



LEARN. LEAD. INSPIRE.

Strategic development plan
2026-2030



**Mountain
Training**
England





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AN INTRODUCTION

We are the national training and awarding body for walking, climbing and mountaineering in England. In this document we lay out our vision and strategic plans for the period of 2026 to 2030.



LEARN, LEAD AND INSPIRE

OUR VISION

A diverse and active outdoor society, supported by inspirational leaders, instructors and coaches.

OUR MISSION

To inspire, enable and develop people in walking, climbing and mountaineering through the provision of nationally recognised skills training and leadership courses.

OUR ETHOS | WE BELIEVE IN

The power of inspiration - leading others to develop their confidence and skill.

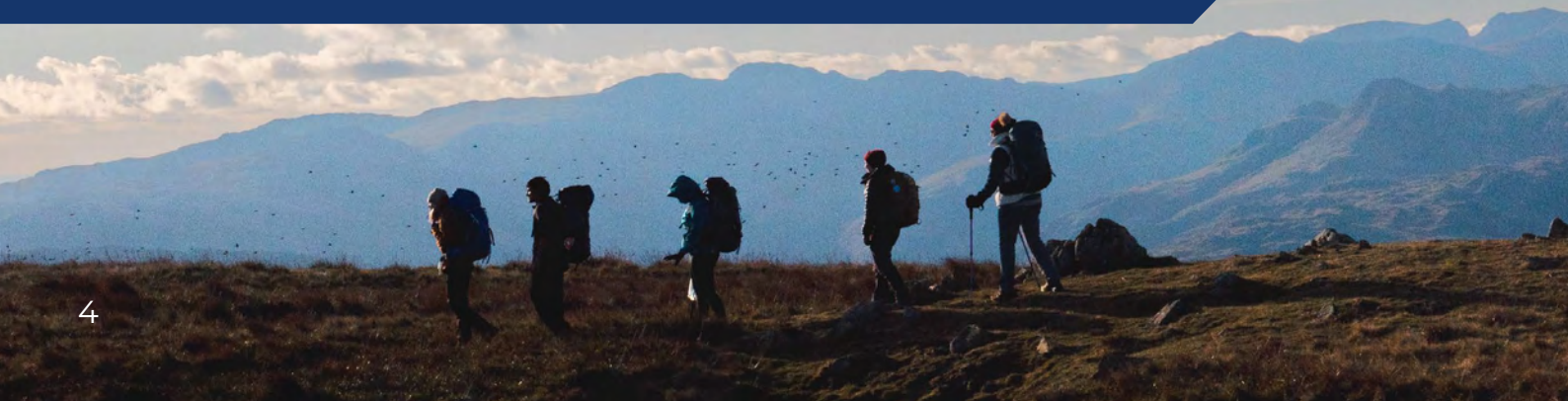
Safe practice- promoting good practice through training to reduce incidents.

Quality training - delivering consistent, quality assured courses.

Self-reliance and sustainability - developing independent participants who access the outdoors sustainably.

Inclusion - supporting access to our activities and developing leadership skills for all.

Transformational leadership - making decisions, but also supporting individuals to lead.

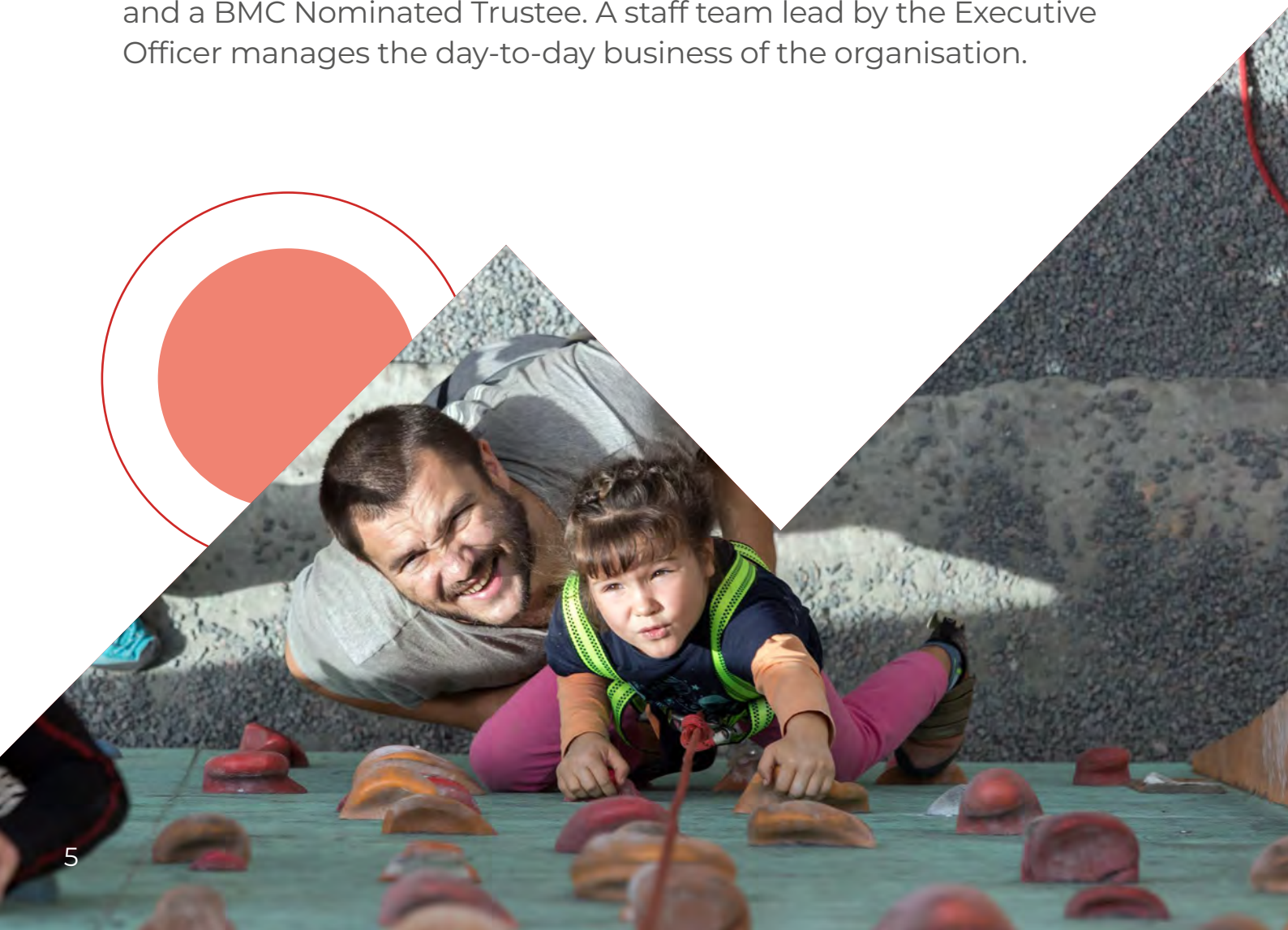
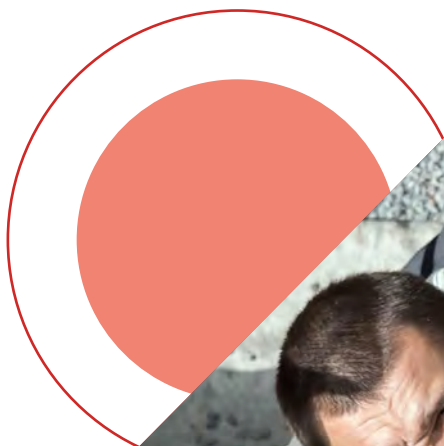


