

Mountain Rescue England and Wales

Annual Review 2026



Published May 2026



Foreword

HRH The Prince of Wales



As our wild and beautiful places attract more visitors every year, the demands on mountain rescue teams continue to increase. Over the last year, an increasing number of young people have been calling on Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) for help.

While welcoming the interest among young people in getting outdoors and enjoying the benefits it offers, MREW volunteers are working closely with partners to ensure visitors feel prepared, confident and self-sufficient while exploring.

As Patron of MREW, I once again thank all of those dedicated volunteers involved in this remarkable search and rescue service; and the families, employers and communities who support them. Your selfless actions save lives every day and we are enormously grateful for all that you do.

Wrth i'n manau gwyllt a phrydferth ddenu rhagor o ymwelwyr bob blwyddyn, mae'r gofynion ar dimau achub mynydd yn parhau i gynyddu. Yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf, mae nifer gynyddol o bobl ifanc wedi bod yn galw ar wasanaeth Achub Mynydd Cymru a Lloegr (MREW) am gymorth.

Er bod y diddordeb ymhlith pobl ifanc mewn mynd allan i'r awyr agored a mwynhau'r buddion mae hynny'n ei gynnig yn rhywbeth i'w groesawu, mae gwirfoddolwyr MREW yn cydweithio'n agos â phartneriaid i sicrhau bod ymwelwyr yn teimlo eu bod wedi paratoi'n dda, yn hyderus ac yn hunangynhaliol pan fyddant yn crwydro'r mynyddoedd.

Fel Noddwr MREW, hoffwn ddiolch unwaith eto i'r holl wirfoddolwyr ymroddgar sy'n rhan o'r gwasanaeth chwilio ac achub rhagorol hwn: yn ogystal â'r teuluoedd, cyflogwyr a chymunedau sy'n eu cefnogi. Mae eich gweithredoedd anhunanol yn achub bywydau bob dydd, ac rydym yn hynod ddiolchgar am eich holl waith.



As 2026 dawned, we looked back at the considerable strides made throughout 2025, in a number of areas — each one aimed at securing the future for our volunteer mountain rescue service. Most significant have been the developments with the All Parliamentary Party Group (APPG) and the establishment of an operational support fund for MREW member teams. We've also appointed a new CEO in Andy Buchan, who takes on the role in May 2026, after a year of getting to know how teams tick.

Key to securing the future has been looking at how best MREW, as a national entity, can best support the teams at ground level, enabling them to continue delivering their volunteer service when and where it is needed.

'Mountain rescue may well be delivered by volunteers, free of charge at the point of delivery,' says CEO Mike Park MBE, 'but the operational costs of running a team are substantial — Vehicle Excise Duty (VED), fuel and base costs, essential kit and equipment not least amongst them. But, thanks to the efforts of MPs Torcuil Crichton and Josh MacAllister (also a rescue team member), and the wider APPG, we received a significant helping hand in 2025, with the removal of VED on recognised search and rescue vehicles, announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves in her November statement. Work remains to be done to design and implement the exemption, from April 2027, but this was welcome news.'

We've also seen movement on the medical front — again supported by the APPG — following uncertainty around the practice of 'hot swapping' medical gases with ambulance services.

'Thanks to medical directors Alistair Morris (MREW) and Brendan Sloan (BCRC), and also UKSAR,' says Mike, 'we know that the practice can continue for now.'

Another factor under consideration has been the notable differences between teams across England and Wales, in terms of funding and assets — with those in the more popular spots undoubtedly better able to attract donations to fund their activities. Without adequate day-to-day funding, the challenges to some teams can be enormous, say, when a vehicle or key items of essential kit need replacing.

'With this in mind,' says Mike, 'we've established an operational support fund, administered centrally by MREW trustees, which will provide financial support to our member teams according to need. The aim of the fund is to help maintain operational capacity and capability, in line with one of our charitable objectives, which is to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of mountain rescue charities and voluntary organisations for the public benefit.'

This support might cover equipment and training, ongoing costs such as rent, utilities and insurance, and potentially bigger items such as capital expenditure or unforeseen events.

'We also hope,' adds Mike, 'that this will attract restricted funds from donors who give specifically for this purpose, allowing us to continue supporting all our member teams as needed.'

As one era ends... another adventure begins

May 2026 sees Mike stepping down after five years in the role of CEO, and his successor has already been busy getting to know his future colleagues nationally, as well as teams and team members, building a picture of the organisation in readiness for stepping fully up to the plate. Mike was keen that Andy be in place well ahead of taking on the role, to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

'When I came into post,' says Mike, 'I was determined that the person who ultimately took over from me wasn't thrown in at the deep end with little or no preparation. Appointing Andy well ahead of time gave him the opportunity to shadow me, attend meetings, meet the teams, chat with members and generally

wrap his head around the nature of mountain rescue.

'It has been a pleasure working with him through the last several months. I know he will bring his own vision to the role, but I am confident he is developing a solid base on which to build, and a sound understanding of the task ahead. I look forward to following his progress with interest.'

As CEO Elect, Andy has indeed been travelling the length and breadth of England and Wales, meeting teams in their 'home' environments. His intention from the start was to 'listen and learn' and he reckons it has been 'fascinating and informative' in equal measure — with one or two of the things he thought he 'knew' about mountain rescue being soundly debunked.

His aim is to continue building 'an organisation that is safe for the future, both financially and practically, at both national and local level, with greater public recognition and engagement', so that rescuers — and those who wish to explore the mountains — can feel 'safe in our hands.'



Opposite: Dartmoor Plymouth team members during a night navigation training, around Wotter on Dartmoor, in November 2025 © DSRT Plymouth. **Inset:** Rossendale & Pendle MRT team vehicle, January 2025, assisting the North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust (NWAS) with a variety of jobs throughout the area © RPMRT. **Top:** Central Beacons MRT team vehicle in action, January 2025 © CBMRT. **Above:** CEO Mike Park (left) with CEO Elect Andy Buchan during Andy's visit to Cockermouth MRT base © Nick Lumb.

