

ScotWays

UPHOLDING PUBLIC ACCESS

ANNUAL REPORT AND MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER – AUTUMN 2025



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ScotWays is now on LinkedIn! Follow us for regular updates on public access in Scotland and help share our work with your wider network.



"The preservation, defence, restoration and acquisition, for the public benefit, of public rights of access in Scotland including public rights of way, and related amenity."

A manifesto that matters



PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD BARRON

SCOTWAYS is very pleased to be part of the Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance (SORA), a coalition of the main outdoor recreation organisations representing activities including walking, climbing, snow-sports touring, cycling, paddling and horse-riding, as well as our own remit for outdoor access in general.

SORA has recently produced a manifesto of proposals for the Scottish Parliament in 2026-31 to persuade prospective elected representatives of the importance of and widespread benefits from outdoor recreation. The proposed commitment, which parties are encouraged to include in their own manifestos, is an ambitious 'Paths into Nature' programme 2026-31, backed by a £50m Scottish Paths Fund, to improve the quality, accessibility and visibility of our paths in outdoor spaces.

SORA organisations clearly share many common interests but, naturally, have differing priorities, so the manifesto includes aspects for each. In addition to improved resourcing of public access, of particular interest to ScotWays and its own charitable objects are updating guidance to access authorities and for NatureScot to champion access.

We would like to see an urgent review of the guidance to access authorities on how to discharge their roles. The current

guidance dates from 2005, so it needs brought in line with legislation and the changing scale and nature of demand, along with the 20 years of practical experience gained. The updated guidance would then be a solid foundation for establishing what a core service looks like and the amount of funding needed to deliver the service.

NatureScot is the government agency with responsibility for outdoor access but its capacity to fulfil its role has been eroded. We would like to see NatureScot better enabled to reflect its role as our national access champion and leading the way in promoting access rights and responsibilities.

SORA's manifesto has been sent to political parties and is published online at scotways.com/sora-manifesto

SORA organisations are attending various party conferences to spread the word. Once you know who is standing in your constituency, we encourage you to contact your candidates to find out their response to these requests, and ask what they are going to do to support outdoor access.

Expect to read more about our SORA manifesto work in future editions of our e-newsletter, *Stravaig*. If you're interested in this area of our work but are not yet signed up, then please do so at scotways.com/sign-up-to-e-newsletter

Many hands make light work

Teamwork and dedication have combined to deliver two important projects that will make a real difference to walkers across Scotland

THIS year, the power of teamwork has been proven yet again with the near-completion of two very different projects:

- A modest grant of £2,000 from NatureScot contributed to the printing and distribution of 20,000 copies of our introductory leaflet '*Public Access – Know Your Rights*'. We set up a two-pronged distribution strategy: advertising the leaflets online for free orders via our website and asking volunteers to distribute them in person to any suitable venues. The in-person approach was by far the more effective and over the course of the year the leaflets have found their way to cafés, hostels, local groups, activity providers and even community information points in converted phone boxes! Many thanks indeed to all the volunteers who have helped in this effort.

- A short-term project over the summer involved volunteers checking through 180 routes described on the Heritage Paths part of our website, looking for errors and reviewing the survey reports from the overlapping *Scottish Hill Tracks* to see if any updates are needed. At the time of writing, three-quarters of the routes have been checked and staff are now starting to upload these corrections on the website. Particular thanks are due to Alan Wyllie, who completed the checks on an impressive 86 routes while recovering from an injury. By the time you receive this newsletter, the revamped Heritage Paths pages will be well worth a look. We've been particularly careful to make sure that links pointing to individual Heritage Path descriptions, for example, from local history groups' websites, continue to work despite the reorganisation of the site.

In the office, a few volunteers have been scanning and filing records about ScotWays-installed signs and filling in gaps in our records. Along with staff working through a backlog of signpost survey data, this is helping to lay the foundations for a final round of signpost surveying during 2026, which we hope will finally bring our Signpost Verification Project to a conclusion.

COMING UP...

Subject to the outcome of a funding application, we aim to start a two-year project to develop further the Heritage Paths in hilly parts of Scotland. This should include opportunities for volunteers to survey routes, research their history and install replacement and new signposts.

We have set up a new, secure digital photo library which should rationalise our photo collection, make it easier both to add and to organise new photos and, importantly, to find them for social media and newsletters. We are now interested in hearing from volunteers who want to help curate and maintain our photo library on a long-term basis, perhaps for a couple of hours a week.

Keen photographers can help us this winter. We are looking for great photos that include one of our signs and/or a path, especially a Heritage Path, for future Christmas cards and to help promote Heritage Paths and other areas of our work.

We'd love to have more photos of people having a great time in the outdoors, too, perhaps even looking towards the camera!



Harvie's Dyke: Glasgow's forgotten triumph

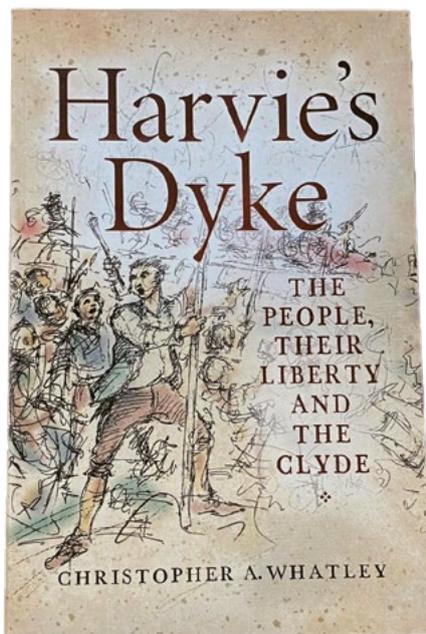
The 19th century story of a rich landowner, his stubborn attempts to prevent public access to a riverside path, and the ultimate victory of the people is an inspiration

ALTHOUGH the details of the dramatic events have long since faded from public memory, in the 1820s, a rich landowner's obstruction of a long-used route along the River Clyde was notorious.