AN INTRODUCTION

WHO WE ARE

In 1964 The Mountain Leader Training Board (MLTB) was set up by the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and the Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) to provide nationally recognised schemes of training and assessment for leaders of groups participating in mountaineering, hill walking and rock climbing. In 2003 the name of the organisation was changed to Mountain Leader Training England (MLTE) and in 2012 the name became Mountain Training England.

Mountain Training England (MTE) is owned and directed by its Council of Members who are drawn from a wide range of stakeholder organisations based in England (see appendix 4). A Board of Trustees is charged with the strategic management of MTE by the Members. The Board comprises a group of volunteer Non-Executive Trustees and a BMC Nominated Trustee. A staff team lead by the Executive Officer manages the day-to-day business of the organisation.



AN INTRODUCTION

WHAT WE DO

We currently train and accredit leaders and coaches through ten qualification schemes:

- Camping Leader (CL)
- Lowland Leader (LL)
- Hill and Moorland Leader (HML)
- Mountain Leader (ML)
- Rock Climbing Instructor (RCI)
- Rock Climbing Development Instructor (RCDI)
- Indoor Climbing Assistant (ICA)
- Bouldering Wall Instructor (BWI)
- Climbing Wall Instructor (CWI)
- Climbing Wall Development Instructor (CWDI)

The schemes are recognised by the Department for Education and the Adventure Activity Licensing Authority and are regulated by Ofqual.

Currently the Board approves around 150 providers to deliver these schemes. Since 1964 MTE has registered over 216,000 candidates on all its schemes.



We also administer six skills training courses throughout England:

- Hill Skills
- Mountain Skills
- Rock skills – Introduction
- Rock Skills – Intermediate
- Rock Skills – Learn to Lead Sport
- Rock Skills – Learn to Lead Trad

In addition to administering these awards MTE also has the following roles:

- Close co-operation with Mountain Training UK&I and other Home Nation Training Boards
- Quality control and networking of approved providers
- Providing support for candidates undertaking the schemes
- Further developing qualification holders through the Mountain Training Association
- Providing advice and guidance outside Mountain Training's own formal awards structure
- Working closely with the BMC in matters relating to formal and informal mountain training
- Liaison with other organisations and community groups to further our aims and offer advice

AN INTRODUCTION

OUR PURPOSE

We enable people from all backgrounds to be active on the hills, crags and climbing walls of the UK.

We support and develop thousands of professional and voluntary leaders who introduce and inspire millions of participants to follow their own adventures with competence, confidence and respect for these challenging environments. This personal agency and direct connection with nature enhances the physical and mental well-being of the nation.



MOUNTAIN TRAINING UK&I AND JOINT PROJECTS

We work very closely with Mountain Training UK&I and the other national Mountain Training Organisations. These bodies promote themselves to the outside world under the single brand name 'Mountain Training'. The following strategies have been developed in co-ordination with them, and many of the projects will be shared with MTUK&I and other national Mountain Training Organisations.

MTE & THE BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

MTE and the BMC have a long-standing and close relationship. The BMC is our principle strategic partner and a founder stakeholder. We work closely to support the BMC's Moving Together strategy and are represented on their Members' Council.

CHALLENGES TO THE SECTOR

The adventure activity sector is a vibrant and growing community of diverse participants who pursue their own adventures at every age and at every level, often for a lifetime. However, such positivity has generated its own growing pains. Post-pandemic outdoor activity has surged in the UK, yet there is now much less access to genuine adventure education.

Many outdoor centres have closed and the nature of led youth activity has changed greatly throughout the sector, with more on-site activities and less developmental adventure on offer. The cost of living, transport costs, and curriculum pressure have also reduced the education sector's capacity to offer adventurous activities.

As the nature and demographics of participation in our adventurous activities are changing, the nature of leadership needs to adapt with it. Older leader centred cultures of leadership are transforming into more interactive, participant centred ways of working. New structures of participation have emerged with the rise of individual activity, and affinity-based community groups, often shaped by social media. These groups and individuals often bypass the traditional apprenticeship pathways of courses, clubs and mentors and seek a different relationship with their skills development.