Celebrating success and looking forwards

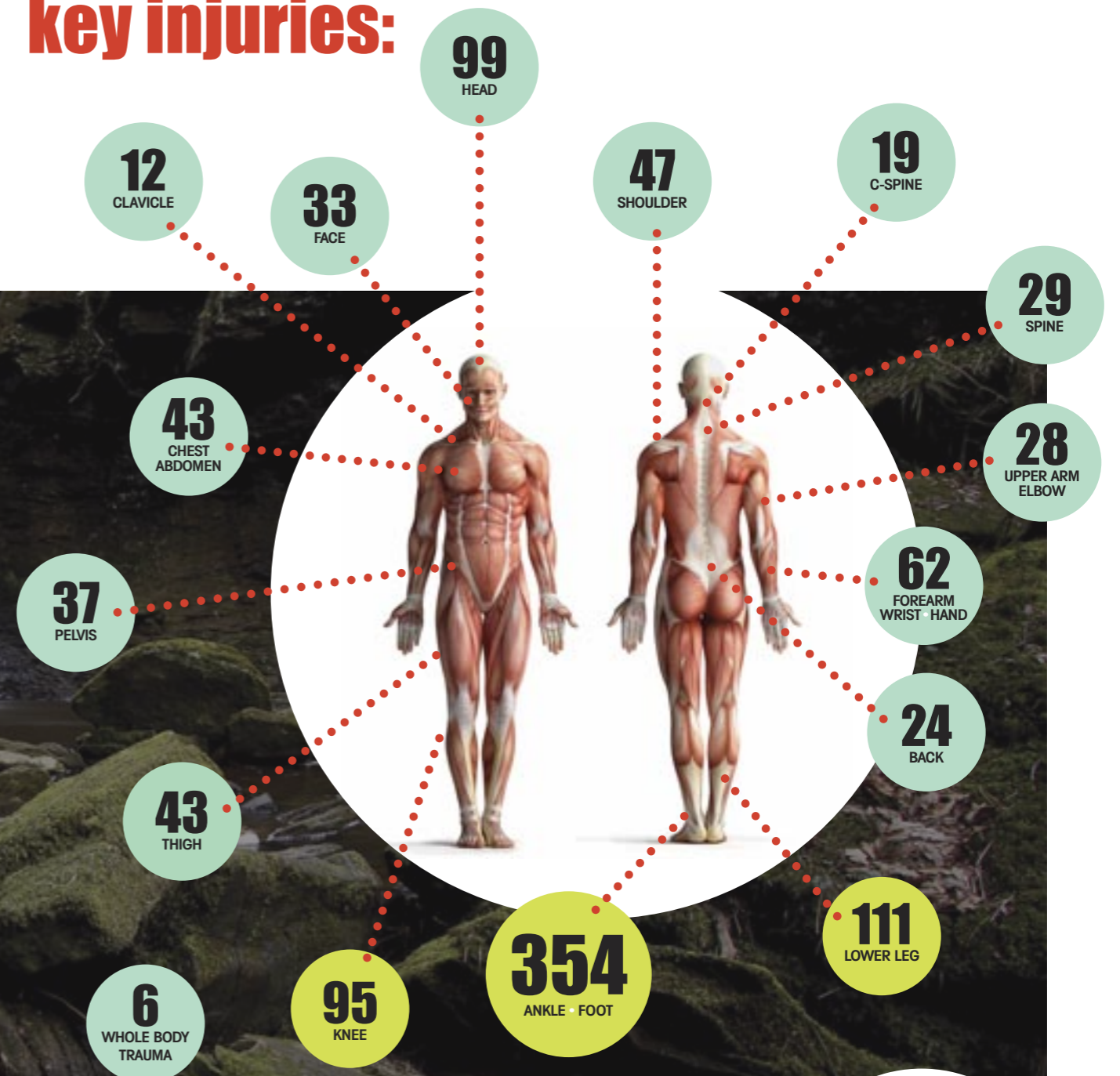
THIS WAY FOR THE INCIDENT STATISTICS IN DETAIL



2025

At a glance: the year in numbers

key injuries:



3,968 call-outs resulting in
3,175 deployments
22% primary reason for rescue: slip or trip
18% to look for a missing person
82% to attending an injured person

Busiest months
May • June • August with **33%** incidents

Busiest days of the week
Saturday • Sunday with **42%** incidents

Persons involved
60% male **38%** female
 * 2% of persons are recorded as either 'unknown' or 'other'

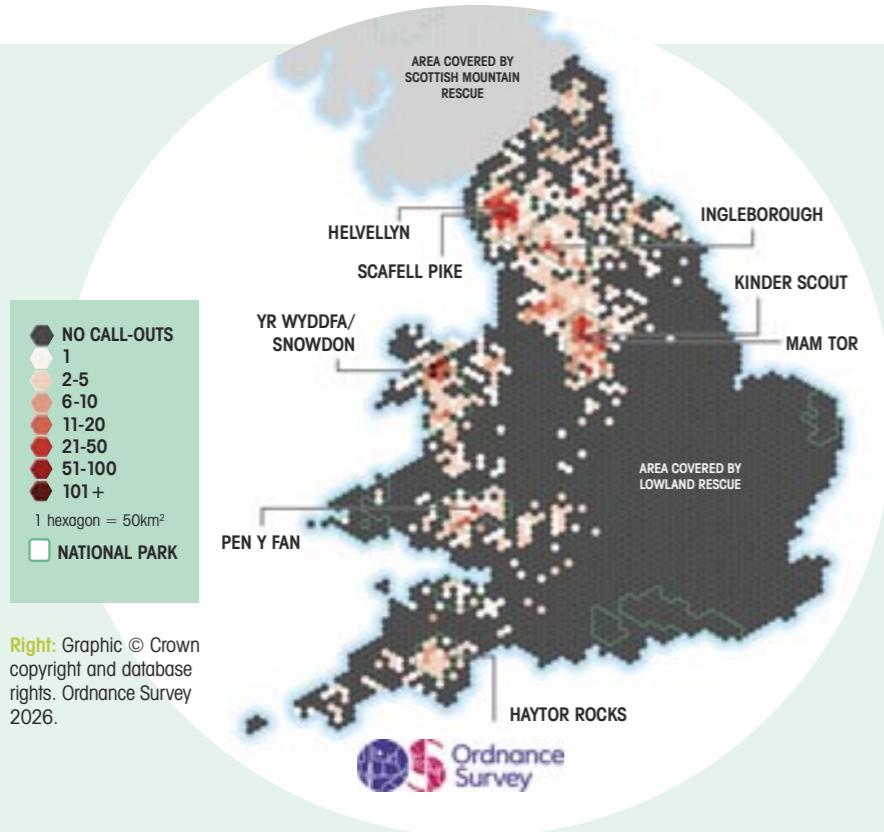
other reasons for rescue include: cramp, collapse, drowning, diabetes, exhaustion, fit, heat, hypothermia, self harm, substance abuse, suicide and stroke

only 9%
 of rescues involved assistance of helicopter

Main image: Waterfall, Hareshaw Linn, Northumberland via Pixabay. Above: Anatomical illustration © Cosmin4000.