Thomas Harvie, a distiller, had bought the Westthorn estate on the then outskirts of Glasgow but was far from happy at the weavers, miners and other members of the public using the riverside path which edged his land. He had walls constructed to block such public passage but the resulting furore triggered a campaign to reinstate access along the right of way. Direct action saw the dyke demolished, followed by the arrest and jailing of some of those involved, but it was immediately reinstated under armed guard.

The outrage at the landowner's actions fuelled public subscriptions – as well as collections held at the Glasgow Fair and elsewhere, there were songs written and fundraising events – and a boycott of his wares and establishments ensued. It took three years of legal work to gather the necessary evidence of public use but the right of way was successfully

vindicated in court. Harvie appealed the decision, thinking his wealth would override the capacity of his far poorer opponents to sustain their campaign. He was, however, again unsuccessful; his thrown refusal to acknowledge the public's right resulted in bankruptcy.



The once disputed right of way past Harvie's Dyke is now the subject of Professor Christopher A Whatley's book: *Harvie's Dyke: The People, their Liberty and the Clyde* (2025). In June 2025, Senior Access Officer Eleisha Fahy attended an online talk by Professor Whatley, co-hosted by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and the Royal Society of Edinburgh. She described it as a "captivating and well-illustrated account".

You can read more about her experience attending the talk on our website at www.scotways.com/harvies-dyke-glasgows-forgotten-triumph

ScotWays is delighted to announce that Professor Whatley will be speaking about this fascinating access case at our AGM on 22 November, prior to the formal business. Do join us to hear his tale. Copies of *Harvie's Dyke* will be for sale at the event. ISBN:978 0 85976 730 9.



More route surveying is on the way

DURING the summer, the ScotWays Board agreed an outline plan with key staff members to set up a rolling programme of route surveys, undertaken by volunteers, which will ensure that every route recorded in the Catalogue of Rights of Way (CROW) is surveyed every 10 years.

The aim is for this to be an indefinite rolling programme, which will improve and maintain the quality and reliability of the information in CROW. Implementing the programme will require a substantial increase in our capacity to coordinate surveys and, more importantly, to record fully the resulting information. Over the remainder of our current financial year, staff will improve internal processes and systems, develop surveying guidances, organise trial surveys of a modest number of routes and devise a structured plan for the programme.

When we launch the surveying programme in full, hopefully during spring/summer 2026, we will need a lot of assistance from existing and new volunteers to visit routes and report back. Much more detail about this should be included in our next newsletter.



Early days on The Way!

In our spring newsletter, we considered the origins of the West Highland Way, which opened in September 1980. Katharine Taylor looks at the experience of walkers on the route in the early years, compared with more recent adventures

In June 1987, my cousin Eric Johnston and his wife Joan walked The Way, and Joan kept a detailed diary of their trip. They drove from Aberdeen, left their car in Fort William and took the train to Glasgow before beginning their walk. They travelled light, with one change of clothes, and their rucksacks weighing only 12 to 14lbs (5.5 to 6.4kg).

Eric was a D-Day veteran, a mountaineer, hillwalker, skier and mountain rescue team member, and they were both members of the Cairngorm Club. Although of retirement age, Eric did several additional detours up nearby hills at the end of walking days! However, Joan developed a painful ankle which meant they had to extend their planned seven-day walk to eight days.

There were quite a few days of rain that week and there are many references in Joan's account of wet, boggy and very muddy sections of path, especially along Glen Falloch where the 'path' had been newly bulldozed!

They "chummed up" with several other walkers and shared meals, drinks and chat in the evenings. Several had set off carrying camping gear but found the load or the midges too much. It seemed to be relatively easy for all to find accommodation at short notice. Joan and Eric, pictured inset, managed to make a last-minute booking at the King's House in Glencoe and move their booking at Kinlochleven back a night, something that would be unlikely today given the pressure on accommodation.

The stretch along Loch Lomond north from Inversnaid does not seem to have changed much, being described by Joan as "rough and strenuous". She wrote: "The path was all the guidebook said, lots of ups and down, climbing over rocks, through plenty of streams and thick mud, sliding down the bank holding on to convenient branches, worn smooth by hundreds of hands doing the same thing." Her description of the Drover's Arms at Inverarnan sounds familiar too: "Full of character... stags heads, stuffed birds, animals and fish everywhere... dark tartan carpets... festooned with cobwebs."

By contrast, the Inveroran Hotel (two-and-a-half miles north of Bridge of Orchy) had recently been modernised and had "electronic flushing systems" (sounds like early 'macerating' toilets). In Kinlochleven, the aluminium factory was still operating, although the number of workers had been reduced as it became more mechanised. But "it was obviously still the hub of life there. They still had a hooter warning the workers of the times to get going for work, lunch breaks, etc." (The plant closed in 2000.)

On the last evening of the trip, the walkers met in the bar. Joan recorded that they had watched "the last programme of Jimmy McGregor 'walking' the final part of the West Highland Way, but it didn't bear much resemblance to what we had seen and done". She added: "At least we hadn't had so much rain. The locals were very scathing about McGregor and weren't at all pleased with his description of their village."

Joan concluded that The Way was far better than they had expected, though they would have enjoyed it even more with better weather. There were fewer people on the the walk than they expected – on days one and eight, only one person



PHOTOGRAPH: KATHARINE TAYLOR

passed them; the best parts were the sections that used the old military roads, while the worst walking was Inversnaid to the north end of Loch Lomond and through Glen Falloch. They also found the guidebook "muddling" as it combined descriptions of path with the history of the areas passed through and they thought it underestimated the mileage in some places. There were two guidebooks published when the route opened and which guidebook Joan and Eric were using is lost to history.