MOUNTAIN TRAINING ENGLAND'S

FIFTEEN-YEAR PERFORMANCE

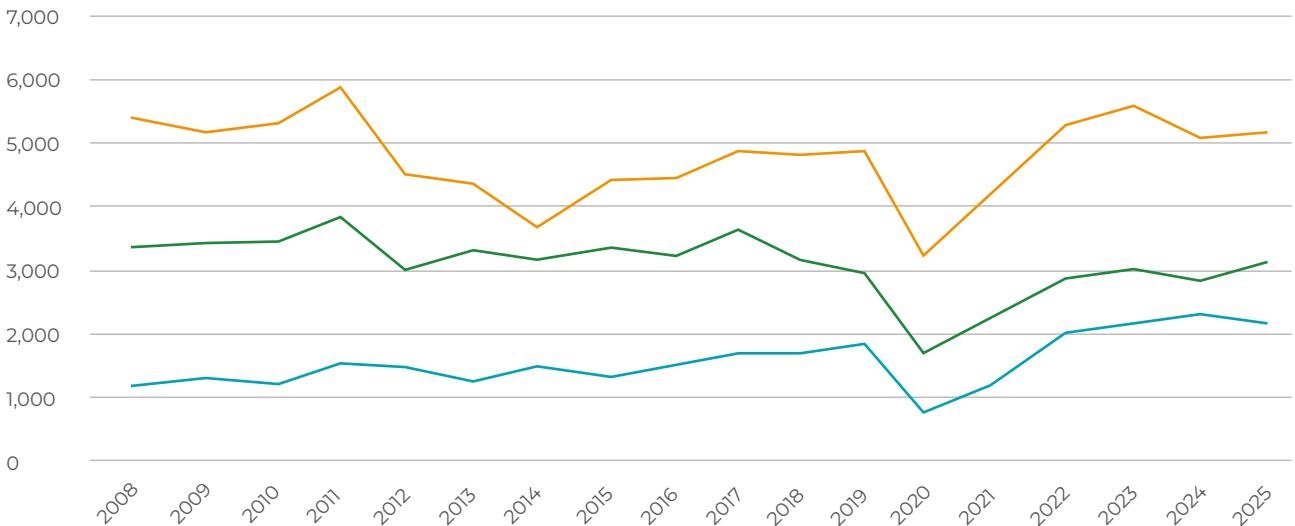
MTE's candidate registration numbers in 2025 are almost identical to fifteen years ago, but we now qualify around double the number of candidates than we did then. In addition, the profile of our candidates is now far more diverse.

We now administer ten qualification schemes to meet the needs of our candidates, whereas in 2008 we had only four. This has created more diverse qualified leaders who support the enormous range of participation in climbing, hillwalking and mountaineering.

These leaders are really needed. They provide the core mechanism of passing on skills and knowledge to new participants so that they can pursue their own adventures with confidence, competence, and respect for the environment.

MTE TOTAL QUALIFICATIONS

Registration Training Pass



THERE ARE FIVE KEY CHALLENGES THAT OUR STRATEGY WILL ADDRESS

Safety information is not reaching many newer outdoor users.

Declines in school and youth-group provision, combined with fragmented social media communication, reduce access to crucial good-practice guidance. The surge in post-pandemic outdoor recreation, driven by social media, has created year on year increases in Mountain Rescue call outs, with 18-24 year olds being the highest risk group. MTE needs to enhance its role to educate the public through effective partnerships with modern, influencing communications and digital resources.

Safeguarding gaps remain in clubs and among independent instructors and sole traders.

Recent revelations about endemic poor practice and safeguarding failures in sport coaching and leadership, as highlighted by the Whyte review, have challenged the entire sport and activity sector. A generational shift in coaching and leadership culture is required and our sector needs to prepare itself for the government's desire to introduce coach licensing.

The demographics of leadership do not fully reflect those of participation.

We are improving the diversity of our candidates. 37% of our qualifications are awarded to women (up from 23% in 2014), and 5.7% of our qualifications are awarded to people of colour (up from 3.7% in 2019). However, the demographics of the country, and our market, are changing. With 18% of the population of England and Wales being people of colour, and 24% of the population having a disability or long-term illness, we need to do more to increase outdoor leadership for all.

Outdoor youth progression (14–25) is a primary weakness.

Unlike other adventure sports, climbing and hillwalking lack a coordinated national pathway to help young people transition safely and sustainably from indoor to outdoor environments. We need to work with partners to signpost and scale up the delivery of our skills courses, especially for youth, by developing our delivery model to increase accessibility.

Our natural wild places are being degraded by human pressure and climate change.

We want to minimise the environmental impact of our activities by improving education and guidance to the public, and by modifying our own practices to reduce this impact and our own carbon footprint. We need to instil respect for the environment and the communities who share the precious outdoor resource that we so cherish.

2026-2030

OUR STRATEGY

Our strategy for 2026 to 2030 will address these challenges and opportunities. To do this we will prioritise five key areas.

**PROMOTING
SAFETY**

**EXPANDING
OUR AUDIENCE**

**IMPROVING
PATHWAYS**

**ENSURING
SUSTAINABLE
ACTIVITY**

**DELIVERING
QUALITY
SERVICE**

All of these areas need to be delivered to all, regardless of their background.



01. PROMOTING SAFETY AND QUALITY LEADERSHIP

Responding to the increase in Mountain Rescue call outs and safeguarding concerns in the sector. We will:

Support the England and Wales Mountain Safety Forum & AdventureSmart UK, with advice, messaging and funding.

These bodies research, develop and provide expert advice on mountain safety and have the strategies to reach audiences beyond Mountain Training's own sphere of influence. Thus, they help us to extend our charitable mission of public education.

Produce and promote sector guidance, in partnership with existing and new organisations.

We will work directly with sector partners and community organisations to provide guidance on good practice in safety, instruction and leadership for our activities. We aspire to be a trusted advisor for all organisations that deliver adventure activities.

Develop standards for deployment in consultation with the sector.

We will work with partners to establish sector recognised standards for instructing, coaching and leadership in our activities. We will establish a benchmark of quality that participants can expect to experience. This will be essential groundwork in order for our sector to respond to the government's desire to establish coach licensing.