2025

At a glance: the year in numbers



Right: Graphic © Crown copyright and database rights. Ordnance Survey 2026.

10 busiest teams in 2025

North Wales:

Llanberis (9%)
Ogwen Valley (5%)

South Wales:

Central Beacons (4%)
Brecon (3%)

Lake District:

Wasdale (5%)
Keswick (3%)
Langdale Ambleside (4%)
Patterdale (3%)

Peak District:

Edale (4%)
Buxton (3%)

Key contributory factors

Poor decision making/human error:	939
Inexperience of pursuit:	644
Weather (freak/rain/wind/snow/ice/heat):	518
Equipment failure/poorly equipped:	241
Tired, fatigued or unfit:	199
Poor visibility:	138

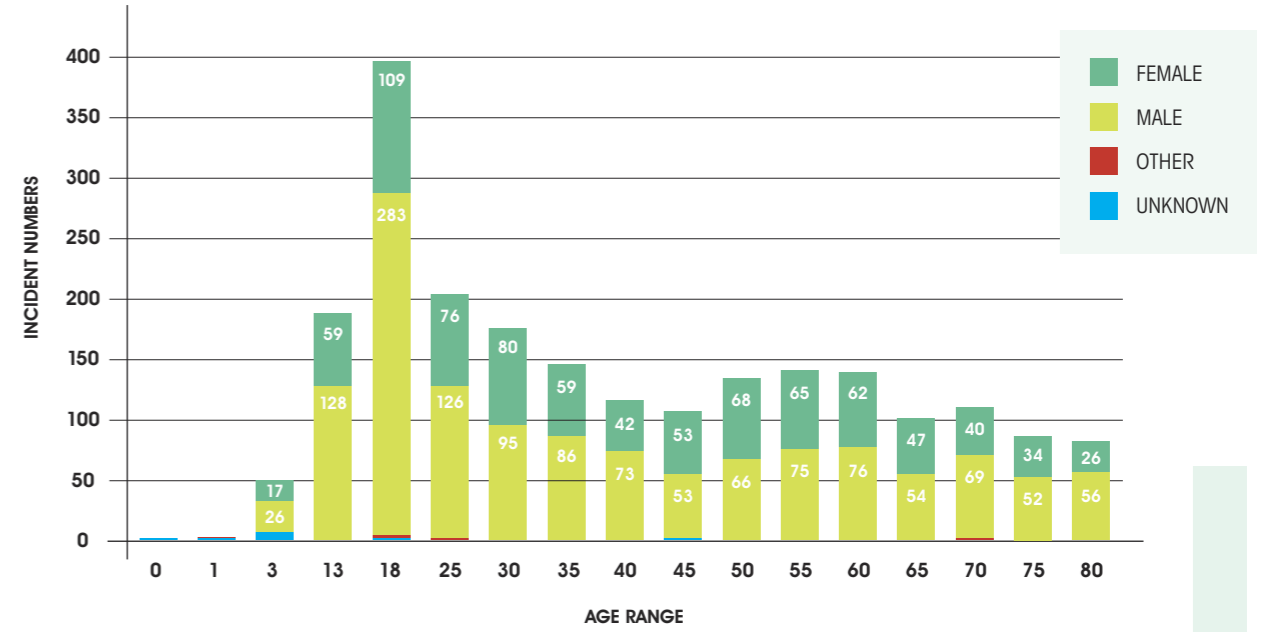
Key rescue skills involved

Inter-agency collaboration:	725
Casualty care:	677
Off-road driving:	496
Response driving:	459
Working with aircraft:	248
Formal search management:	157
Technical rope rescue:	139
Fatal incident protocol:	71
Swift water rescue:	33

Most frequent interventions

Stretcher:	781
Walked off:	692
Limb splintage:	423
Transported in team vehicle:	446
Transported by helicopter:	223
Warming/heat pack:	206
Neck/pelvis/spinal protection:	175
Advice given:	149

3 days
without
a call-out



Incident Figures: January to end of December 2025

Lake District

Cockermouth	92
Coniston	71
COMRU	1
Duddon & Furness	38
Kendal	70
Keswick	138
Kirkby Stephen	30
Langdale Ambleside	151
Patterdale	105
Penrith	50
Wasdale	154
Total	900

Mid Pennines

Bolton	47
Bowland Pennine	67
Calder Valley	42
Holme Valley	49
Rosendale & Pendle	77
Total	282

North East

Cleveland	77
North of Tyne	62
Northumberland	73
Swaledale	44
Teesdale & Weardale	71
Total	327

North Wales

Aberdyfi	61
Aberglaslyn	65
Llanberis	360
North East Wales	61
North Wales CRO	2
Ogwen Valley	188
South Snowdonia	37
Total	774

Peak District

Buxton	108
Derby	93
Derby CRO	0
Edale	165
Glossop	64
Kinder	76
Oldham	50
Woodhead	76
Total	632

Peninsula

Cornwall East	32
Cornwall West	24
Dartmoor Ashburton	34
North Dartmoor	25
Dartmoor Plymouth	17
Dartmoor Tavistock	30
Devon CRO	0
Exmoor	26
Total	188

South Wales

Brecon	114
Central Beacons	176
Longtown	48
Western Beacons	58
Total	396

South West

Avon & Somerset	35
SARA	48
Total	83

Yorkshire Dales

CRO	88
Scarborough & Ryedale	45
Upper Wharfedale	64
Total	197

Search Dogs

Lake District MRSD	14
MRSD England	107
SARDA Wales	21
SARDA South Wales	28
Total	170

Drones

Lake District Drones	21
Total	21



Taking the mountains to Westminster...