From those early days, The Way continues to attract generations of walkers. I walked it in 2014 with a group of friends – some of Joan's descriptions still rang true, although the condition of the path seems to have improved, apart from that section along the north end of Loch Lomond! We did not travel light and availed ourselves of a luggage transfer service, a luxury that did not appear to exist in 1987.

In August 2020, Joan and Eric's granddaughters, Lynsey and Fiona Morgan, walked The Way in an impressive five days. Fiona wrote up a humorous account of their journey. In some ways their experience was different from that of their grandparents' 33 years before – luggage transfer was used, there were many people walking the route, highly competitive card games replaced chat in the evenings and it was a "cruel blow" to find that the original finish point had been moved to the 'Sair Feet' statue at the end of Fort William High Street. But there are some similarities. Fiona's Garmin showed that the guidebook "lied" about the mileages in some sections, the path along Loch Lomond was "hideous", The Drover's Inn an "experience" and in Glen Falloch there was still "a stretch of very muddy uphill path".

On one day, the Morgan duo also walked 21 miles from Bridge of Orchy to Kinlochleven through rain that started as "relentless" and became "torrential". Their grandparents would have been proud! After a tough five days, they felt that "the journey back was very surreal, but the sense of achievement was real"

Generations of walkers have a lot to thank Tom Hunter for. Do you have any memories of walking the West Highland Way that you would like to share?

We are confident there are no 'lies' in our route guide, *Scottish Hill Tracks*, which was carefully researched by our volunteers! Available from ScotWays at a discount price to members.





Report of the Directors for the year ended 30 June 2025

THE Directors present their report and the accounts for the year ended 30 June 2025. The financial statements comply with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended), the Companies Act 2006, the Articles of Association, and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

OBJECTIVES

The charitable objective of the Society is “the preservation, defence, restoration and acquisition, for the public benefit, of public rights of access in Scotland, including public rights of way and related amenity”. The Society is the independent charity which upholds public access in Scotland. Originally founded in 1845, then incorporating in 1946, it combines the three main roles: expert authority and adviser on the law of access; custodian and manager of the national resource of information about access routes and rights; and practical guardian and advocate of public access on the ground, in town and country, across Scotland.

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Financial year July 2024 to June 2025 was a year of transition and the Directors are happy to report that we have progressed many of our objectives for the year. Our finances are healthier, we are strengthening our systems and processes and we continue to defend access rights and provide a valued enquiries service to solicitors as well as advice on access issues to landowners and the general public.

PUBLICATIONS AND PUBLICITY

The year got off to a great start with the launch of the sixth

edition of *Scottish Hill Tracks* in autumn 2024. The book has been a huge success, with sales exceeding our expectations to such an extent that a second print run was necessary after only a few months. The book was favourably reviewed in the media and well received by users. Highlights were director Tim Simons being interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland’s *Out of Doors* and having a well-attended public discussion with broadcaster and writer Paul Murton, who wrote the foreword for the book, at the Fort William Mountain Film Festival in February. In addition, an article featuring the book appeared in *National Geographic* in June 2025. We also had a stall at the Dundee Mountain Film Festival in autumn 2024, while BBC Radio Scotland broadcast a walk over Elsick Mounth with one of our volunteers, hopefully one of a series.

During the spring we recruited Finley Jackson as Administration and Communications Assistant to take on tasks previously done by other members of staff, freeing them to spend more time on access, signage and development issues. This appointment has also enabled us to increase our activity on social media to engage with new and younger audiences. We opened a new Instagram account, initially to promote *Scottish Hill Tracks* and, along with many other organisations, have moved from X (previously Twitter) to Bluesky.

DATA MANAGEMENT

Work has continued to reorganise our data according to our Records Management Plan. At the beginning of the year, we designed a File Plan to lead the restructuring of our digital records into organised functions-based folders relating to the various areas of our work. Work is still ongoing to migrate our files into designated storage areas but, once completed, this will increase our resilience for the future.

Continued overleaf

Continued from previous

We have initiated a 10-year rolling programme to update the records in the Catalogue of Rights of Way (CROW). The quality and accessibility of the information on CROW is crucial as it allows us to answer access queries efficiently and accurately and thus defend public access rights.

Unfortunately, the work to make the web-based Countryside Access Management System (CAMS Pro) operational is still not complete. This means that we have not yet been able to ask volunteers to submit survey information directly to CROW.

ENQUIRIES SERVICE

The access team has been busier than ever this year. The monthly average number of search requests has been more than 20% higher than in 2023/24. This was during a year which had the upheaval of staff changes: we were sad to bid farewell to Lynda Grant, who retired after being a valued member of the access team for more than 11 years. We wish her a long and happy retirement. In her place we have been pleased to welcome Johanna Babbs, who has settled in well to the team.

Our aim is to respond to at least 80% of the enquiries from solicitors within 10 working days. The changeover in staff in February coincided with an exceptionally busy period and the rate for solicitor enquiries dipped to 77% in the final six months of the year but has since recovered. We are working towards better measurement of enquiries from the general public, with a view to responding to 80% of these enquiries within 15 working days.

DEFENDING ACCESS RIGHTS

ScotWays has continued engagement with Network Rail on the issue of the closure of the level crossing at Dalwhinnie, working with our partners The Highland Council, Cairngorms National Park and other outdoor organisations.

Discussions are also under way on the protection of other level crossings, including those with Core Path designation. We cross-referenced a list of private level crossings in Scotland with records of rights of way and core paths. We also compared information on core paths and level crossings from the Scottish Government and the access authorities, and identified discrepancies.