Investigate coach licensing and safeguarding systems.

We will research and develop a coach licensing system with key partner organisations in order to make our sector more 'quality transparent' and engender more confidence amongst participants, parents and authorities. We will continue to develop a pro-active safeguarding culture that actively fosters safe and inclusive environments.

TARGETS FOR SUCCESS

- Support AdventureSmart UK with our funding contribution
- Develop guidance for local walk leader schemes
- Advance sector agreement on standards for deployment and publish recommendations
- Establish safeguarding training standards for all our candidates

02. IMPROVING SCHEME PATHWAYS



Designing frictionless routes for all, into, through and beyond our schemes. We will:

Review pathways into and through our schemes.

Methods of learning are changing with digital solutions, mentoring, online tutoring and modern teaching practice all developing.

We will develop more hybrid learning pathways along with smoother payment pathways.

Develop youth pathways into our qualification schemes.

We want to engage young people to explore and experience leadership from the age of 14 with existing qualifications and 'graduate pathways' with partners.

Support lapsed leaders back to confident activity.

There are many qualification holders who have left adventure leadership due to life changes, who are ready to return to this role with some help from us.

We will promote and provide update and refresher training for lapsed leaders and those who have not completed their qualification.

Conduct a review of our skills course delivery.

We aim to expand participation in skills courses by making them easier for a wider range of voluntary and commercial providers to deliver, while working with partners to promote them to broader audiences, increasing uptake among community groups, young people, and individuals.

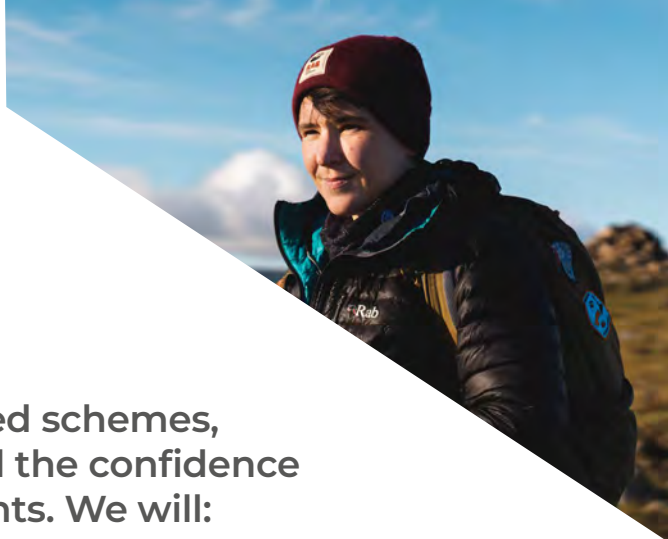
Improve support and guidance around disability access.

We will develop and publish guidance to improve access and the management of disabled and neurodivergent participants, train providers in inclusive delivery, and review our qualification schemes to improve accessibility while maintaining sector standards.

TARGETS FOR SUCCESS

- Increase overall registrations by 5%
- Increase leadership roles and accreditation for 14-17 olds
- Increase female qualification rate to 40% and people of colour to 8%
- Increase skills course attendance by 50%
- Publish guidance for leaders on working with disabled and neurodiverse participants

03. DELIVERING QUALITY SERVICE



Having high quality, consistently delivered schemes, that engender trust in our standards and the confidence to lead others in challenging environments. We will:

Focus provider training on inclusion, benchmarking, and assessment skills.

We will ensure our providers deliver our expected standards across all training and assessments.

Widen the demographic of our providers.

We will recruit talented providers from diverse backgrounds who can engage wider demographics, using policy, campaigns, training, mentoring, and partnerships to support this.

Maintain transparent, competent, representative governance.

Good governance underpins quality service; we will review policies against the Code for Sports Governance and recruit skilled, diverse trustees to represent participants and candidates.

Develop greater integration of our quality assurance systems with other Mountain Training organisations.

Delivering consistent standards across the whole Mountain Training network is the bedrock of our role as a national awarding body. We will continue to work with other MTOs to align and harmonise our quality standards.

Develop assessment standards guidance for candidates and assessors.

We will create clearer guidance on observable behaviours to help trainers, assessors, and candidates understand required standards, improving transparency in our holistic assessments.

TARGETS FOR SUCCESS

- Meet Tier 2a of the Code of Sports Governance with a minimum of three female trustees on the Board
- All MTE course directors having completed training on inclusion
- Female course directors to make up 30% of the provider workforce
- Publish guidance on standards required at assessment based on observable behaviours
- Increased number of course directors from diverse backgrounds

04. ENSURING SUSTAINABLE ACTIVITY



Securing our financial stability and the environmental sustainability of our activities. We will:

Review our relationships with the national MTOs and the BMC to develop a financially sustainable Mountain Training structure.

The Mountain Training network has a complex governance and business structure. We will seek synergies, structures and relationships within the network and with the BMC that will improve resource and governance efficiencies, to secure our future service to candidates.

Develop and monetise digital resources for our candidates and sector partners.

We will capitalise on our sector expertise to create digital resources that enhance our candidates' learning and that can generate income by marketing these to the wider sector.

Access grant funding and commercial partnerships to support EDI project work.

We will work to raise funds to help support those who find it harder to access our training schemes. We will work with partners to support EDI initiatives and their promotion amongst community groups.

Publish and implement an environmental sustainability policy for MTE.

We will develop policies to reduce our own carbon footprint and environmental impact. We will educate, promote and incentivise sustainable behaviours amongst our providers and candidates.

TARGETS FOR SUCCESS

- A stable and secure financial structure for the Mountain Training network
- Establish sustainable income for an EDI fund
- Build towards £50,000 income per annum from digital resources for the Mountain Training network
- Publish sustainability policy for MTE, providers and candidates

05. EXPANDING OUR AUDIENCE



Staying relevant through research, advocacy, and digital access. We will:

Conduct research on the current and future needs of the sector.

