

Statement from the Board of Mountaineering Ireland regarding proposed increase in annual subscription payable by Club Members

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland has tabled a Motion for discussion at the AGM on 30th March 2019 proposing that the annual subscription payable by club members be increased to €35.00 from 1st November 2019. (No change is proposed in the reduced fee payable by club members aged under 23 years)

Club member's subscriptions have not increased in almost 14 years. Much of that period coincided with the Global Recession which saw low rates of inflation and reductions in the rate of price increases. However, as members will know from their own daily experience, the improvement in economic conditions in recent years has been accompanied by a return to inflation and price increases across a wide range of goods and services.

Mountaineering Ireland has not been immune to these cost pressures. Despite the best efforts of the Board and staff to control expenditure, the company has incurred deficits amounting to almost €130,000 over the last three years, as follows –

- 2016 €50,147
- 2017 €33,631
- 2018 €45,108

These deficits have been funded from our Reserves. However, it is not sustainable to continue to run down our Reserves to fund our day to day expenditure. Action must be taken to eliminate the pattern of annual deficits and to bring our income and expenditure into line.

The Board has carefully considered all aspects of our operations and believes that attempting to achieve this through a reduction in our expenditure would impact adversely on the services provided to members.

While there has been a welcome increase in our core grant from Sport Ireland for 2019, this is not sufficient to bridge the gap between income and expenditure.

The Board has concluded that, unless we increase our income from subscriptions, it will not be possible to maintain the current level of services and to achieve the goals and objectives set out in our Strategic Plan 2018-2021. These include:

- Lobbying for improved and assured access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers
- Strengthening our support for clubs, hillwalkers, climbers and mountaineers
- Striving to ensure that mountain landscapes are valued and protected
- Working to tackle upland path erosion
- Promoting formal and informal training to meet the needs of hillwalkers and climbers
- Encouraging young people to participate in mountaineering
- Growing our membership by 25% over the four years of the Plan

At €35.00, the proposed subscription fee compares favourably with similar mountaineering organisations abroad and with other governing bodies for sport in Ireland. The following are the annual subscriptions in a number of such bodies -

- Mountaineering Scotland: €35.00 (£30.50)
- BMC: €46.00 (£40.00, assuming BMC proposed increase is approved)
- Austrian Alpine Club: €57.00
- New Zealand Mountaineering Club: €69.00 (\$115 NZ dollars)
- American Alpine Club: €75.00 (\$85.00 US dollars)
- German Alpine Club: €97.00
- Irish Sailing Association: €46.00
- Cycling Ireland: €50.00
- Triathlon Ireland: €75.00
- Canoeing Ireland: €50.00
- Irish Underwater Council: €110.00

No one likes the prospect of a price rise and the Board would prefer not to have to seek an increase in members' subscriptions. However, the reality is that the organisation has been living beyond its means and a subscription increase is essential to enable Mountaineering Ireland to maintain the services that it currently provides and to deliver on the improvements in services and supports to members envisaged in our Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

The Board urges all Clubs and members to support its Motion at the AGM on 30th March.