March 2025 saw the Westminster launch of an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Volunteer Rescue Services. An MREW contingent, led by CEO Mike Park and Josh MacAlister MP (who is also a Patterdale MRT member), was joined by representatives from Scottish Mountain Rescue (SMR), the British Cave Rescue Council (BCRC), Lowland Rescue, Independent Lifeboats and the Voluntary Coastguard.

During the day, these representatives were joined by more than sixty MPs and their colleagues from the House of Lords.

'Mountain rescue teams from across the country had been active in inviting their local MPs and other key contacts,' says Mike, 'and this local approach seemed to do the trick in getting people along to find out more. The aim of the new APPG is to give volunteer search and rescue services a voice in Parliament, creating connections, explaining our work and bringing experts and decision makers together to create the recognition and support we need if we're to continue delivering our vital and lifesaving work.'

Discussions at the inaugural meeting focused on a range of priorities, many of them shared across all the volunteer rescue services represented. These included establishing a sole ministerial responsibility, support for public liability insurance, and improving the statutory footing of volunteers. The MREW team also raised issues such as Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) exemption on rescue vehicles, blue light permissions, access to resilience information and support around safety messaging in the outdoors.

Since that first meeting, progress has already been made on VED exemptions, but there is still much more to do.

'A designated Government minister and department would give us a single point of contact in Westminster,' says Mike, 'and that would really help us to navigate the legal and procedural complexities of Government, and build familiarity with civil servants as well as elected MPs. It would also help us lobby on behalf of the various member organisations.'

'Establishing the APPG is a great start and an important milestone, but we now need to tackle important challenges one by one — and continue to build that momentum together.'

'Raising our profile and facilitating collaboration is all very well but, ultimately, we need to cut down bureaucracy and become more efficient so that we can better support our communities and those we rescue.'

To read more about the APPG, please read the latest information and download our APPG Manifesto 2025 from mountain.rescue.org.uk/appg.



What is an APPG?

An All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) is a cross-party group of UK MPs and Members of the House of Lords established to focus on a specific policy area, country or topic.

They are forums for cross-party discussion, networking and expert engagement, governed by a clear set of rules and recognised as a preferred route for lobbying the Government.

'The APPG for Volunteer Rescue is chaired by Torcuil Crichton MP,' says Mike. 'Both he and Josh MacAlister have been critical in establishing and maintaining the focus and support for the APPG in Westminster — their work has been invaluable.'

Opposite: Mike Park being interviewed outside the Houses of Parliament in March 2025. **Top:** The APPG Manifesto 2025. **Below:** Quite the triumph of logistics to get one of the Patterdale MRT Land Rovers into the Parliamentary estate, but worth it for the photo opportunities; Left to right: James Bicknell (Patterdale MRT), Carolyn Otley (Cockermouth MRT), Nigel Harling (MREW Helicopter Officer) and Mike Park (MREW CEO). Images © Carolyn Otley/MREW.





Meeting our mountain rescuer MP...

Josh MacAlister MBE played a key role in the launch of the APPG, bringing into play what is arguably the unique combination of mountain rescue team member and local MP in West Cumbria, able to draw on his experience both in Government and at the sharp end of rescue. 'Mountain Rescue' magazine editor, Judy Whiteside, talked to Josh about the APPG and how he balances life in the mountains with his commitments as an MP.

He wouldn't want to take away from the work being done by other members of Parliament who don't have a background in voluntary search and rescue, but very effectively helped put pressure on — but Josh does concede that being able to talk about first-hand experience certainly helped. Being able to say 'this will save my team x-thousand pounds' is a lot more powerful than talking in the abstract.

'A lot of people won't have interacted with mountain rescue, ever,' he says. 'Within a community like Cumbria, we might have a stronger sense about the sort of people in mountain rescue, but while a lot of people in Government think it's an admirable thing, they don't really know much about how it works, the fact it's done by volunteers — hundreds of people across the country who are giving up their time for free.'

'So, for me, it was about getting across that special role that search and rescue volunteers play in the community and then finding a way for Government to acknowledge that contribution.'

'Vehicle Excise Duty exemption was a very clear win. There's obviously now an understanding in Government that we are a firmly grassroots-led organisation, and what these volunteers are doing is making a difference, and we should continue to build on that momentum.'

So where does he see us going next?

'I think there are some obvious areas that the APPG could have some influence on, like the cost of insurance. That could be pretty transformational.'

'I also think it's worth pushing for more formal recognition for team members from employers. There's something about the magic of mountain rescue being very bottom-up and feeling very responsible for how they approach things. So you want to create national recognition for these things, without losing that bottom-up freedom.'

'Then there's the issue of demand — particularly in the more popular spots — and the need to raise awareness about how people handle themselves in the outdoors.'

'There's definitely an understanding at the moment that there is something really special here that we don't want to mess with. The teams have incredible expertise, team members give up a lot of their time, enjoy what they do. You wouldn't want to lose that.'

All of which is good to hear. Mountain rescue as an organisation has been campaigning and lobbying Government in one form or another since the 1930s, but this does now feel like a significant step-change.

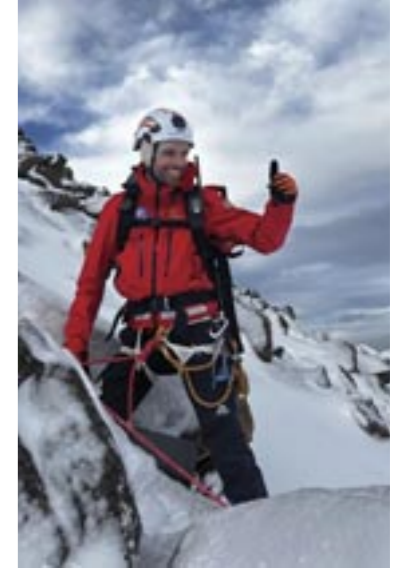
But beyond the APPG, aside from his work and commuting between Cumbria and Westminster — and being appointed Minister for Children and Families at the Department for Education, in September 2025 — for the last four years, Josh has been an active member of Patterdale MRT. How does he find time to keep track of training and respond to call-outs? How does he keep a balance?