Unfortunately, the positive progress on railway matters reported at last year's AGM stalled for several months shortly afterwards, during which much time and energy was expended exploring potential alternative methods to resolve the difficulties. In June, however, we received the welcome news that the National Access Forum's level crossings working group would be reconvening. Despite its unexpected hiatus, we have been pleased to participate actively in this working group, which has improved communication between Network Rail and the public access sector. We will continue this work to ensure that the general public can safely use level crossings on established routes in a responsible and appropriately managed way.

While railway matters remain the most time-consuming of access issues, some other cases are particularly worthy of mention here. ScotWays has continued its engagement in the lengthy Radical Road saga, with Director participation both in the Historic Environment Scotland working group and attendance at wider Holyrood Park public meetings. From this, we had understood that at least partial reopening of the Radical Road would take place in 2025 but, regrettably, this has been pushed back into 2026. Staying with HES, we

remain watchful over potential proposals to change public access at Calanais Standing Stones. We commented earlier in the year on two planning applications relating to the extension of quarrying activity at Ravelrig Quarry in west Edinburgh.

In the Borders, Center Parcs has been advancing plans to open its first Scottish 'holiday village'. In light of the high-profile nature of the proposed development, and the potential for unwelcome precedents to be set, ScotWays arranged to meet Center Parcs representatives to ensure that Scottish access rights were properly taken into account. A planning application was submitted during the summer but it is the prospect of by-laws under Section 12 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 that are the greatest cause for concern. We anticipate being consulted on the latter in the autumn.

We collaborate with colleagues both at the National Access Forum (NAF) and via the Scottish Outdoor Recreation Alliance (SORA) on progressing issues of national relevance. Individually, several of our staff team are also members of the Scottish Outdoor Access Network (SOAN).

Over the past year, our Enquiries Team has responded to numerous consultations from the Scottish Government on a range of major proposed renewable energy developments that have the potential to affect access rights and the amenity of access users, including many proposed wind farms across the country, from Sutherland to the Borders.

The team has also commented on various planning applications, including Ravelrig Quarry, near Balerno and large residential developments at Cardross and Hermiston, Gogar Station Road, on the outskirts of Edinburgh.

We provided general advice to a number of local authorities on stopping up and diversion orders made under the town and country planning acts. We also responded to consultations for the new Local Development Plans from various access authorities. We highlighted the need for improved outdoor access provision and active travel inter-connectivity within and between settlements, to help achieve the Scottish Government's concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods. Finally, the team responded to consultations on the proposal for a third national park in Dumfries and Galloway. All in all, it has been a busy and hectic year for this area of work.

SIGNS AND BRIDGES

Our signpost repair and replacement programme aimed to replace 38 ScotWays signs that needed repair over the year, as well as carrying out further minor repairs. In total we replaced 41 signs that were in need of repair or missing and we completed a further 47 minor repairs.

During the spring we launched our *Support a Sign* scheme, which invites people to donate to repair or replace a specific sign, as advertised on our website. There has been a good take-up already, with nine donations received by the end of June. Four of the repairs were completed by August and the other five are in progress.

VOLUNTEERS

We rely on our Scotland-wide network of dedicated volunteers to carry out the majority of the signpost repairs noted above. Volunteers also continued to assist with checking the condition of signposts and surveying routes, when specific needs arose. More than 20 volunteers have assisted with distribution of our updated *Brief Guide to Public Access*, six volunteers have been helping regularly at the office with projects to consolidate and assist access to our records

and several have been volunteering from home, checking for updates and corrections needed to the Heritage Paths section of our website.

Many volunteers have assisted with communications activity by, for example, providing photos and stories for inclusion on social media and assisting with our stalls at the Dundee and Fort William Mountain Festivals. Two organised local launch events for the new edition of Scottish Hill Tracks. Particular thanks are due to those volunteers who represent ScotWays on Local Access Forums around Scotland.

FUNDRAISING

As part of our fundraising efforts, we made a successful grant application to the Scottish Mountaineering Trust for the first phase of a two-stage project to improve the Heritage Paths section of the website. After the functioning of the website has been improved, we intend to apply for further funding for a second phase of the project, to update the information on Heritage Paths over the next two years, using consistent methodology.

We also received a small grant from NatureScot to expand the print run of a new edition of our *Brief Guide to Public Access in Scotland* as part of activities to mark the 20th anniversary of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC). Volunteers have been distributing 20,000 copies of the leaflet to outlets across Scotland.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Over the year, work has been under way to strengthen our operational practices and resilience. The Board reviewed and updated our Strategic Framework, which now runs from 2025-28; introduced an Activity Tracker that enables staff and Directors to plan projects and better monitor progress; reviewed our banking and investment arrangements; and revised the Role Description for Directors and developed a Role Description for the Chair. As an organisation, we are also updating our processes and policies to ensure that they reflect current legislation and new working practices.

FINANCES

We are very happy to report that we recorded a profit this year, which is a great achievement and testament to the hard work of the whole team. After a difficult start to the financial year, a record number of search requests from solicitors in 2025 boosted our income to the extent that we very nearly broke even operationally. A couple of substantial legacies and a significant donation on top of that meant we ended the year in profit for the first time since 2020-21. Further information is given in the Financial Review in these pages.

Finally, 3 April 2025 was the 180th anniversary of the founding of ScotWays! We celebrated in a small way, with a series of social media posts giving historical information about the organisation.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

We are grateful for all subscriptions and donations received. Over the past year we received several substantial donations, three for £1,000 and one for £10,000, together with three significant legacies totalling £89,125.

The Society therefore recorded a surplus of £120,486 (2024: deficit £42,148) for the year. This includes a surplus of £119,142 (2024: deficit £37,236) on unrestricted reserves and a surplus of £1,344 (2024: surplus £4,912) on restricted reserves. The surplus is increased by

investment gains – both realised and on year-end valuation – of £10,174 being factored into the accounts, as required by accounting standards.

