

**NORTH
EAST
MOUNTAIN
TRUST**



*“Protecting the coastal and mountain environment of
North East Scotland”*

Annual Report
to
30th September 2016

Annual Report of the North East Mountain Trust Year Ended 30th September 2016

Principal Address

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The object of the Trust is to protect from potentially damaging developments, and to enhance the upland, coastal and rural environments of Scotland, and in particular the hills and mountains of North-East Scotland, for the benefit of those taking responsible non-motorised recreation there.

The objective is achieved by:

- The collection and dissemination of relevant information
- Providing a forum for the discussion of such information by interested parties
- Making representations to individuals and authorities who have responsibility for the above environments

In addition, NEMT

- Organises a series of public lectures on relevant topics
- Distributes a regular newsletter on NEMT's activities and related matters

Up until 2nd September 2016, the Trust was an Unincorporated Body which was administered by a General Council composed of individual members and representatives of member and affiliated bodies. The membership of the General Council for 2016 is shown later in the Report. The Trust is now a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) which is administered by a Council composed of Trustees (Individual Member Trustees and Organisational Member Trustees). Some Organisation Members may not want their representatives to be Trustees; the Council has decided that these representatives will be invited to all Council meetings but they do not have voting rights.

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation Number SCO008783

1. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

With campaigns on a number of fronts, this has been an extremely busy year for NEMT.

The Trust held a very successful Open Evening on 24th May. The aim of the evening was to find out which issues people cared most about. There was a lively discussion, generally agreeing with the current priorities and also highlighting that additional emphasis should be given to the following topics:-

- Mountain biking and its effect in sensitive areas
- Access
- The protection of Bennachie against some of the proposed A96 dualling routes (see below)

NEMT's interest in applications for wind farms remains focussed on those which have implications for wild land areas or locations of high scenic amenity. Recent decisions suggest that there is a growing understanding that there must be limits to developments impacting on such areas. In the last year a number of applications which NEMT objected to have been rejected or abandoned. These include the Glencassley and Sallachy projects north west of Loch Shin (wild land area 34), Talladh-a-Beithe (south west corner of Loch Ericht) and Carn Gorm (Little Wyvis). Cullachy (north west side of the Corrieyairack) and Caplich (wild land area 34) are in the appeals process as of September 2016. The John Muir Trust's legal challenge to the massive development on the northern slopes of the Monadhliath (Stronelairg) has failed and this will now go ahead.

Two major proposals which are concerning NEMT are on the horizon: Fasque and Glen Dye (west of the southern side of the Cairn O'Mount) and Tomchrasky (east of the Munros on the north side of Loch Clunie and partially within wild land area 24). The changes to the subsidy arrangements seem to have slowed the pace of applications. With suitable land for major developments becoming scarcer, it is likely that there will be an increase in applications for the extension of existing projects and proposals are likely to involve ever taller turbines.

We have been monitoring applications for hill tracks submitted under the Prior Notification procedure and contributing to LINK's submission to the Scottish government on how well the new system is working. The new procedure has contributed to more tracks being declared and hence available for public scrutiny, which is clearly a good thing. Some of the old problems such as tracks being declared as for agricultural use and yet obviously built for grouse shooting continue. In summary, the new system is an improvement but we will continue to push for full planning control. One worrying trend is that ski centres seem to need to construct "maintenance" tracks. This is a development that we will oppose. Another trend is the retention of ugly tracks used to build new mini hydro-electric schemes, without suitable remediation. Again, we will oppose the unremediated tracks; typically not the actual mini hydro-electric schemes.

The year started with a blaze of publicity for mountain hares as gamekeepers were caught carrying out a winter slaughter. We managed to generate two stories in the Herald and a series of Parliamentary Questions. There is steadily increasing public pressure to get driven grouse shooting estates and their employee gamekeepers brought under control. The mistreatment of mountain hares, illegal muirburn and persecution of raptors are all linked to the intensive (mis-)management of driven grouse moors. We will have to wait but ultimately, I believe that we will get legislation to bring this activity under proper control. The SLE offer of "voluntary restraint" in culling mountain hares has been shown to be worthless; exactly as their offer of co-operation on eliminating raptor persecution.

We, together with representatives from the Cairngorms Campaign and the Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group, have had a further meeting with Natural Retreats following the widespread concern over the standard of works carried out to replace an old rope tow on Cairngorm Mountain. The meeting

was constructive and useful and Natural Retreats admitted that the standard of the work hadn't been good enough. They outlined a number of improvements that had been made to achieve an appropriate standard for future works. We will need to monitor any future works to ensure that they deliver on their promises.