'Part of it is making use of the time I've got. So, on the train to London, I'll plough through the paperwork. I've a brilliant team, as a minister and a constituency MP, so they make sure I make really good use of my time, wherever I am. And my family are great at pitching in too.'

'As for mountain rescue — it's really good to just do something that's very different that's not about politics.'

He's very committed to his mountain rescue involvement — responding to a call-out just hours after arriving home as a newly-elected MP — but have there been any other memorable rescues?

'Three,' he says. 'One was a fatality, a heart attack. He was part of a walking group. Something struck me about that group — they didn't know each other well,



but there was something about being outdoors together and for him to be surrounded by people at that moment, in an environment he loved, not being alone. Reflects how important it is that whoever shows up first is well-attuned to the situation.'

'Another was a hypothermia case near Helvellyn, a search for an older couple who hadn't returned to their coach at the end of the day. I'd just got back home from London, so it was a long day. That was the call-out where I felt I'd made the biggest difference — had they not been found, it could've been a much worse outcome.'

'The third one was when I walked a guy off from an accident at the Bad Step where his friend had died. It was quite a long walk back and he was processing it all along the way. It's so easy to forget how momentous those things are. There's a level of gravity that sometimes we can take for granted. That training, recognising that the grieving process starts straight away — how you respond, what answers you give to their questions, it's all important.'

Finally, where does he see his future in mountain rescue? Leadership, perhaps?

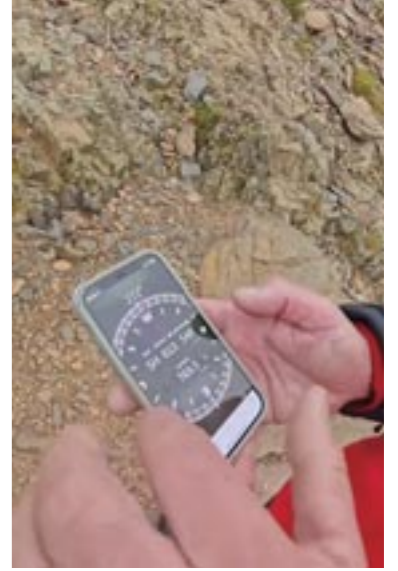
'I am very content being a dogsbody team member and will continue being a dogsbody team member for as long as the team will have me. It's really nice to be doing something where I'm just part of the team. And even if I wanted to, I wouldn't have the time to do any more than I'm doing now.'

Opposite: Josh MacAlister during team training. Inset: Pictured with the Patterdale team vehicle outside their base. Above: Winter training with the team in the Cairngorms, Scotland; Outside the Houses of Parliament following a meeting of the APPG in March 2025. Images supplied by Josh MacAlister.

Walking (and working with) a 'Northern Introvert'



Analysis of the 2024 MREW statistics by Ordnance Survey revealed that those aged 18 to 24 had become the most likely to call upon mountain rescue volunteers for help. Media interest focused on the negative influences of social media and route apps, but left us with a challenge: how best to reach this group with the advice and information they need to make more informed decisions about their outdoor adventures.



Jacqui Hanson, Media Officer for North Wales Mountain Rescue Association (NWMRA), took the opportunity of a call from Jack Roscoe, aka outdoor influencer Northern Introvert, to try a new approach.

'Younger people are less likely to visit our websites, follow us on Facebook, or source information from traditional news media — they're on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. These are the people we need to reach to help them understand inherent risk and the importance of research and preparedness in reducing that risk.

'So, when Jack contacted us, we saw opportunity, but I was cautious. Producing content together and then reaching his Followers and YouTube viewers (over 85,000 subscribers), could get to some of those that we can't, but there are also risks in engaging with online influencers and social media is notoriously hard to manage once it starts to go wrong.

'After a lot of research — checking Jack's content and messaging, reading up on his background and exploring the options — it seemed too good an opportunity to miss, as long as we could work together and he understood our concerns and limits.

'We arranged for Jack to accompany Llanberis MRT chairman Jurgen Dissmann, and press officer Kathryn Cummings, on a walk up Yr Wyddfa in late October. The

day had bad weather predicted to hit in the afternoon, so a great opportunity to talk about the importance of researching weather conditions along the planned route.

'The filming was simple — Jack had a handheld camera and simply chatted to Jurgen as they made the climb with other walkers occasionally chipping in. The resulting film was incredibly relaxed and watchable.

'Very helpfully, about three-quarters of the way up, the predicted storm began to make its presence known, so the decision was made to turn back without ascending to the summit. This was a fantastic live example of preparedness and dynamic decision-making.

'The descent, as the wind grew and temperature and visibility dropped, really made the point about how quickly the weather conditions can change — without us having to say a thing.

'The end result of the day was a 40-minute video on YouTube* showing Jack and Jurgen, with Kathryn, chatting

on the walk. This has been viewed over 211,000 times. We also shared a link to our own safety and information videos on the NWMRA website, and Jack's content helped to drive traffic to our own platforms.

'A series of five shorts were produced from the long content, for YouTube (303.8k views)*, Instagram (217.9k views), Facebook (299.5k views) and TikTok (130.3k views). With Jack's support, we were able to look at the demographics of those people viewing the content and found we had succeeded in reaching audiences we may not have been able to engage via our own platforms.'

Nationally, mountain rescue has worked with a number of outdoors influencers in the last twelve months, including Sam Culley and his dad, fundraiser Martyn. Combined with more shareable content on our traditional channels and activity with partner organisations, ambassadors and supporters, we hope we're doing at least some of the right things to make a difference in future.

*** You can watch the long-form Northern Introvert video at tinyurl.com/4whw2wfk (or scan the QR code) or follow him on social media @northernintrovert.**



Opposite & top: Clips from filming with the Northern Introvert, aka Jack Roscoe, out on the hill with Llanberis team members © Northern Introvert. **Above:** Nick Owen (Langdale Ambleside MRT) on camera and Mike Park on the BBC Breakfast couch © BBC Breakfast.

Mountain rescue on the BBC couch for Easter 2025

MREW CEO Mike Park appeared on BBC Breakfast in April, ahead of the Easter break, advising viewers how to keep themselves safe on the hills and what to carry in their rucksack (Hint: Warm, weatherproof clothing, extra layers, fully-charged phone battery, map and compass and snacks). Meanwhile, Nick Owen, from Langdale Ambleside MRT was interviewed on camera at the team's Lake District base.



