In the light of the recent announcement by the Scottish Government and the launch of the new document ‘Covid 19: Scotland’s Strategic Framework’ we want to update members on the work Mountaineering Scotland has been leading on your behalf over the last few weeks.

In response to the change in approach from the Scottish Government and in advance of the restrictions in the Central Belt over the last few weeks, we wrote to the First Minister, copied to the Chief Executive of Public Health Scotland and the Minister for Health Wellbeing and Sport on the 21st of September, to make our case for avoiding a return to travel restrictions, and are awaiting a response.

In that letter we highlighted the relatively low risk of transmission when outdoors, and set out our concerns about any travel restrictions that would impact on the ability of people to exercise their right of responsible access to the hills. We stressed the important contribution outdoor recreation makes to the physical and mental health of people across Scotland at this difficult time. The letter was shared on social media and was published on the Mountaineering Scotland website here: [https://www.mountaineering.scot/news/access-to-hills-remains-despite-new-covid-restrictions](https://u1573856.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=HG7PfRXY5z7c30PRqA4qtBw6WMQJONf9FhxSBCpJWUXsbrDQEoxDtCi4no35-2FhlWtuBxQt7Vqi-2Fg5DmgPPGawt5mgueUwhKAEXIzJ3fx2uW6EP-2Bw3Gp3Q2BPHEjip4pjo3NqEvTXUyEhu1zBTztmKA-3D-3DOIqo_G3-2BER2LzYkfGHpV0MZ1CeZN-2FiKusirP75a-2FvojK1io1nkkGOUTHoDKij5Xg1HYMNIoSjIwUBSEboll3lYEnZ8ZzU-2BIgZDz4niGaBfN2wKc8BprT-2BHly69NDvOuRq1hIOnLGptWvJOwR4K0zrRtafqxTJxMjz5P5MoNCBiyTj-2FB4EYmcCZm-2FG-2FvGBcqgDhV4ecFtkxK1P8BzFFudZGAiyIIC4QVhh-2F7VsahjOwtkUqmrUkOeLpkB4-2BE2UWgxzz-2FiLg0Um5mTFykXZQurgy9goX85ItJ6SuFxA3Okq8n1wFdMwm3jl59y00mOw0TeEFEx2)

On the 1st of October we wrote to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills in support of the #SaveYourOutdoorCentres Campaign. We were delighted to get the backing of organisations from across the outdoor sports sector who co-signed the letter, identifying the important role residential outdoor education has in providing important life and learning opportunities for children and young people across Scotland.

We were pleased to learn that last week the Scottish Government announced a £2 million support package. Although this is not the £3million needed, it is a significant step forward. The campaign goes on and if you have not yet signed the petition we would encourage you to do so. It can be signed here: [www.change.org/p/scottish-government-save-scottish-outdoor-centres](https://u1573856.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=Xb6vn3Ez2th8b9FEjmMdeTCAOK6yL-2FFrfnlrgIjEPQQCqnAWoH3XAcaiJ0aJrmqPugZCb0ox-2Fw1nsdoSM1mmNtFl90lIL-2FrvzwQj6yG2eQAuHinmq3W-2FIKJ-2FiuXitpzQj2zd_G3-2BER2LzYkfGHpV0MZ1CeZN-2FiKusirP75a-2FvojK1io1nkkGOUTHoDKij5Xg1HYMNIoSjIwUBSEboll3lYEnZ8TPOviJTOc1MVJmT52L-2BuhKyQouQLoT2IjJFBFt3bxYSCuDjsGHRgIzaa5iCoPYswAHX0ZiRehc3n2Aen8ovHSNX-2F6VG8zuXj2-2FzoZ8siEEGyO2dDIefhDcEwohEf011eSyrf0Aw-2FbWbyA6oli-2FgWiJy44vn1aZHp3O-2FAqdGwGML2yH-2F-2BwMDXDgqoB1flnFeQARtTm9zXcgPFdD8D14adB5Ga5R4gtH4L8wxfApZAGv7) . The news article and copy of the letter can be found here: [https://www.mountaineering.scot/news/support-for-threatened-outdoor-centres](https://u1573856.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=HG7PfRXY5z7c30PRqA4qtBw6WMQJONf9FhxSBCpJWUV6eKiIyDGmc-2FmYdJqeHTvsZRG0-2FlU59Z3JaDAiUNjoN40W6RJQEQX49-2F1NrdaY1P-2F31PnxFloZzjb82b0sPdrLrMq2_G3-2BER2LzYkfGHpV0MZ1CeZN-2FiKusirP75a-2FvojK1io1nkkGOUTHoDKij5Xg1HYMNIoSjIwUBSEboll3lYEnZ8anyn5KnJGI-2BrBW-2Fmk3T2Z0oiSwCRfjhKJddtOB9LaTEOde2exC9Yw8hH227w4btkrrU-2FByTmistFwkVl6ReXvLKPzZra8XBQLJr-2FL0RPvV3Ke29BBFv8AFMJqsa64EVQJETzajm7IEh2rw-2Bs7ntABm7MQ3-2F2DvWXfseuri7omMj9a2CcOJH-2BrXQ3m65Nje1Nb7n4GlnxV1I1VeLrFWqnSvr7oQPF1fGIeBEhqpHj4p2)

