



Planning for the Future

MCI Strategic Development Plan
2009 – 2013



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IRELAND
leave no trace
The MCI promotes the
principles of Leave No Trace



www.mountaineering.ie



“The MCI will continue to place volunteers at the core of its work – this is your organisation. Future development is, as has always been the case, dependent on the active engagement of members.”

MCI Chairperson's Address

The new five year Strategy of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI) presented here is ambitious and ground-breaking. As with all work of the MCI, this Strategy has been informed by an extensive and active public consultation process, including seventeen local area meetings held throughout the length and breadth of Ireland from February to September 2008. The Strategy has also been greatly enhanced from the experience gained by the MCI, its 9,800 members and funding partners since being established almost 40 years ago.

Mountaineering in Ireland includes hill walking, rock climbing, rambling, bouldering and alpinism. This Strategy sets out a clear vision for the future growth and promotion of these activities with a major focus on support to members and clubs primarily engaged in hill walking together with enhanced support for youth participation in our sport.

The Strategy will build on some very notable achievements over the past five years. These achievements, developed from the clear strategic policy direction outlined in the previous plan, include the establishment of our offices at Sport HQ, development of a new organisational structure, recruitment of highly motivated and professional staff, including the MCI's first ever Chief Officer and Access, Training and Youth Officers. Other notable achievements have included the successful implementation of our access and environmental policies coupled with the MCI's active engagement with Comhairle na Tuaithe. This has resulted in opening up access along national way-marked ways through the Walks Scheme and the success of our training programme, the summer Alpine meet, Spring and Autumn meets, the redesign of the MCI website and enhanced communications strategy. All of the above have delivered real and tangible benefits not only to the membership of the MCI but across a very wide spectrum of users of the Irish countryside, uplands and crags. These achievements have provided a real foundation on which to build for the future in this new five year Strategy.

There is no doubt that the funding landscape has altered significantly over the past number of years. The MCI will need to meet these challenges head-on. As the recognised National Governing Body for mountaineering by both the Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland, the MCI fully appreciates that this Strategy is launched at a time of economic downturn and severely restricted public finances. The strategy seeks to emphasise the need for greater levels of non-state funding. It does so in the knowledge that there is a growing recognition that the sport we seek to promote, and more especially the hill-walking, is immensely important and has health and societal benefits beyond what can be expressed in purely monetary terms.

The MCI intends to capitalise on this through the appointment of a Hillwalking Development Officer with a core focus on developing a range of supports to our club and individual members whose primary interest is hillwalking. This will include enhanced targeted support to make services (insurance, training, meets, lectures, guidebooks, Mountain Log and discounts) of direct relevance to more members. The continued implementation of the MCI's environmental policy and support for the work of Leave No Trace will raise awareness and appreciation of how we can use the uplands of Ireland in a respectful and sustainable manner. At all times the Strategy emphasises how mountaineering activities can contribute to our quality of life and the MCI will continue to promote the enjoyment of the sport for and by everyone.

The Strategy places tremendous demands on the MCI. It sets targets which will grow the membership base of the MCI. This will help place the organisation on a sound financial footing. The MCI will continue to place volunteers at the core of its work – this is your organisation. Future development is, as has always been the case, dependent on the active engagement of members. The MCI will continue to work in partnership with its members and all relevant bodies to promote mountaineering in Ireland.

With the continued support of all our members, funding partners and stakeholders, I have no doubt the MCI will meet the challenges set. The MCI Board and staff are committed to achieving further success and to fully implement the work set out in this Strategy.

Ruairí Ó Conchúir
Chairperson
Mountaineering Council of Ireland
November 2008



"I would like to thank all those who contributed to the strategy process and I wish everybody involved in the governing body all the best for the coming years."

Chief Executive Officer, Irish Sports Council

The Irish Sports Council has produced three strategies and has commenced the process for its fourth strategy. Central to the strategies is increasing the levels of participation in sport and activity and improving performances of our elite athletes in major international competitions.

National Governing Bodies of Sport play a major role in helping achieving these strategic goals. The MCI (Mountaineering Council of Ireland) is responsible for encouraging people of all ages to take up and enjoy outdoor activities and ensuring that these pursuits are operated in a safe and enjoyable environment.

While National Governing Bodies of Sport will always require state funding, it is important that extra capacity is created so that they can strengthen staffing and other supports enabling them to become less dependent on such funding.

The development of the strategic plan sets out the aims of the organisation for the next four years. The MCI Strategic Development Plan 2009-2013 has been developed following an in-depth consultation process which has taken place over a six month period earlier in the year. This process involved obtaining opinions of individual members, clubs and associated organisations through written submissions, numerous country wide meetings and online feedback.

I am glad to see that the MCI will be focusing on two main elements in this strategy. These elements of participation and performance concur with those of the Irish Sports Council as it goes forward.