News snips

from around England and Wales

Mountain rescue continues to feature on our screens — be that through documentaries and chat shows on TV or via social media. It's increasingly about using the online media to get our messages 'out there', raising awareness and supporting our fundraising and safety messages.



Summer saw a third series of the BBC's 'SOS: Extreme Rescues', featuring mountain rescue teams from across North Wales working alongside HM Coastguard, Police, Fire and Ambulance. The series continued to showcase the stunning efforts of responders who save lives across Eryri National Park (Snowdonia), with stunning images and information about so many aspects of mountain rescue. The featured incidents ranged from injured mountain bikers and missing walkers, through rock climbers and quarry explorers, to swiftwater searches, Search Dog deployment and multi-agency responses. Heart-stopping moments, captured in real time, showed ordinary people facing extraordinary danger — a salutary lesson in just how unforgiving the mountain environment can be. Viewers saw the rescue process unfold, moment by moment, team members giving their time, energy and expertise to save another life in peril. And we're pleased to report that plans are underway for a further series.

Above: 'SOS Extreme Rescues' promotional graphic. Insets: Scenes from Series 2, Episodes 6 and 8 © BBC.



JULY 2025: 'SOS: Extreme Rescues' returns to TV screens



DECEMBER 2025: Online comments after call-out spark response across mountain rescue

A pre-Christmas call-out for the Ogwen Valley team, to Tryfan, prompted a wave of online criticism across social media. This in turn inspired a set of memes from colleagues in Central Beacons MRT.

The call involved two walkers who had become lost and stuck in the dark. In a social media post following the incident, Ogwen had taken the opportunity to warn about the dangers of navigating Tryfan during the winter months, and to reiterate the key safety messages. But chat below the line quickly turned critical, suggesting we should charge those we rescue. Ogwen pushed back, describing the commentary as 'a bit boisterous' and underlining the important thing — 'that they felt able to call when they did', adding that 'for all of you shouting about charging people, that they are somehow lesser people than you, just know everyone needs a hand at some point, regardless of ability or experience', and the critics should 'scroll on instead of criticising'.

The subsequent Central Beacons memes reiterated the message that 'stuff happens', asking people to support mountain rescue and 'be kind' in the comments sections.

Above: Pre-Christmas call-out on Tryfan © Ogwen Valley MRO.

Thinking Mountain Rescue Should Charge People?
Cool... let's have a chat about that

But you're all volunteers?
That's right:
We choose this
We understand the risks
We train to manage them
If we don't mind, nor should you, but we love that you're looking out for us.

...working for us



AUGUST 2025: Social media helps solve the mystery of an abandoned rucksack

The abandoned rucksack presented something of a cross-Border mystery for three teams but, thanks to the power of social media, the mystery was solved. A walker had reported finding the dry duffel on its frame with over-sized wheels, and something didn't sit right. North of Tyne and Northumberland National Park teams worked through a number of possible scenarios with Border SAR, as team members also carried out a search of the surrounding area on foot and by team vehicle. Meanwhile, social media reported a man seen earlier in the week, pulling a similar trolley, and information popped up suggesting that the trolley was broken. A builder reported giving a walker a lift to Alnwick, and a retailer there confirmed a man buying a holdall 'to carry some of his kit back home'. As the plot thickened, team members stood down, police confirmed that the man had been traced and was safe — albeit not yet home — and eager to have his trolley, and its contents back!

Above: On the look-out following the discovery of the abandoned rucksack © NNPMRT.



OCTOBER 2025: Our social media campaign expands with 'Did you know?' memes

Our social media campaigns continued to target an online readership, with a series of memes explaining the nature of mountain rescue and how we operate. The messages included key points of interest: that mountain rescue teams are made up of willing volunteers, on call 24/7, operating under the auspices of the police. Team members might be at work or a family event, or asleep in bed — or, increasingly with some of the busier teams, already involved with a different call-out.

Above: Graphics thanks to Sarah Harvey. Images courtesy of Calder Valley SRT, Edale MRT & Aberglaslyn MRT.

Did you know?

TV and social media...

...and still more TV



JANUARY 2026: Northumberland team features on BBC 'Countryfile'

The episode, titled 'Northumberland: Nature's Playground', was filmed in early December 2025. Presenter Matt Baker spent an afternoon with the team to learn more about the vital role mountain rescue plays in one of England's most remote and rugged landscapes. The programme explored a team training scenario, offering viewers a rare behind-the-scenes look at how teams prepare for real incidents.

Above: Team members during the filming of BBC 'Countryfile' in December © NNPMRT.



AUGUST 2025: BBC 'Look North' features COMRU underground training

Alex Challies from BBC 'Look North' went below ground with COMRU members, to film a training session in Nenthead and Carrs mines and talk about all things 'rescue'. The team is one of twelve teams that form the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association (LDSAMRA) and team members frequently work alongside their mountain rescue colleagues in incidents above and below ground.

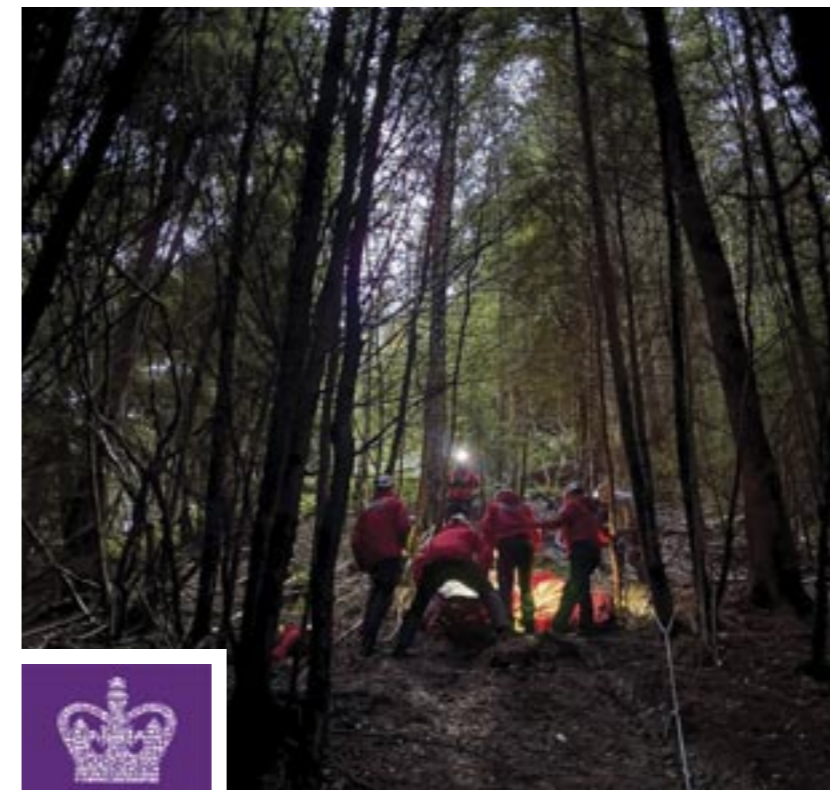
Left: COMRU team members during filming © COMRU.