The running, or 'trading', position is a surplus of £110,312 (2024: deficit £72,114). As at 30 June 2025, the Society had total reserves of £604,928 (2024: £484,442), including £448,305 (2024: £468,682) general funds, £146,676 (2024: £7,157) designated reserves and £9,947 (2024: £8,603) restricted funds. Further details on the financial performance of the charity can be found in the Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet and supporting notes of the full accounts.

RESERVES POLICY

The general fund represents the free reserves of the Society. The general fund not tied up in tangible fixed assets amounted to £344,407 (2024: £364,650). The Board has revised the amount it considers appropriate to hold from 12 months to six months' budget expenditure, around £135,000.

The Directors acknowledge that current reserves are above that requirement and have decided to set up several designated funds to cover predicted large expenditures over the next few years. More detail on the designated funds is set out in Note 16 of the full accounts.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Finance & Risk subcommittee takes the lead on risk management with input from the other Sub-committees as regards their areas of work. When funding can be unpredictable, the Board is very conscious of the need to safeguard the Society's reserves and make careful assessment before incurring any major expenditure or committing to major projects.

INVESTMENT POLICY

ScotWays maintains an investment portfolio which is actively managed by Rathbones Investment Management (incorporating Investec Wealth and Investment). The objective is to maintain the real value of the portfolio with respect to CPI inflation over a five-year span, as well as to provide an income.

We are now also benchmarking against the ARC Steady Growth Index, which aggregates a number of charity investment portfolios, in this way comparing like with like. In the year our portfolio increased by 4.8% net of fees, compared with CPI of 3.6% and an ARC index of 3.7%.

At the beginning of the financial year, we withdrew £50,000 to cover the cashflow problems anticipated after the run of operating deficits mentioned previously. We opened a new easy access account with Virgin Money, which produces a better yield on the day-to-day balances than keeping all our cash in a non-interest-bearing current account.

After a review of the Board's attitude to risk part-way through the year, we withdrew another £50,000 from the investment portfolio and opened a fixed-term deposit account paying 4.6% with the United Trust Bank. In this way we should be assured of a steady income from the bank deposits to supplement the yield produced by the investments. The value of the investment portfolio at 30 June 2025 was £251,304, with an estimated annual income of £5,284.

Continued overleaf

Continued from previous GRANTS AWARDED POLICY

ScotWays has operated a small grants scheme for a number of years but no grants were awarded in financial year 2023/24 and the Board took the decision to close the scheme this year. The credit in Note 7 of the full accounts is due to a £1,500 grant awarded previously to the Lumphanan Paths Group, reversed in the current year as the work was covered by donations from other sources. At the discretion of the Board, the Society may help to fund larger projects that benefit public access and meet its charitable objectives.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

During 2025-26, we aim, in addition to our access information work, to:

- Complete the distribution of our updated Brief Guide to Public Access leaflets;
- Complete the functional improvements to the Heritage Paths web pages and update the descriptions of the routes that overlap with routes in *Scottish Hill Tracks*;
- Define and trial an updated methodology for volunteer surveys of routes, signs and bridges and refine this to facilitate resurveying all recorded routes on a 10-year rolling cycle;
- Subject to funding, start a project to resurvey and undertake additional research into the history of some of the Heritage Paths featured on our website;
- Complete the Signpost Verification Project (initiated in 2018), consolidating all of our signpost records into a single register and validating all records with a field survey;
- Replace 50 signs that are damaged or missing and complete a further 50 minor repairs;
- Engage with politicians and continue to raise awareness of access issues;
- Host stalls at the Dundee and Fort William Mountain (Film) Festivals;
- Involve volunteers in contributing to and using our new digital photo library.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT GOVERNING DOCUMENT

The Scottish Rights Way and Access Society is a company limited by guarantee (SC024243) and a registered charity (SC015460) governed by its Articles of Association. Each member of the Society has undertaken to contribute an amount not exceeding £1 towards any deficit arising in the event of the Society being wound up.

Directors of the Society are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law and directors for the purposes of company law and are listed on page 14. The Articles of Association provide that any director who has held office for a period of three years since their last appointment shall retire from office and may seek reappointment. Directors may not seek reappointment if they have held office for a continuous period of nine years. The Directors are appointed by the members at the annual general meeting and the Chair is appointed by the Directors from among their number.

We welcomed Rachel Taylor and Martin Yeoman to the Board at the AGM in November 2024, as well as Fiona Dick in September 2024 and Lindsay Anderson and



Christopher Huntley in January 2025. However, Robert John Elliot stood down immediately after the AGM in 2024 after eight years on the Board, including three as Chair, while Stephan Hennig, Elizabeth Helene Mauchlen, Jonathan Binny and Alistair Anderson stood down during the year for personal reasons. Martin Yeoman stood down in August 2025.

We are grateful to them all for the valuable contributions they made to the Board during their time in office.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MANAGEMENT

The Directors meet five times a year and, in addition, each is a member of one or more sub-committees. Day-to-day running of the Society is the responsibility of the National Secretary, Alison Riddell, supported by other staff and volunteers.

STATEMENT OF DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The directors are responsible for preparing the Report of the Directors and the financial statements in accordance with the applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including income and expenditure, for the financial year.

In preparing those financial statements, the directors are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for maintaining proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006, the Charities & Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The directors are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) and in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small entities.

Approved by the Board of Directors on
16 September 2025 and signed on its
behalf by:

Katharine A Taylor, Chair

Independent Examiner's Statement to the Trustees of The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society

I have examined the summarised accounts of The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society set out on pages 10 to 11.

This report is made to the directors, as a body, in accordance with the terms of my engagement dated 21 April 2021. My work has been undertaken to enable me to report as set out below and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law I do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charity and the directors, as a body, for my work or for this report.

