Training & Accreditation Framework, Coaching Ireland continues to develop its proposed national coaching framework with the Irish Sports Council. Mountaineering Ireland maintains its commitment to assist and participate in discussions of this scheme in relation to its application to mountain training.

#### Development Structures

In autumn 2008 Mountaineering Ireland engaged the services of Adventure Activity Associates Ltd to produce an options appraisal for the potential future administration structure of mountain training in Ireland. This was delivered to a joint Mountaineering Ireland /BOS Board meeting: it was concluded that it would be beneficial for MI and BOS to further develop possible links with the Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland Board.

In 2009 a Joint BOS/MLTNI Working Committee was created, with representatives from both mountain training boards, and various affiliated associations invited to attend. A series of meetings were organized to further explore the possibility of a closer relationship between BOS and MLTNI. These meetings will continue until June 2010 when a proposal document will be composed and submitted to the boards of BOS, MI and MLTNI for further consideration.

Tim Orr, Mountaineering Ireland's first Training Officer, left during the year and we wish him well in his career and of course Tim is back as a BOS course provider. MI is in the process of recruiting a successor.

## Communications and Services

The development of an online Mountaineering Ireland library is in progress and will materialise in early 2010. The Irish Mountain Log has, under the editorship of Patrick O' Sullivan continued to be a source of pride within the MI membership. The Mountain Log continues to encourage staff and volunteers alike to contribute to the quarterly journal and the editor wishes to congratulate all those who had articles published during the course of 2009.

Mountaineering Ireland's autumn, winter and summer Meets are an important opportunity for like-minded individuals to gather together and share experiences, knowledge and most importantly a passion for the hills. Training courses are an integral part of the winter and summer Meets in particular, and, whilst not in themselves leading to any kind of formal qualification or award, offer a chance for individuals to extend the range of their personal mountaineering experience.

In March 2009, Mountaineering Ireland ran its nine-day Scottish Winter Meet from Onich, near Fort William. Almost 30 participants booked on to a variety of training courses, which included ice climbing, winter walking and winter mountaineering throughout the Ben Nevis and Glencoe areas. Most courses were of three days' duration, allowing for a significant development of clients' skill levels and confidence in the terrain. Pre-event preparation for this event involved an evening talk in the Great Outdoors shop in Dublin (January 2009), as well as ongoing individual communication.

Feedback forms were circulated after the winter Meet and participants were encouraged to raise any issues or comments. The vast majority of the feedback relating to the training courses was overwhelmingly positive; with just a few comments made about the unpredictability of the weather and resulting inconsistent snow cover and quality. For 2010, it has been decided that the Winter Meet will take place in the Italian Alps – this will give participants an opportunity to experience a better quality of snow and gives access to a greater range of training course opportunities.

In July 2009, Mountaineering Ireland returned to Innertkirchen in the Bernese Oberland for its annual summer Meet. The summer Meet is aimed at walkers, rock climbers, and alpinists of all ages and a comprehensive range of training courses, trips and workshops were provided, catering for the full range of walking, sport climbing, trad climbing and bouldering communities. Almost 100 people attended the summer Meet in 2009 – one of Mountaineering Ireland's most successful to date.

Walking courses ranged from one-day skills programmes in navigation, GPS and local flora/fauna, to multi-day hut-to-hut walks across the region. Climbing courses ranged from introductory rock-climbing workshops to multi-pitch sessions and bouldering courses. At the more extreme end, the five-day Alpine courses (introductory, intermediate and advanced) offered participants a chance for adventure at altitude.

The Autumn Meet (October), held in Dingle, was similarly successful. The Autumn Meet is traditionally an opportunity for an MI-affiliated club to showcase their area and invite other clubs to partake in a weekend of hill-walking and bonhomie. The 2009 Autumn Meet was kindly organised by Dingle Hillwalking Club and saw over 100 people descend on Dingle for one of the most successful Autumn Meets of recent years. Evening lectures, organized daytime walks, skills workshops and a gala dinner made for an event-packed weekend.

Our membership discount scheme continued to grow in 2009 and there are an ever increasing number of retailers and accommodation providers amongst others who offer discounts on the presentation of a valid Mountaineering Ireland membership card.



## Resources

*“Budgeting for future funding cuts was undertaken to ensure that Mountaineering Ireland will remain in a sustainable financial position for the long term.”*

The implementation of Mountaineering Ireland’s Strategic Development Plan (2009 – 2013) commenced in 2009. The strategy sets out a clear vision for the future growth and promotion of all aspects of mountaineering in Ireland with a major focus on supporting clubs and individual members who are primarily engaged in hill walking together with enhanced support for youth participation in our sport. With the appointment of a new Chief Officer along with the dedicated staff of MI the success of this plan will be visible to our members.

The post of part-time Training Administrator was increased to a full-time job in June 2009. This reflected the need to support the work of BOS and to provide for greater training supports for all members and clubs. The departure of the Training Officer in Autumn 2009 increased the importance of a full-time Training Administrator.

A renewed emphasis on prudent financial management was implemented during 2009. Budgeting for future funding cuts was undertaken to ensure that Mountaineering Ireland will remain in a sustainable financial position for the long term. The wider economic downturn and the threat of draconian cuts to sport focused Mountaineering Ireland’s attention, initially on emphasising to government, in conjunction with the Federation of Irish Sport the importance of sport to Ireland’s unique culture together with the health and societal benefits related to active participation in sport. Mountaineering Ireland have also began exploring potential alternative revenue streams to allow for consistent programme delivery in the long run.

As outlined at the AGM in 2009, the board said that it would not ask the membership for an additional membership fee but would firmly control its costs and demand value for money in all its activities. The board

was also fully aware of the Sports Council’s budget cuts and how they would affect the grant income to Mountaineering Ireland. From the audited accounts you can see that MI has exercised this promise and as we expect further Sport Council Grant Reductions in 2011 MI will continue to demand value for money without affecting the services to the membership. The good news however is that MI has secured additional funding from Sports NI whilst although ring fenced for specific roles and projects it will enhance the overall ability of Mountaineering Ireland to deliver for its Membership.

The development plan for a Mountain Resource Centre was completed in early 2009 and while the current economic conditions make funding for this project more challenging it is a project that is being discussed with potential private sponsors and relevant stakeholders. The Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Walls Strategy is under review and will be completed during 2010.

Mountaineering Ireland is a success primarily because of the active involvement of members volunteering for a wide range of posts, both within clubs and as representatives in various external organisations and internal committees. Mountaineering Ireland would like to offer a sincere “thank you” to all the volunteers for their continued efforts at national, regional and local level. Volunteers are involved in every area of the Mountaineering Ireland from: writing articles, organising events, representing Mountaineering Ireland at festivals and events, sitting on committees and steering groups and sitting on the Mountaineering Ireland Board. If you have an interest in being a Mountaineering Ireland volunteer or representative for your club or region please don’t hesitate to contact the Mountaineering Ireland Office. A list of current volunteer opportunities can be found on our web site.