The Cairngorms National Park is currently consulting on the next update to its 5 yearly strategy document, 2017 – 2022. At the end of September, we submitted a detailed response. We will be publishing this on our website.

We have agreed to support the Save Bennachie Alliance in their work to protect Bennachie from the potential impacts of some of the proposed options to dual the A96. At this stage of the process, it is correct to consider a range of options. However, we need to ensure that any options chosen for further work are well away from the hill itself. In order to avoid duplication, we have agreed that the Save Bennachie Alliance will lead on the issue and we will support them as necessary. However, make no mistake; we are fully committed to protecting this iconic hill and its environs.

Finally, NEMT has become a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). Although the individual members and clubs won't see much of a change, the move to become a SCIO provides increased protection for the Trust's officers. To date, we have never needed this kind of protection. However, as our position, along with other NGOs, versus driven grouse shooting becomes more polarised, such protection might be useful in the future. The necessary changes were agreed at an Extraordinary General Meeting held in April earlier this year and we formally became a SCIO in September.

Dave Windle

2. GENERAL COUNCIL for the Unincorporated Body

Office Bearers

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| David Windle | Chair |
| George Allan | Deputy Chair |
| Catherine Lacy | Minutes Secretary |
| Susan Smith | Treasurer |
| Donald Thomas | Membership Secretary & Webmaster |
| Brian Heaton | Lecture Organiser |
| Maureen Stuchbury | Ex officio |

Representatives of Member Clubs and Affiliated Bodies

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------|
| Hamish Clunas | Aberdeen Hillwalking Club |
| Heather Eddie | Aberdeen Hillwalking Club |
| Donald Thomas | Aberdeen Mountaineering Club |
| Somersal Shepley | Alford Womens Outdoor Group |
| R John Hughes | BOOTS Oldmeldrum Hillwalkers |
| Della Russell | Culter Hillwalking Club |
| Catherine Lacy | Cults Hillwalking Club |
| Jean Robinson | Cairngorm Club |
| Ken Thomson | Cairngorm Club |
| Alan Murray | Ellon Hillwalking Club |
| Archie Brock | Granite City Hillwalkers |
| Andrew Hogg | Granite City Hillwalkers |
| Carlos Oldani | Stocket Hillwalking Club |
| Jaqui Phillips | Stocket Hillwalking Club |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Alistair Beeley | Stonehaven Mountaineering & Hillwalking Club |
| Roger Owen | Stonehaven Mountaineering & Hillwalking Club |
| Dave Liddle | Turriff Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club |
| Robert Sivewright | Turriff Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club |
| Brian Cornock | Baillies of Bennachie |
| Alison Mitchell | Ramblers Scotland |
| Alison Riddell | Scottish Rights of Way Society |
| Dawn MacKinnon | Aberdeen & St John Mountain Rescue Association |
| Tessa Jones | Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group |
| Drennan Watson | Cairngorms Campaign |
| Peter Aikman | Mountain Bothies Association |
| Alec Scott | Mountain Bothies Association |

Newsletter Editorial Team

David Windle George Allan Catherine Lacy

3. MEMBERSHIP

A flourishing membership supports NEMT by strengthening the credibility of our campaigning work, drawing in more people with time and ideas to contribute to our activities and providing income. In return, members receive copies of our bi-annual magazine (*Mountain Views*) and enjoy reduced rates for our winter lectures. Most importantly, they know they are supporting an organisation dedicated to representing their interests as hill-goers. It is good, therefore, to report that 2016 has seen an increase in Individual Membership from 99 to 112. We also welcome the Stocket Hillwalking Club as a new Organisational Member.

Members are reminded to let us know of any changes of contact information.

George Allan (Temporary Membership Secretary)

Member Clubs

Aberdeen Hillwalking Club
Aberdeen Mountaineering Club
Alford Women's Outdoor Group
BOOTS (Oldmeldrum Hillwalkers)
Cairngorm Club
Culter Hillwalking Club
Cults Hillwalking Club
Ellon Hillwalking Club
Granite City Hillwalkers
Stocket Hillwalking Club
Stonehaven Mountaineering & Hillwalking Club
Turriff Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club

Affiliated Bodies

Baillies of Bennachie
Ramblers Scotland
Scottish Rights of Way Society
Scottish Natural Heritage

Bodies with Reciprocal Membership

Aberdeen & St John Mountain Rescue Assn
Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group
Cairngorms Campaign
Mountain Bothies Association

4. LECTURES

We are very grateful to Brian Heaton, Dave Windle and George Allan who provided a very interesting and varied lecture programme over winter 2015-16, and to the volunteers who assist with running the programme.