The nature and needs of our sector are constantly evolving. We will conduct research that examines these and explores new content, access and pedagogy to meet the demand.

Expand digital resources and hybrid delivery into our schemes.

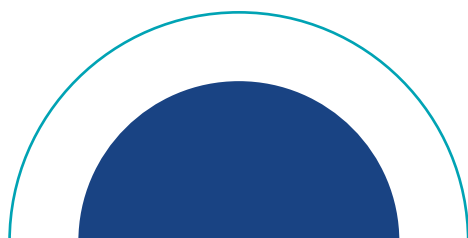
We will grow our audience by offering more online training and outreach, explaining our offer to the public. These can include initiatives to re-engage, update and upskill those who have left adventure leadership or engage those who are just beginning to contemplate it.

Promote and explain our impact on, and the importance of, adventure activity.

We will advocate for the personal benefits and economics of our activities on the health and welfare of the nation. We will explain to the public what our Board and Council do.

Promote the professionalism and value of our diverse qualified leaders.

We will make the case for national qualifications and champion the quality and impact of our leaders. We will promote our EDI mission, explaining why and how we intend to develop leadership talent from across the demographic spectrum.



TARGETS FOR SUCCESS

- Publish research on the adventure sector and its training and qualification needs
- Integrate digital modules into our training pathway.
- Publish and promote material on what we do and why we do it
- An increase in led activity – as measured by our MTA surveys

MULTIPLYING OUR IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS

MTE works with partner organisations in order to achieve its strategic aims. Our member organisations sit on our Council and advise us on our strategic work, helping us to ensure that our schemes are fit for purpose (See appendix 4).

Increasingly however, we also work at an operational level on joint projects with community partners. It is often more effective, cost efficient and mutually beneficial to work in this way. We pursue partnerships that increase our reach, broaden pathways into our schemes and further our educational aims.



Current partnerships include the following:

Sport England and BMC
Strategy development and funding for development projects.

Plas y Brenin
A key provider of our schemes, also delivering training for our providers.

National Trust
Training 100 walk leaders from ethnic minorities, through our schemes.

RNIB
Developing walking guide training for sight impaired hillwalkers.

Climb Out
Supporting the LGBT climbing festival with training courses.

Association of British Climbing Walls
Promoting the Bouldering Wall structure qualification.

NICAS
Developing graduate pathways for young people into our schemes.

Wanderers of Colour
Supporting people of colour access skills and qualifications.

Melanoma Fund
Promoting sun protection awareness for outdoor leaders.

Muslim Charities Forum
Advising on a ten-point charter for outdoor leaders.

AdventureSmart UK
Messaging to the public on mountain safety.

Climbing for All
Publishing guidance on managing inclusive climbing for people with disabilities.

Access Sport
Researching and delivering our disability and neurodiversity survey.

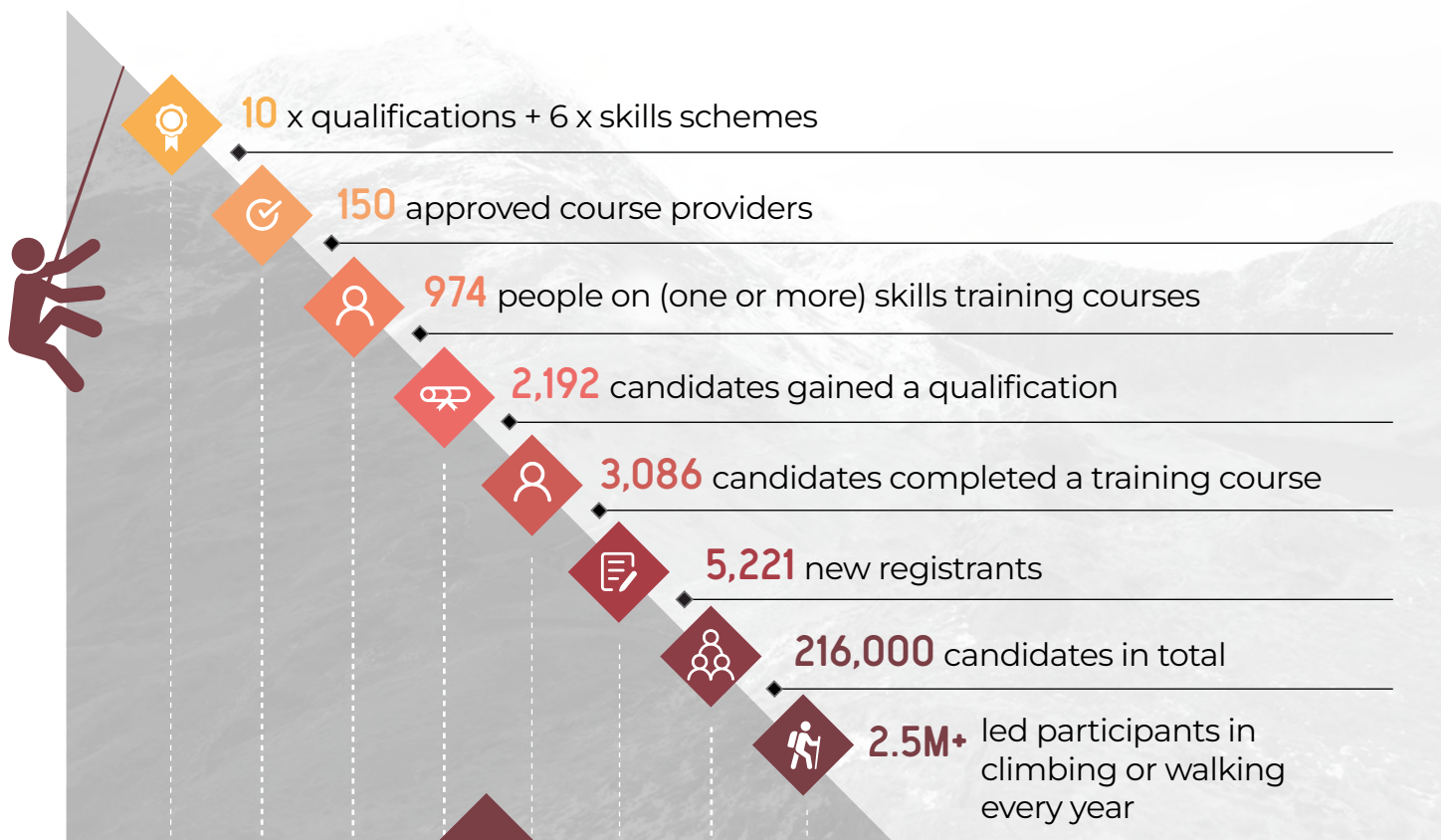
Ordnance Survey
Delivering provider training in GPS and navigation apps.