Respective responsibilities of the trustees and the independent examiner

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised accounts in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law and the recommendations of the charities SORP.

My responsibility is to report to you on the consistency of the summarised financial statements within the Annual Report with the full annual financial statements.

This statement has been prepared for and only for the charity's Trustees as a body and for no other purpose. I do not accept or assume responsibility for any other purpose or to any other person to whom this statement is shown or into whose hands it may come save where expressly agreed by my prior consent in writing.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

The summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements of The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society for the year ended 30 June 2025.

Kevin Cattanach CA
16 September 2025

Summary financial statements

THE summarised accounts set out on pages 10 and 11 are not the statutory accounts but comprise an extract of the information in the full accounts. The full accounts were approved by the Board on 16 September 2025 and the Independent Examiner's report on the full accounts raised no concerns.

Copies of the full report and accounts can be obtained

from the Registered Office: 24 Annandale Street, Edinburgh, EH7 4AN or from our website, www.scotways.com

The full accounts will be submitted to the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator in the near future.

Katharine A Taylor, Chair
16 September 2025

Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating the income and expenditure account)

for the year ended 30 June 2025

	Note	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	1	151,813	4,816	156,629	46,423
Charitable activities		207,841	-	207,841	143,362
Investments		8,469	-	8,469	9,111
Total Income		368,123	4,816	372,939	198,896
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		(2,830)	-	(2,830)	(2,657)
Charitable activities		(256,325)	(3,472)	(259,797)	(268,353)
Total Expenditure		(259,155)	(3,472)	(262,627)	(271,010)
Realised gains on investments		177	-	177	(2,004)
Unrealised gains on investments		9,997	-	9,997	31,970
Net (expenditure)/income		119,142	1,344	120,486	(42,148)
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		119,142	1,344	120,486	(42,148)
Funds brought forward at 1 July 2024		475,839	8,603	484,442	526,590
Funds carried forward at 30 June 2025		594,981	9,947	604,928	484,442

Balance sheet as at 30 June 2025

	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets		103,898		104,032
Investments at valuation		251,304		344,510
		355,202		448,542
Current assets				
Stock	4,092		2,319	
Debtors	77,424		36,059	
Cash in bank and at hand	201,029		39,278	
	282,545		77,656	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(32,819)		(41,756)	
Net current assets		249,726		35,900
Total assets less current liabilities		604,928		484,442
Reserves				
Unrestricted funds				
- General reserve	448,305		468,682	
- Designated funds	146,676		7,157	
	594,981		475,839	
Restricted funds		9,947		8,603
		604,928		484,442

These financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the Board on 16 September 2025.
Fiona Dick, Director

Note:

1. Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Annual subscriptions	17,542	-	17,542	16,845
Life subscriptions	2,920	-	2,920	400
Corporate subscriptions	3,136	-	3,136	2,742
Local authority subscriptions	7,350	-	7,350	7,700
Donations	22,983	4,553	27,536	12,991
Bequests and legacies	89,125	-	89,125	1,000
Gift Aid	8,757	263	9,020	4,745
	151,813	4,816	156,629	46,423

AGM arrangements

THE Society's **Annual General Meeting** will be held on **Saturday 22 November 2025** at 2.30pm at **The British Horse Society**, Suite A3, Stirling Agricultural Centre, Stirling FK9 4RN. The entrance is between the Clyde Vet Group and Angling Active and there is plenty of parking onsite. We have added to the booking form questions as to whether you are able to offer a lift to anyone coming from your direction, or whether you would be interested in having a lift. We will try to put attendees in touch with each other to make arrangements.

If you prefer to travel by public transport, you can catch either bus 59 for Callander or X10A for Glasgow from Stirling bus station, both for seven stops to Dobbies Garden World, after which there is a walk of about 10 minutes north east on a pavement alongside the A84, taking the first exit on the roundabout. Plan your journey on travelinescotland.com

For anyone intending to get to the AGM by bike from Stirling train station, the link below takes you to a map indicating a suggested route: **Stirling FK7 7NU to The British Horse Society (Scotland) – Google Maps**

It bypasses almost all of the A84 and takes you along a footpath by the River Forth. On reaching to the A84,



PHOTOGRAPH: NEIL FEGGANS

The 2024 AGM

there is a pavement alongside the road, or one can cross the A84 and then follow Chalmerston Road via the historic Drip bridge to the roundabout next to the venue.

An informal sandwich lunch will be available at 12.30pm to those who have pre-booked. There will be a charge of £8 (inc. VAT) per head for lunch to cover costs (there is no charge for any other aspect of the day). To facilitate catering, please pre-book by Monday 17 November.

If you are unable to join us in person, join us online – you'll be able to take part and submit questions through the chat function. Whether you intend

to come in person, including for lunch, or attend the AGM online, please register. You can do this through our website at scotways.com/AGM

The website also has full details about the AGM, along with copies of the minutes of the 2024 AGM, plus the accounts to 30 June 2025.

If you are unable to book online, please complete the booking form enclosed with this mailing and send it to the ScotWays office, enclosing a cheque payable to 'ScotWays' for any lunches required. We are also happy to send out meeting papers in advance if you are unable to download them from our website.

Annual General Meeting 2025

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 22 November 2025 at 2.30pm at The British Horse Society, Suite A3, Stirling Agricultural Centre, Stirling, FK9 4RN

At 1.45pm, prior to the formal business, Scottish historian, Prof Christopher Whatley, will give a talk entitled "Harvie's Dyke, the people, their liberty and the Clyde", the story of an access dispute in the 1820s, involving a landowner, workers and a wall! The talk will be based on his recently published book of that name (see the review in our newsletter).