The MCI Strategic Plan is the final product of an intense examination, evaluation, consultation process and discussion in the future direction of the MCI. I would like to thank all those who contributed to the strategy process and I wish everybody involved in the governing body all the best for the coming years. I also look forward to continued partnership between the Irish Sports Council and the MCI and I am confident that with the hard work and support of its members that the MCI and its sport will go from strength to strength over the period of the strategic plan.

John Treacy
Chief Executive Officer
Irish Sports Council



"Through this plan the MCI have recognised the contribution that increased participation in mountain activities can play in bringing about health, social and economic benefits to both individuals and communities."

Chief Executive Officer, Sport Northern Ireland

I am delighted to write this forward to the Mountaineering Council of Ireland's Strategic Development Plan 2009 - 2013.

There are many reasons why people take to the hills and mountains of Northern Ireland – to experience the beauty of the scenery, to get away from the pressures of day to day life or to experience and overcome challenge. Whatever the reason it is clear that hill-walking and mountaineering are as popular as ever and indeed growing. This presents challenges to the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI) to provide real leadership in terms of demonstrating best practice and sustainable use of sensitive areas that ensure continued opportunities for growth in these popular activities.

Through this plan the MCI have recognised the contribution that increased participation in mountain activities can play in bringing about health, social and economic benefits to both individuals and communities.

Sport Northern Ireland has been working in partnership with the Department of Culture, Arts Leisure (DCAL) to develop a new ten year Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation in Northern Ireland. This Strategy, envisages a new shared sporting vision – 'a culture of lifelong enjoyment and success in sport'.

The MCI plan has encompassed this vision by creating initiatives to increase participation but also by developing opportunities for climbers and mountaineers to improve skills, to perform better and reach new heights – both metaphorically and physically.

Sport Northern Ireland is a strong advocate for the value of adventure activities and is investing considerable resources in the redevelopment of Tollymore Mountain Centre as the National Centre for leadership and skills in adventure activities. Continuing to work in partnership with MCI and other similar agencies is crucial in ensuring that people have the opportunities to enjoy lifelong involvement and success in sport.

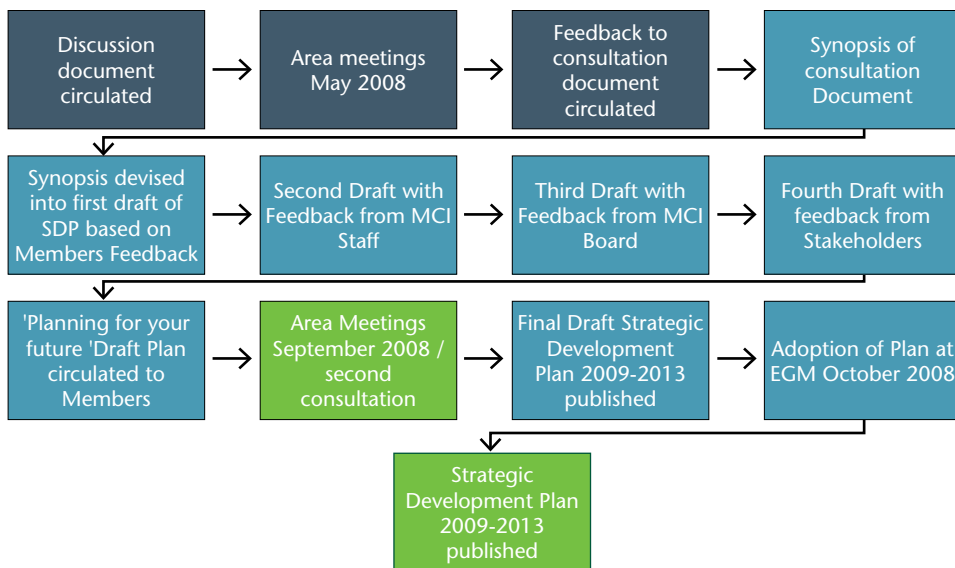
I therefore endorse this plan and look forward to seeing mountaineers achieving even greater feats and more people having the opportunity to experience the hills and mountains that we are fortunate to have on our doorsteps.

Eamonn McCartan
Chief Executive Officer
Sport Northern Ireland

Background

During the period of the last Strategic Development Plan (2002-2008) the MCI has been significantly restructured and strengthened. The foundations have now been laid at an organisational level to undertake further development, the focus of which will be at the grass roots level of our organisation.

Outlined within the new Strategic Development Plan are the methods by which extra capacity will be created to strengthen staffing and supports, and reduce dependency on State grants. In the development of this new plan the MCI has invested considerable time and effort to undertake an in-depth consultation process with members throughout Ireland (North and South). This process to encourage active participation by MCI members in the development of the Strategic Development Plan took place between February and September 2008. The opinions of individual members, clubs and associated organisations were sought through written submissions, via an online feedback system and most importantly through the staging of seventeen local focus meetings throughout the country.