D of E
Promotion and development of our remote supervision course.



MOUNTAIN TRAINING ENGLAND'S REACH AND IMPACT

DIRECT IMPACT IN 2025



MTA membership now stands at 9,500 members, reporting an average of **267 participants per candidate** = at least **2,536,000 led participants** this year.

In 2025 386,000 participants regularly went climbing or bouldering and 3.9 million people were regular hill and mountain walkers.



REACH & IMPACT

WIDER IMPACT

Contributed to the new Countryside Code; published national guidance for bouldering; and qualification matrices for leaders and advisors, establishing more inclusive definitions of competency.



Through various roles in adventurous training, Mountain Training candidates have enabled 8,247 service personnel to take part in rock climbing courses and 11,500 in walking courses this year.

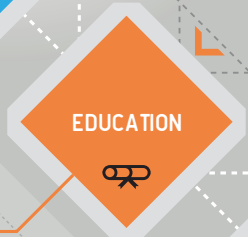


Co-authored manifesto on hillwalking with the BMC and Plas y Brenin for Sport England and worked with a wider range of strategic partners and projects than ever.

MTE has been represented at numerous events and conferences - and enabled many more, from the YHA festival of walking, to supporting the Ten Tors event. Our candidates will be involved in the staff training, sign-off, or direct delivery of almost every charity abseil and walking event in the country.



Not everyone in the outdoor sector is required to hold a Mountain Training qualification or attend training. But MTE provide a benchmark against which almost everyone in the sector is measured. Once again we have seen how our guidance, skills courses and expertise has enabled projects way beyond the mountains.



Capitalised on the growth in indoor climbing with new guidance (and qualifications underway) to ensure more inclusive Course Director requirements. Engaged with the voluntary sector and key ambassadors to reach urban communities.

Our Leader Responsibilities e-module and our guidance on remote supervision are applicable to all outdoor leaders.



Supporting diversity and sustainability, to ensure more people can enjoy the benefits of healthy outdoor activity, for many more years to come.

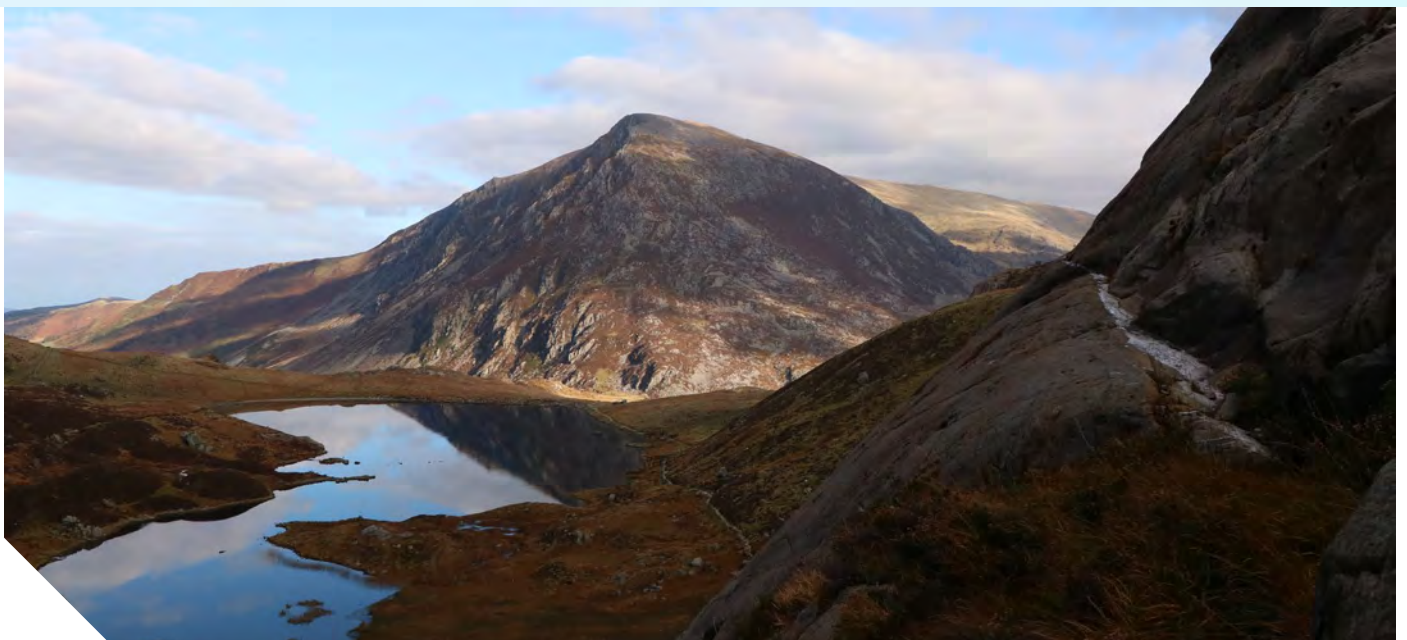
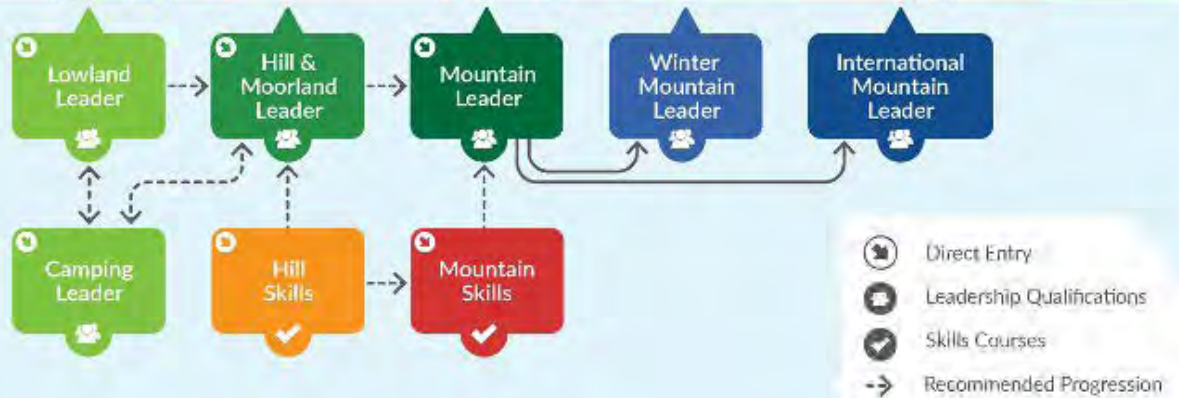