News snips

from around England and Wales

We have been proud to have HRH Prince William of Wales as our Royal patron since May 2007. The announcement back then followed William's work experience with an RAF mountain rescue team, and presented the perfect way to celebrate our 75th anniversary in 2008. Since then, our Royal connections have brought invitations to events and fundraising opportunities, and recognition to individual mountain rescue teams for which we are deeply grateful.



royal recognition



DECEMBER 2025: Celebrating together at The Abbey

Five representatives of MREW travelled to London at the invitation of HRH the Princess of Wales, to attend a carol service at Westminster Abbey, hosted by Her Royal Highness and attended by volunteers and community leaders as well as members of the Royal family.

Above: Left to right: Phil Ridley (MREW Training Officer), Jacqui Hanson (NWMRA), Deborah Pourkarimi (MREW Finance Director), Sally Seed and Tim Radford (OVMRO) © Sally Seed.

JUNE/NOVEMBER 2025: Two teams receive the King's Award

West Cornwall and Teesdale & Weardale teams were just two of 231 social enterprises, charities and voluntary groups to receive the award in 2025. The King's Award for Voluntary Service replaced the former Queen's Award and is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK, equivalent to an MBE.

Earlier, in June 2025, members of North of Tyne and Northumberland National Park teams attended a Royal Garden Party at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, near Edinburgh, in recognition of their teams receiving the award in 2024.

Previous winners of the award (and before that, the Queen's Award) have included the Central Beacons, Longtown, Brecon, Oldham, Woodhead and Patterdale teams, and the twelve Lakes teams jointly as LDSAMRA.

Left: Teesdale & Weardale team © TWSRT; West Cornwall team © WCSRT. Below: Left to right: Keith Briggs (North of Tyne), Iain Nixon (NNPMRT), Val Miller, Jamie Pattison (NNPMRT), Lydia Nixon, Andrew Miller (NNPMRT) © NNPMRT.





**TEAMWORK
EXCELLENCE
PASSION
CARING**

Training together towards excellence

Excellence is one of the four recognised 'shared values' of mountain rescue and something team members and probationers commit a lot of their time to achieving. Training is a key factor and a big commitment as part of being a mountain rescue volunteer, and it's not all done purely at team level, as MREW Training Officer, Phil 'Rigger' Ridley explains.



'In the past couple of years, I've noticed a trend towards teams training more often with other teams (or other organisations), and it's something that's building skills and making a real difference.

'Joint winter training has been a feature of teams' training programmes for several years, as have national training courses such as the Party Leader courses in North Wales, and what we previously knew as Casualty Care training, now known as Remote Rescue Medical Technician courses. These bring together participants from across England and Wales and the added value this networking brings to the organisation is very much recognised.

'I am often asked about organising more joint training and collaboration — we all know it works. The enthusiasm and appetite are there. We just need to talk to each other more and share ideas. Geography may be slightly different, but mountain rescue volunteers are doing similar things wherever they're based.

'During 2025, I've been visiting training sessions across England and Wales and we've set up a number of working groups to look at how best to make the most of collaboration in areas of training such as search planning and management, technical rope rescue and driver training, along with non-operational topics such as duty of care and governance, record keeping, core competencies and CPD frameworks.

'An online training session organised by Chris Cookson, our national rope rescue lead, proved popular and was judged a success, as well as being a platform for future joint training. Chris and I have since been working with Paul Edisbury, a Kinder team member and the Peak District's regional rope lead, to get joint rope work training up and running as a joint regional training objective. I've also discussed joint cross-border training with Paul Russell of Scottish Mountain Rescue.

Joint training brings financial savings,

often justifies a specialist venue or input, and ensures that those who might need to work together on a big incident already know and understand each other's skills.

'MREW needs to make the most of limited funding for national training as the LIBOR grants that subsidised training for several years have now finished. In that context, we need to maximise the impact of what we do and ensure that we're deriving as much benefit from each training course as possible.

'I think we're in a good place and there's reason to be optimistic. Every time I browse an issue of 'Mountain Rescue' magazine, there are more examples of teams working with each other, with their local emergency services or with other volunteer rescuer organisations to learn from each other and improve knowledge and skills.

'It's all about excellence, but it's great to see other values such as teamwork and a passion for training too.'



Opposite & top: Joint training hosted by Western Beacons MRT, involving members of Peak District teams, Derby CRO and Holme Valley MRT in August. **Inset:** MREW shared values: Teamwork, Excellence, Passion and Caring © Henry Paisey. **Above left:** Joint rope rescue training in Glossop, for Peak District teams, in September 2025 © Henry Paisey. **Above centre:** Peak District members join the Scottish Mountain Rescue gorge and canyon training in September 2025 © Henry Paisey. **Above right:** Remote Rescue Medical Technician CPD at Swaledale in June 2025 © Tim Cain.