Oct 2015 James Brownhill – Clouds

James, a professional meteorologist and former TV weather presenter, used a stunning set of photographs to explain the different cloud formations and their relevance to the likely weather to be expected. He capped these photographs with a series featuring Brocken spectres and sun dogs, phenomena created by the sun shining through either fine water droplets or ice crystals suspended in the atmosphere. Many of us have been lucky enough to have photographed one or two of these features, but James showed a truly impressive array of photographs.

Nov 2015**Steve Kentish – A winter journey in the Alps – the Cote d’Azur to Chamonix on ski**

Steve entertained us with an account of a long distance mountain ski journey. He conveyed the difference between a journey of this nature with conventional off-piste skiing. Navigation in low cloud was a challenge as was finding and actually getting into some of the huts, when surrounded by high piles of snow. It took some weeks to complete the route and was a fascinating adventure. Steve described it beautifully and had the audience imagining what it was like. He left an appreciative and very envious audience.

Dec 2015**Sandy Allan – The complete first ascent of the Mazeno Ridge on Nanga Parbat**

Sandy described a truly epic undertaking. Three years ago, he and Rick Allen became the first people to climb the full ridge and then carry on to the summit. Towards the end, they were running low on both food and water and were lucky to survive. It was an incredible feat of endurance and earned them the coveted Picolet d’ Or award. The story itself is gripping and Sandy brought it alive with some excellent photographs and an understated “Highland” commentary.

And a reminder about Sandy Allan’s book, *In Some Lost Place*. If you didn’t buy a copy at his lecture, then it is still widely available. It is a fascinating story and truly a “must read”.

Jan 2016**Roger Owen – Elbrus – an adventure in the Russian Caucasus**

Unfortunately, this lecture had to be cancelled at short notice, due to a family bereavement. We hope to see Roger or Alistair Beeley give this lecture for next winter’s lecture season.

Feb 2016**Graham Marr – Exploring old roads on Deeside**

As a retirement project, Graham Marr has explored what remains of the Old Deeside Road and written a book on this, thus updating the work of G.M.Fraser around a century ago. Graham showed fascinating slides of the road and structures beside it, many contrasting what is there now with how the places looked historically. He also outlined the work he has undertaken for Scotways on the Mounth Passes. His excellent book was reviewed in a past issue of Mountain Views.

Mar 2016**Glenn Roberts – NESBreC: biological recording for NE Scotland and the Cairngorms**

Glenn, the coordinator for the North East, gave an interesting presentation of biological records and how they can be used. He explained how simple it is to for members of the general public to take observations and send them in. He then showed a fascinating sample of the existing records. A lot of discussion ensued on some the strange sightings; including a mountain hare apparently in the lowlands and a pine marten definitely seen in Peterhead harbour! NESBreC provides identification and training days.

Get involved, submit your sightings, it’s very simple, for further information and form, go to <http://www.nesbrec.org.uk>.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Statement of receipts and payments for the period 1st Oct 2015 - 30th Sep 2016

| | Period ended 30/9/16 | Year ended 30/9/15 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| <u>Unrestricted funds</u> | | |
| Receipts | £ | £ |
| Donations | 257 | 3 |
| Bank interest | 4 | 4 |
| HMRC Gift Aid repayment | 320 | 250 |
| Receipts from charitable activities | 2806 | 3039 |
| Total receipts | <u>3387</u> | <u>3296</u> |
| Payments | | |
| Cost of charitable activities | 2168 | 3241 |
| Governance costs | 148 | 0 |
| Publicity | 55 | 65 |
| Total payments | <u>2371</u> | <u>3306</u> |
| Surplus/deficit for year | 1016 | -10 |

Statement of balances as at 30th Sept 2016

| | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <u>Unrestricted funds</u> | | |
| Opening cash at bank | 8734 | 8744 |
| Surplus (deficit) for the year | 1016 | -10 |
| Closing cash at bank | <u>9750</u> | <u>8734</u> |
| Bank Balances | | |
| Bank current account | 9750 | 8734 |
| Debtors (o/s payins) | | |
| Creditors (o/s cheques) | | |
| Total balances | <u>9750</u> | <u>8734</u> |

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 30th September 2016

1. The North East Mountain Trust became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) on 2nd Sept 2016. As our annual income is less than £100,000 a year, we have been able to present merged accounts for the periods 1st Oct 2015 to 1st Sep 2016 (incorporated organisation) and 2nd Sep 2016 to 30th Sep 2016 (SCIO).