While the consultation process undertaken has highlighted many needs and opportunities, the two most important issues agreed were the need for much better communication with members and the need to develop, implement and fund a long-term plan for the enhancement of youth membership and involvement.

Increased participation in sport and physical activity will be emphasised as a major objective of the Irish Sports Council in its next strategy statement, to be published early next year (2009). This is already a target for Sport Northern Ireland. The MCI will support this through our new Strategic Development Plan.

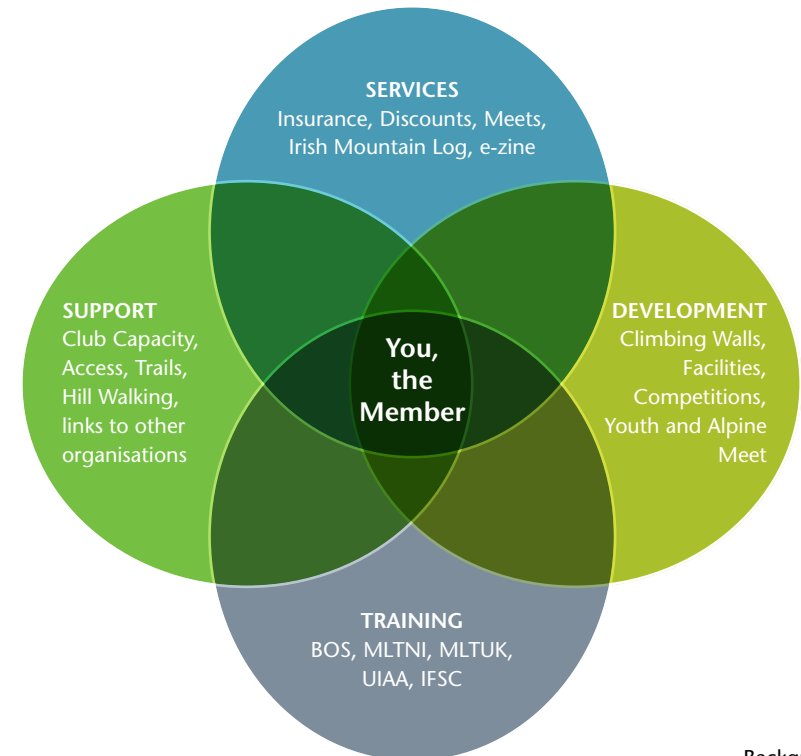
There are several initiatives under way which will enhance walking and other trails for both residents and tourists. The outdoors will be increasingly promoted as “the Green Gym”, with an emphasis on family participation. The mountains and uplands are going to experience a significant increase in usage. The MCI needs to develop a considered and constructive response to this coming reality.

All of these developments are supportive of MCI's mission and will create the conditions for a significant development of mountaineering, particularly hill walking. The new strategy will seek to take advantage of these opportunities, in addition to addressing the principal issues raised by members during the lengthy and active process of consultation.

While the focus of our new Strategic Development Plan is firmly centered on enhanced support to members (individuals and clubs) and on youth participation, the MCI is acutely aware of its responsibilities as a national governing body. The MCI will work with other bodies to ensure that its training programme supports the uptake of higher level instructor and coaching awards, and will work to introduce a system of provider moderation to ensure and maintain levels of standardisation across all mountain training and assessment courses.

In addition, while taking a leading role in coaching in our sport, the MCI will seek to promote the highest standards in mountain training and develop a long term strategy towards Irish sport climbers competing in the 2020 Olympics.

Where we see members within MCI



Statement of intent

The MCI will focus its efforts on two main elements.

Participation – *helping Members do it and*

Performance – *helping Members do it better.*

We want to help develop the capacity of Members to get more out of our sport. Support for our grass roots membership is equally as important as the technical side and formal aspects of what we do.

This Strategic Development Plan establishes seven broad programmes for action:

1. Membership Development

2. Youth

3. Access and Conservation

4. Performance Development

5. Training and Safety

6. Communication and Services

7. Resource Utilisation

Membership Development	
Why	How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to feedback from Members • To make best use of the resources available to us as an organisation • To enhance the experience and capacity of individual Members and clubs • To facilitate a level of sustainability and self sufficiency within clubs • To enhance leadership capacity within clubs • To engage with the wider membership who aren't currently engaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appointment a Development Officer with a primary focus on Hill Walking • Develop member support packs • Develop member and club handbooks • Publish best practice guides • Develop the MCI website with additional resources • Develop the Irish Mountain Log to have a balanced focus on all elements of our sport and to enhance the reader's experience • Oversee a programme of sustainable charity and challenge walks in line with Leave No Trace principles • Create better links with Local Sports Partnerships and other organisations • Take measures to encourage those active in the sport to join the MCI