For further details see our full 2023 Impact Report by Martin Chester.

SCHEME PATHWAYS

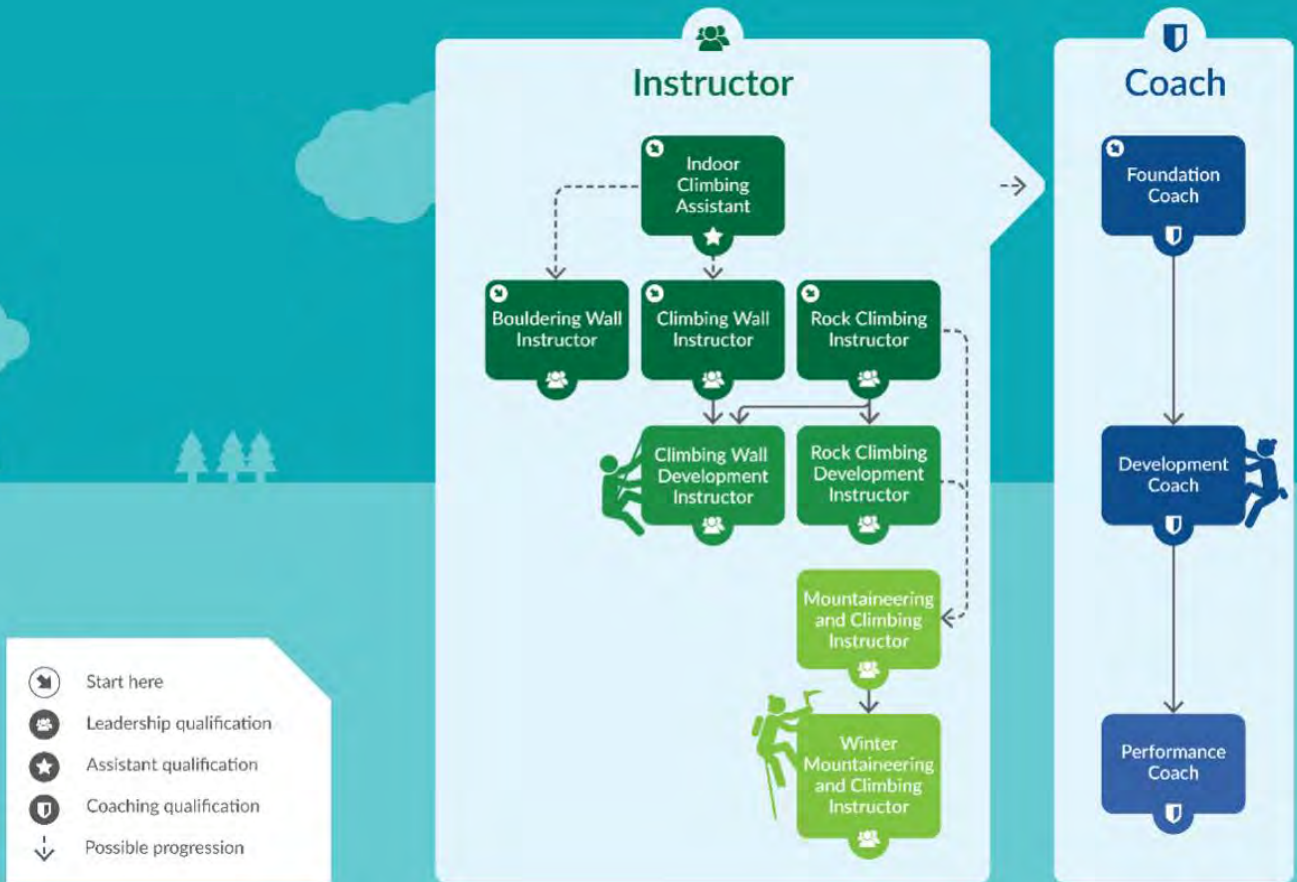


WALKING PATHWAY



APPENDIX 1

CLIMBING PATHWAY



APPENDIX 2

MOUNTAIN TRAINING ENGLAND'S EQUITY STRATEGY 2026-2030

This strategy sets out our commitment to creating a fair, welcoming and representative organisation and community.

The strategy, provides a clear framework for action, accountability and continuous improvement across everything we do.

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Building robust internal processes to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

- Improve data collection processes of participants & candidates, staff, SLT & boards to better understand baseline metrics and where work is required.
- Ensure internal policies, procedures and recruitment processes are equitable for all staff, candidates and providers to build a sense of belonging.
- Ensure EDI work aligns with wider strategy and organisational aims to maximise buy in from leadership, staff and partners.

ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS

Ensuring our courses, qualifications and communications are inclusive and accessible to a wide range of audiences.

- Demystifying pathways for new participants and support lapsed leaders by creating relevant and engaging digital resources.
- Analyse candidate data, survey results, stakeholder feedback and industry wide research to continually improve pathway accessibility.
- Build a sustainable youth leadership pipeline to strengthen engagement among young people.

- Encourage inclusive practice via provider and leader education and support, resource development and behavioural Codes of Conduct.
- Review skills course delivery to improve accessibility and enable a wider range of voluntary and commercial providers.
- Review pathway accessibility for individuals with a disability and/or neurodivergence and implement effective adjustments to reduce barriers to participation.



BROAD HORIZONS

Improving representation and diversity across candidates, providers, staff and decision making structures. We will use positive action to widen participation and ensure our community better reflects the diversity of the people we serve.

- Increase diversity across staff, board and council members by improving recruitment, selection and membership processes.
- Improve diversity across providers and course staff by promoting visible role models, improving access to clear delivery pathways, and supporting talent identification and community outreach.

- Improve diversity across our candidates, particularly in relation to People of Colour, disability and/or neurodivergence and gender equity.
- Develop & support accessible targeted projects, resources and funding to support under-represented groups access our pathways.
- Ensure representation of relatable role models by amplifying diverse voices and providing relevant, inspiring content for our audience.





MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

Actively listening to and working with our stakeholders to shape inclusive practice. By building strong relationships and creating opportunities for dialogue, we ensure diverse voices inform our decisions and direction.

- Work with a broad range of organisational partners including council members, funded partners and community organisers to achieve sector wide change.
- Improve mechanisms for community co-creation and feedback on proposed actions via paid consultancy, partnership projects and pilots.
- Develop relationships with community group leaders to maximise connections, reach new and diverse audiences, understand and respond to community needs and promote our mission.

APPENDIX 3

MTE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE - 2025

7%

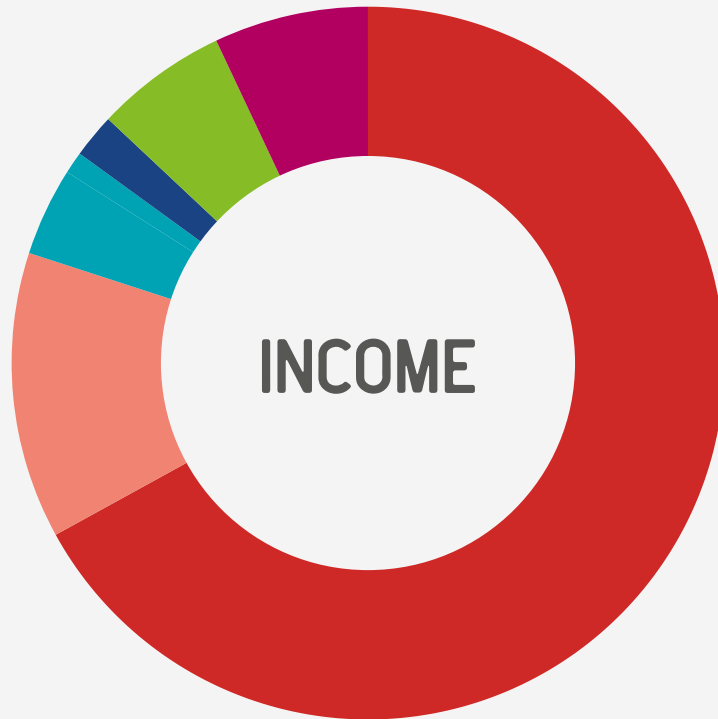
Sport England grant

5%

Provider & director fees

14%

Course place fees



2%

Other publications & exemptions

6%

Bank interest & investments

72%

Registrations

3%

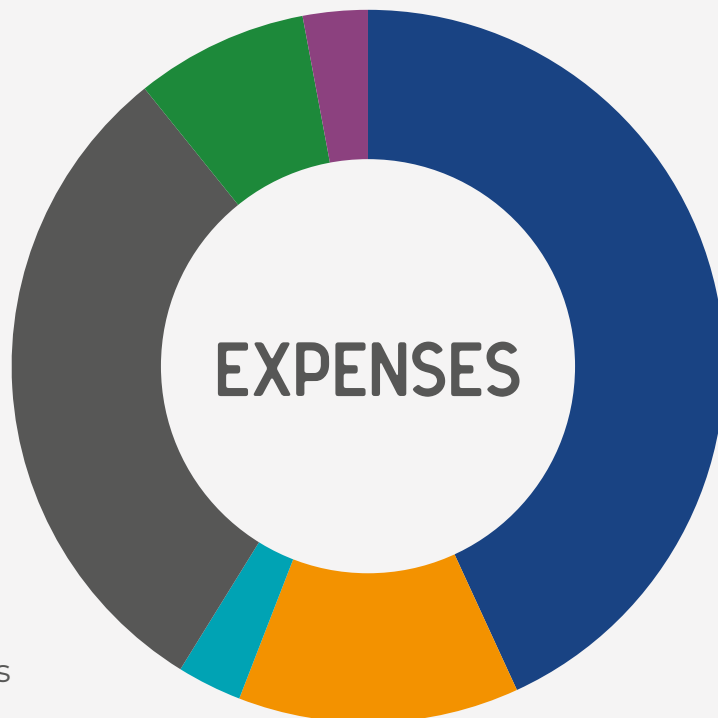
Banking fees & charges

8%

Sport England grant

29%

MTUKI levy, workshop & provider materials



44%

Staff costs

13%

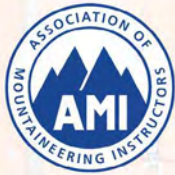
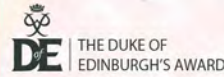
Office overheads

3%

Moderator & contractor expenses

APPENDIX 4

OUR COUNCIL MEMBERS





Mountain Training

England

Mountain Training England

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Get in touch with our team

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