2. These accounts have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis in accordance with the Charities & Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

3. Nature and purpose of funds: unrestricted funds are those which may be used by the Trustees for the furtherance of the aims of the charity. The Trustees maintain a single unrestricted fund for all activities of the charity.

4. Receipts from charitable activities

| | 2015/16 | | 2014/15 |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|
| | £ | | £ |
| <i>Subscriptions</i> | | | |
| Individual members | 1324 | | 1499 |
| Clubs and affiliated organisations | 754 | | 640 |
| | | 2078 | 2139 |
| Lecture entry fees | | 595 | 790 |
| Mountain Views sales | | 133 | 110 |
| Total | | 2806 | 3039 |

5. Costs of charitable activities

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------------|-------------|
| <i>Lecture costs</i> | | | |
| Room hire | 175 | | 255 |
| Lecturers' fees & expenses | 222 | | 416 |
| Projector purchase | 0 | | 370 |
| | | 397 | 1041 |
| <i>Mountain Views costs</i> | | | |
| Printing | 1079 | | 1232 |
| Post | 162 | | 155 |
| | | 1241 | 1387 |
| Trustees' attendance at LINK mtg | | 20 | 0 |
| <i>Subscriptions</i> | | | |
| Scottish Environment LINK | | 0 | 200 |
| <i>Donations</i> | | | |
| John Muir Trust Stronelaairg appeal | | 0 | 150 |
| <i>Administration costs</i> | | | |
| Admin expenses | 0 | | 26 |
| ACVO membership | 25 | | 25 |
| Insurances | 246 | | 238 |
| Internet services | 84 | | 60 |
| Stationery/Telephone/Postage | 142 | | 114 |
| Membership cards | 13 | | 0 |
| | | 510 | 463 |
| Total | | 2168 | 3241 |

6. Comparison with accounts to 30th Sept 2015

(i) Subscriptions from individual members appear to be less this year because in previous years subscriptions included donations made by members. This year these donations, amounting to £244, have been shown separately, accounting for the decrease in subscriptions and increase in donations compared to the year to Sept 2015.

(ii) Lecture entry fees are less because one of the six lecturers on the programme was cancelled because the speaker was unable to attend at the last minute. In addition there were seven lectures last year so the room charges were greater. Fewer lectures probably accounted for reduced entry receipts (it is difficult to record numbers of attendees accurately when

attendance is high), but nevertheless the small surplus of £198 is more than the one of £119 last year (once the cost of the projector included as a revenue cost in the figures for last year's accounts is excluded). This is because all but one of the speakers were local so travel expenses were £150 less. None of the speakers ask for a fee or accept the honorarium offered.

(iii)"Mountain Views" costs are less than last year because of reduced printing costs resulting from a smaller number of pages.

(iv)Our subscription to Scottish Environment LINK for their current year (2016/17) was due in mid June, but we have not received an invoice for it. We have asked them to send another one. Last year we paid subscriptions for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

(v)John Muir Trust did not request any donations this year but the Council has agreed to support the organisation in any future appeals they make regarding the Stronelaig wind farm.

(vi)Governance costs are the room hire charges for Council meetings, which were not claimed last year.

(vii)The publicity costs this year are for room hire at the Sportsmens Club and refreshments for an open evening. The cost of fliers has been included in stationery, telephone and postage.

(viii)Last year's deficit of £10 has been converted to a surplus of £1016 mainly because of lower lecture costs referred to above. There were also reductions in donations made and in "Mountain Views" printing costs and there was no subscription to Scottish Environment LINK. This subscription and one for the year to 30th Sept 2017 will appear in the accounts for 2016/17, but will be offset by a Gift Aid repayment from HMRC which has been claimed but not yet received.

(ix)In spite of gloomy predictions last year, the Trust's finances are adequate to cover current routine expenditure. Nevertheless it should be noted that we alternate between a deficit and a surplus each year and although our bank balance would cover about 4 years' expenditure, there may not be as much leeway as we might like for exceptional items of expenditure. Our lecture speakers are very generous of their time and are not paid a fee, neither is our accounts examiner. Postage costs per item continue to increase. The Trust may need to consider raising subscriptions and lecture entry fees and to change some of its operational procedures once the changes resulting from the new bank account the Trust as a SCIO has had to open have been made.