FORMAL BUSINESS

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the AGM on 16 November 2024
3. To receive the Report of the Directors
4. To receive the accounts
5. To appoint the Directors

The Directors recommend the appointment of:

- **Lindsay Anderson**
- **Christopher Huntley**
- **Brian Humphries**
- **Gregory Quinn**

6. To appoint the Independent Examiner of the Accounts
7. ScotWays in action – what we've been doing, what we plan to do and how you can get involved
8. AOCB

Members are reminded that they may appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf if they are unable to attend the meeting. Contact the office for a proxy form if necessary or download one from the website scotways.com/agm

New directors

FOUR directors are standing for election at the AGM this year. Lindsay Anderson and Chris Huntley were co-opted by the Board earlier in the year and introduced themselves in our last newsletter. Lindsay, a retired solicitor, has been chairing our Legal & Access sub-committee, while Chris sits on our Communications and Operations sub-committees. Brian Humphries and Greg Quinn hope to join the Board for the first time and introduce themselves here.



Brian Humphries

I am a professional in operations and asset management with broad board and senior leadership experience in public-realm and education estates. My specialism is lifecycle planning, financial control and risk management, helping organisations make sound, long-term decisions on sustainability and value for money.

I have worked closely with contractors, funders and community stakeholders, strengthening collaboration and improving accountability through open reporting. As a long-time user of Scotland's open spaces and paths, I am committed to ScotWays' mission to defend access, conserve heritage routes and improve public information.

On the Board, I will contribute pragmatic scrutiny in finance and risk, provide strong governance and support staff and volunteers in planning and delivery.

I recently joined ScotWays and live in the Central Belt, where I spend much of my free time walking and exploring with my family and dogs.



Greg Quinn OBE

I left the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in June 2024 after 29 years of service. In that time, I served in a wide range of countries with my last overseas posting in early 2024 as the Resident British Commissioner to Antigua and Barbuda.

I graduated with a degree in International Politics and International History from the University of Wales in Aberystwyth and have a Masters in History from the Open University. Queen's University Belfast awarded me an Honorary Doctorate in Law in 2019 for distinction in public services. I was made an OBE for services to British foreign policy in Her Majesty The Queen's 2021 Birthday Honours.

I live in Inverurie and now run my own government relations, business development and crisis management consultancy, Aodhan Consultancy Ltd.

I am a Director and Volunteer Secretary at Scotland's only community-owned Distillery – GlenWyvis in Dingwall. I love the outdoors and am passionate about ensuring access to Scotland's landscape.

A company limited by guarantee. Company registration number SC024243

Charity registration number: SC015460

Registered Office: 24 Annandale Street Edinburgh EH7 4AN

Telephone: 0131 558 1222

info@scotways.com

www.scotways.com

OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

The preservation, defence, restoration and acquisition, for the public benefit, of public rights of access in Scotland including public rights of way, and related amenity.

Corporate members 2024/25

COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Balforn Community Council
 Benholm & Johnshaven Community Council
 Bennachie Community Council
 Blackford Community Council
 Broughty Ferry Community Council
 Cambuskenneth Community Council
 Carlops Community Council
 Chryston Community Council
 Cove & Altens Community Council
 Culross Community Council
 Dunsperder Community Council
 Duror & Kentallen Community Council
 Echt & Skene Community Council
 Gifford Community Council
 Inchinnan Community Council
 Jackton & Thorntonhall
 Community Council
 Killearn Community Council
 Kirkkliston Community Council
 Kirriemuir Landward West
 Community Council
 Ladybank & District Community Council
 Letham & District Community Council
 Lilliesleaf, Ashkirk & Midlem
 Community Council
 Low Valleyfield Community Council
 Monkland Glen Community Council
 Musselburgh & Inveresk
 Community Council
 Newport, Wormit & Forgan
 Community Council
 North Kincardine Rural
 Community Council

North Queensferry Community Council
 Polmaise Community Council
 Royal Burgh of Falkland & Newton
 of Falkland Community Council
 Strathard Community Council
 Tayport Community Council
 West Loch Fyne Community Council

OTHER SUPPORTER ORGANISATION

Aboyne Paths & Tracks Group
 All Year Ramblers Club
 Banffshire Field Club
 Biggar & District Community Heritage
 Blairgowrie & District Hillwalking Club
 Border Bothies Association
 BT Hillwalking Club
 Cairngorm Club [8064]
 Cioch Mountaineering Club
 Craigencaft Rural Community Trust
 Cults Hillwalking Club
 Dunblane Development Trust
 Dunblane Rambling Club
 Duncanrig Rambling Club
 Dunfermline Rambling Club
 East Kilbride Mountaineering Club
 Edinburgh & Forth C H A Club
 Ferranti Mountaineering Club
 Fife Mountaineering Club
 Fife Walking Club
 Forfar & District Hill Walking Club
 Friends of the Pentlands
 Gatliff Hebridean Hostels Trust
 Glasgow Glenmore Club
 Glasgow Health Culture Rambling Club

Green Lanes Association
 Kyle & Carrick Civic Society
 LP22 Geriatric Hill Walking Club
 Lumphanan Paths Group
 Markinch Heritage Group
 Melrose Paths Group
 Midweek Walking Group
 Monifieth Hillwalking &
 Rambling Club
 Moray Mountaineering Club
 Mountain Bothies Association
 Northern Pilgrims' Way Group
 Ochils Mountaineering Club
 Paisley Hillwalking Club
 Peebles Gutterbluids Society
 Ramblers Scotland
 Scottish Borders Hillwalking Club
 SPOKES
 SRUC Oatridge Campus
 Stirling Hillwalking Club
 Stirling Rambling Club
 Strathaven Climbing Club
 Strathearn Ramblers
 StrathRRAG
 Tarland Development Group
 The Long Distance Walkers Association
 Torphins Paths Group
 Tryst Walking Group
 United Clyde Angling Protective
 Association
 Walk, Run, Cycle East Dunbartonshire
 Walkaholics Anonymous
 Walking Scotland
 Wilson's Walkers

Directors and staff 2025



Left to right: Alison Riddell, Finley Jackson, Karen Lowrie, Craig Reilly, Johanna Babbs, Eleisha Fahy, Neil Feggans and Neil Birch.