Youth	
Why	How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote participation in mountaineering and introduce young people to mountaineering as a lifelong sport • To support the development of a number of area based youth mountaineering clubs in Ireland • To provide clubs with the support to develop their own youth programme. • To develop an Irish Youth Climbing Team • To provide young people with progressive pathways for all mountaineering activities. • To allow renewal of the age profile of MCI clubs and increase the number of young individual members • To provide and support a skilled network of trainers and mentors. • To invest in the future of mountaineering • To make a link between indoor and outdoor climbing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appointment of a Youth Development Officer for the Republic of Ireland • To work in a variety of different programmes and settings with young people from ages 8 to 25 • To act as advocate for youth participation in Mountaineering with the formal and non formal education and youth work sectors • Carry out an audit of existing resources and structures in place • Support best practice in the development of youth mountaineering clubs • Appeal to existing MCI clubs to embrace youth activities • Establish a number of pilot youth Mountaineering groups • Work in collaboration with existing organisations including: Scouting Ireland; Gaisce -The President's Award; the Duke of Edinburgh Award, and others

Access and Conservation	
Why	How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue the implementation of the current MCI Environmental Policy and to review and develop and new policy • It is the desire of the MCI to work in partnership with landowners, state bodies, recreational users and any other concerned groups • To continue to develop new policies as new challenges and opportunities require 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active and committed membership of other organisations such as Comhairle Na Tuaithe, Leave No Trace and the Countryside Access and Activities Network amongst others • Support dialogue and cooperation between all stakeholders • Establish Leave No Trace as a benchmark for all outdoor activities • Facilitate and promote "clean up" sessions and other practical programmes

Performance Development	
Why	How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCI as the voice of mountaineering in all its forms • To support the development of the sport and raise performance standards • Engage with the appropriate international bodies • Support Members personal development • To take a leading role in the coaching of our sport in association with Coaching Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appointment of a Coaching and Talent ID Officer • Develop a Climbing Wall Manual and a new National Climbing Wall Development Plan • Select and support representatives to international meets and events • Support Irish Expeditions to greater Ranges and Irish mountaineers whose achievements are of national/ international significance • Secure access to crags by negotiation, or where necessary by lease or purchase • Facilitate policy debate on relevant issues • Organise events to develop all aspects of Mountaineering • Develop a long term Strategy towards competing in international events including the 2020 Olympics

Communications and Services	
Why	How
<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make sure information is available to all • To make the MCI more relevant to Members • To provide best value for money • Turn “the MCI” into “my MCI” • To create belonging and loyalty <p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be the voice of Mountaineering • Promote the image and values of Mountaineering • To promote wider sustainable use and good practice within the sport of Mountaineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective, simple and professional communication • To provide Regional Members Forums • More interactivity in web site and magazine • Making MCI more relevant • Develop a Communications Strategy • Build relationships with the media • Review the brand and refine the image of the organisation • Empower local regional representatives to engage local media • Provide media training for clubs • Network with other relevant organisations • Develop a Rock Climbing Guidebook Strategy • To review funding opportunities for the appointment of a communications and marketing officer

Training and Safety	
Why	How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure safe and good practice on a long term basis in the mountains of non MCI members and MCI members • To ensure that a pool of qualified instructors are available to provide quality training opportunities to individuals and clubs • Club members need to be trained in the hill skills necessary to make them self sufficient, not just mountaineering leaders • Clubs themselves need to come together with the MCI to discuss training • To ensure quality standards between all BOS Training Providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the implementation of the current MCI Training Policy especially by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Increasing the uptake of the higher level instructor awards and (ii) Increasing the availability of training which is tailored to meet the needs of the club member • Carry out an options appraisal on the future development of mountain training in Ireland • Introduce a system of provider moderation in the Republic of Ireland to ensure and maintain levels of standardisation across all mountain training and assessment courses

Resource Utilisation	
Why	How
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make the MCI as efficient and cost effective as possible • To place the MCI on a sustainable financial basis • To increase our membership base and allow organic growth of the MCI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine sponsorship opportunities • Develop a number of Mountain Resource Centres at key mountaineering locations to promote the sport and increase activity and skills. • Establish regional focal points for training • Continue to develop the MCI Regional Members Forum • Develop the MCI Library

This plan was adopted at an EGM in Macroom Co. Cork on Saturday 11th October 2008. The contents of this Strategic Development Plan will be developed into Annual Work Plans and reported on through Annual Reports presented each year to our Members. The staff will be accountable to the Board of the MCI and the Board to the Membership. The first of these Annual Work Plans will be presented to the Board and agreed for commencement in January 2009.