Last week we also received a draft copy of an important research report into Covid-19 and Mountain Sports. An international team of researchers and mountaineers from Europe and North America, including three Mountaineering Scotland members, has conducted a detailed study into the impact of the virus on outdoor mountain sports.

This report (although still to be peer reviewed) confirms many of the risk areas we have already identified in our guidance and, importantly, the relatively low risk overall of transmission when participating in mountain sports. As well as sharing this on our website, we shared the full report with senior management in sportscotland and the Active Scotland Division of Government last Wednesday. It is available along with a summary paper here: [https://www.mountaineering.scot/news/covid-19-and-mountaineering](https://u1573856.ct.sendgrid.net/ls/click?upn=HG7PfRXY5z7c30PRqA4qtBw6WMQJONf9FhxSBCpJWUXv0I2iLHbCR8y1t8pNzC8pGDjvBNXeGmqqn6wgiwAdGOzAcZE-2B4XgLGc3DvADxoxk-3DBhP__G3-2BER2LzYkfGHpV0MZ1CeZN-2FiKusirP75a-2FvojK1io1nkkGOUTHoDKij5Xg1HYMNIoSjIwUBSEboll3lYEnZ8c6A5pBNvDbeEFZw2GSDCvm49Mwt5O3ZlG-2Bu3wKqSZOwbyALsa5LjDwfDk4Oa0NjhO4U5YQrcgycfy41yoeRJOuQuLcxA6Rzqdf9QiuQaVmdSnyoNHe8fRu-2F0qdDGLiL8qbqHZWKATJrxzF9volHY5wVgcdNYJsGsr8y4FmKZssSCxCsg9GGc1c-2B0RxaDePtaHn7BlcFWUPvTGPmYVE9BIfwtZ05Lt8ZRXEDwg9biG6A)

Since the announcement of the new tiered system on Friday the 23rd October Mountaineering Scotland has reviewed the document and submitted feedback to Scottish Government via sportscotland. We have broadly welcomed the approach if it is evidence led and based on the need to reduce risk of further transmission of Covid-19.

We were encouraged by a key statement on page 33 which reads: "We will support people to stay safe outdoors, continuing to support outdoor activity that is safe." We also welcome recognition of the need to "support broader health and wellbeing".

In response to the statement that any restrictions will be evidence based, we have drawn attention to the draft paper on Covid-19 and Mountain Sports detailed above.

The part of the document of most concern to Mountaineering Scotland relates to travel, where it says there will be advice to "avoid unnecessary travel to or from Level 3 or Level 4 areas in Scotland," with an additional statement for Level 4 that it may be necessary to limit the distance people should travel. Later in the paragraph, however, there is mention of exceptions including "outdoor exercise" and we are seeking clarification on whether this includes travel for outdoor recreation. As well as asking that the Scottish Government make exceptions to travel restrictions to include outdoor activities, we have also asked for exceptions to allow our young climbers to travel to specialist sporting facilities for training.

With improved knowledge about Covid- 19 since the lockdown restrictions earlier in the year, the case we are putting forward on your behalf is for the continuation of mountaineering activity on the basis of the benefits it provides in health and wellbeing and the relatively low risk of transmission outdoors. If the tiered approach proposed by government is to include travel restrictions, we do not think these can be justified if they restrict hillwalking and climbing activity, except in the most exceptional circumstances.

We hope you find this update helpful and should you have any questions or comments please feel free to get in touch by emailing [info@mountaineering.scot](mailto:info@mountaineering.scot).

In the meantime we will update the advice on our website when the protection levels and arrangements for travel, sports and leisure activities are confirmed.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Stuart Younie, Chief Executive Officer**

**Brian Shackleton, President**