HON. VICE PRESIDENTS:

Bob Aitken
 George Menzies

DIRECTORS:

Katharine A Taylor (Chair) (Edinburgh)
 Lindsay Anderson (Edinburgh)
 Fiona Dick (Edinburgh)

David Dixon (East Lothian)
 Chris Huntley (Lanarkshire)
 Tim Simons (Edinburgh)
 Rachel Taylor (Dumbarton)

STAFF:

National Secretary and Treasurer:

Alison Riddell

Senior Access Officer:

Eleisha Fahy

Access Officers:

Neil Feggans
 Karen Lowrie
 Johanna Babbs
 Neil Birch (Outreach)

Information Officer:

Craig Reilly

Admin and Communications Assistant:

Finley Jackson

Honorary Advisers:

George Menzies
 John Mackay

Signpost repair scheme in action

OUR signpost at the south side of the Màm Ratagan in the west Highlands was installed in 1999 as part of the second phase of our Signs Across Scotland programme, funded jointly by the Lottery Sports Fund and participating local authorities.

Initially it had a single sign pointing to Shiel Bridge, along Scottish Hill Tracks route 255. In 2001, three further signs were added, for Arnisdale, Kinloch Hourn and Gleann Beag, but all four signs pointed in the same direction, as the routes all start off together. The sign for Gleann Beag has caused confusion and it was turned to point the wrong direction, perhaps by a well-intentioned person who felt that the simplest way to Gleann Beag was west by road, rather than the circuitous route east via the low pass above Suardalan bothy. More than 20 years of exposure to the elements, damage from turning vehicles and people scratching names into the signs meant that the whole signpost was in need of replacement and relocation. We listed the need for replacement of this sign on our website and are very grateful to Fi R, who made a donation to cover the cost of the repairs.

We designed two replacement signs: a single, combined sign listing the three main destinations of the Scottish Hill Tracks routes leading east from this point and a smaller sign pointing along the road to Glenelg village, which is also part of the

Scottish Hill Tracks routes. Both signs are bilingual, as is our usual practice in the north and west Highlands, and we included both miles and kilometres to suit the varying preferences of today's walkers. We chose not to include Gleann Beag in the new sign, to keep it to a manageable size, but the routes to Arnisdale and Kinloch Hourn both pass through the upper reaches of that glen, and a sign at the junction there indicates the way down Gleann Beag to Glenelg.

Before the new signs arrived, volunteer Rod Dalitz installed a new pole at a safer position, next to the post box at the side of the road, clearly visible to anyone at the junction regardless of their approach direction. After the new signs arrived, Geoff Simpson installed them on to the new pole, and (after taking these photos) took the old sign and pole down. We hope you agree that the new sign is a big improvement, and we hope it will stand there for many years to come!

Donating to cover the cost of a sign repair is a way that you can have a direct and substantial impact on upholding public access. If you wish, you can choose to add a small plate to acknowledge your donation, to commemorate an event or to dedicate the sign in someone's memory. A selection of signs in need of repair is listed at [scotways.com/repair-a-sign](https://www.scotways.com/repair-a-sign)

Neil Birch



On the move around the country

SCOTWAYS will be attending various events throughout the coming year. To round off 2025, we will once again be at the Dundee Mountain Film Festival, which will be celebrating its 40th year on Friday 5 and Saturday 6 December at the city's Abertay University.

In 2026, we will be at Mountain Aid's 'Skills for the Hills' event, which is a day of presentations, demonstrations, workshops and displays. This will be on Saturday 7 March at the Pathfoot Building, University of Stirling.

We are also planning to return to next year's Fort William Mountain Festival, being held from 12 to 15 February.

If you would like to stay up to date on ScotWays' appearances, you can sign up to our e-newsletter *Stravaig* online at [scotways.com/sign-up-to-e-newsletter](https://www.scotways.com/sign-up-to-e-newsletter)



Christmas cards

THIS year's Christmas cards are both inspired by Scottish Hill Tracks and Heritage Paths, with photos by Richard Barron and Laura Thompson. The cards are available from our website, or by post using the form enclosed with this mailing, at a cost of £6.50 for a pack of 10 A6 cards. They contain the message 'Season's Greetings.'



**£6.50
for a pack
of 10**



ScotWays merchandise

WE have recently been investigating having a range of ScotWays branded clothing and accessories, such as tote bags and mugs, available for sale through our website. Designs are still a work in progress, but keep an eye on our website for details. We plan to have items available by the time of our AGM.



ScotWays

ScotWays – The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society

Founded in 1845, ScotWays upholds and promotes public access rights in Scotland. We are widely recognised as experts in the law and practice of access and advise on access problems, provide information and training, and maintain a vast database about routes in Scotland. Our recognisable green and white signs are on routes across Scotland. We are home to the Heritage Paths Project, a unique archive of Scotland's old paths and roads.

We do not receive any public funds for our core activities. As a result, we are proudly independent and flexible in what we can do,

but must also raise enough money to survive. We couldn't operate without volunteers, who help us by researching path history and keeping our records accurate, representing us on local access forums, surveying and repairing signposts, and inspecting paths.

How could you help us?

www.scotways.com/support-us

Registered Office: 24 Annandale Street, Edinburgh EH7 4AN.

Tel: **0131 558 1222** • E-mail: info@scotways.com •

www.scotways.com