News snips

from around England and Wales

'Train hard, fight easy' may be a military concept, but it applies equally as well to mountain rescue: by training at potentially higher levels of intensity, exploring 'worst case scenarios', you stretch your capability, physically, mentally and technically, building confidence and readiness.



training hard to fight easy

NOVEMBER 2025: Storm Claudia floods presents a timely reminder of how training translates into practice

Several teams around England and Wales have a swiftwater rescue capability, able to support the Fire and Rescue Services and their own – and other – communities when severe flooding occurs. This has proved particularly helpful over the years, in York and Cockermouth for example, and 2025 saw the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA) Monmouth putting their skills into practice during Storm Claudia. Friday 14 November had begun with severe weather warnings in place for much of Wales and the west of England. It also coincided with the first of two annual multi-agency flood rescue training days at Cardiff White Water Centre (CIWW), organised by Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum. A small team from SARA spent the morning in rescue scenarios, including from a vehicle and various pretend buildings, working with colleagues from Avon and Somerset SAR and various teams from 'Category 1' responders. But, just after noon, they found themselves tasked for real, with three flood teams requested. Tasks included rescuing homeowners from properties and drivers stuck in submerged vehicles, all regular training scenarios, as well as evacuating elderly patients from a local hospital. 'The benefits of multi-agency training were very clear,' says Richard Newhouse. 'It was especially useful to have had exercise exposure to major incidents, where the scale of the task becomes overwhelming and you just have to keep doing the basics, well.'

Above: Carrying out welfare checks. Inset: Multi-agency flood training at Cardiff White Water Centre © Richard Newhouse/SARA.

SEPTEMBER 2025: Joint water and rope training sessions in 'unseasonably' low water

When we think of water rescues, we might think of higher levels of water, fast-flowing water and urban flooding, but low water too can present challenges. The casualty might be a missing adult or child, or someone out of their depth (even close to the shoreline), injured or medically unwell, or trapped in deep mud. Any rescue carries the potential need for the fundamental skills – searching, casualty care and stretcher handling, technical rope systems – so teams practise with the conditions they have.

Left: Swaledale team members during a 'water to rope rescue' training session, casualty secured on the stretcher, on the boat © Swaledale MRT.



APRIL 2025: NESRA teams head to Glasgow for 'vehicle in water' training

Team members from Cleveland, Upper Wharfedale and Swaledale travelled to Pinkston Watersports for the two-day training, working through a number of scenarios and workshops, in a variety of water depths and speeds. They practised how to move in the water, stabilise vehicles, and then extract injured and non-injured occupants to a safe place.

Above: Vehicle in water training © Cleveland MRT.



JUNE 2025: Peak teams join forces with RAF Leeming for rope rescue training

Over the last year or so, Peak District team member Paul Edisbury (PDMRO Rope Officer) – supported by Toby Green (PDMRO Training Officer) and Phil Ridley (MREW Training Officer) – has been exploring the rope systems of different teams around the country. The aim of the training was simple: 'to gather an understanding of the crag systems and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) being used by teams across the UK'. These collaborations have greatly improved visibility on current capabilities which, in turn, leads to consistency in practice. The nature of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service is such that teams can be called to work nationwide, unlike MREW teams who – except in the case of wider major incidents – focus on their own neighbourhood. Systems become more nuanced, to suit their local conditions and terrain. In contrast, the RAF has been able to standardise their crag systems and SOPs. It was good to discover, however, that the fundamentals are very similar, with notable differences in pieces of kit and the 'pre-lower talk through' – all valuable learning points for future collaboration.

Above: RAF team members training with members of the Peak District teams, including Kinder and Buxton © Paul Edisbury/Henry Paisey.

JULY 2025: Annual joint rope rescue training event in quarry, for south west teams

The event was the fourth such annual bringing together of rope rescue professionals from search and mountain rescue teams, HART, ambulance and fire services, including an all-female team of rope rescue operatives from various organisations (Breaking Boundaries). The day's training included medical workshops alongside the technical rope rescue scenarios.

Below: Images supplied by Clive Bush, Avon & Somerset SAR.



multi-agency



36-hour cave and mountain rescue call

Mountain and cave rescue volunteers frequently work together in rescue operations, deploying the resources required to meet the situation. Indeed, five of our MREW member teams — Swaledale in the North East, Upper Wharfedale and the Cave Rescue Organisation in the Yorkshire Dales and both East and West Cornwall teams, at the other end of England — comprise a joint capability, responding to calls both above and below ground.

In October, a particularly difficult rescue operation, in appalling conditions — to recover three cavers, reported missing having failed to surface at the expected time — involved over a hundred team members of multiple mountain and cave rescue teams, and other volunteers. With Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association (UWFRA) leading, team members from the Cave Rescue Organisation (CRO), Calder Valley SRT, Derbyshire CRO and Swaledale MRT were joined by RAF MRS personnel and an extended list of other volunteers giving their time to rescue fellow cavers. The story appeared in full in the Autumn issue of 'Mountain Rescue' magazine, with UWFRA explaining how that long 36 hours had unfolded.

'The call came in from North Yorkshire Police at 9.00 pm Thursday 2 October, following a report of three experienced cavers who had entered Dowber Gill passage via Providence Pot to attempt a traverse to Dow Cave and were now overdue. The cavers had entered the system in the morning in good weather and should have completed the trip that afternoon, 36 hours before the bad weather was forecast.

'Given the scale of the task, UWFRA contacted neighbouring teams to ask for assistance. Surface comms were quickly established as team members entered the cave from both entrances.

'At approximately 2.30 am on Friday morning, the missing cavers were located below the high-level traverses on the approach to the 60ft Rift, towards the Dow Cave end of the system.'

Unfortunately, by this time, the earlier good weather had passed and heavy rain was causing water levels to rise, blocking the easiest exit for the rescue

parties. The only option was for team members to retrace their steps and exit via Providence Pot.

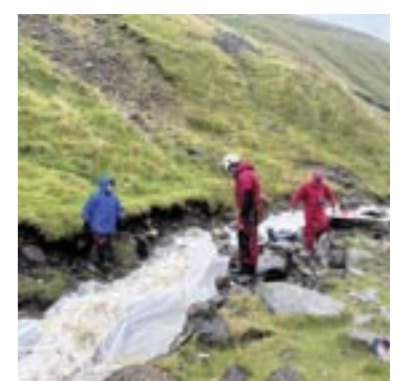
Meanwhile, team members on the surface endured appalling conditions to maintain communications with those below ground, via the Cave Link system. Driving conditions to Hag Dyke were also increasingly difficult as cavers and kit were transported up to the cave entrance.

'Underground teams worked in relays to bring the tired cavers back towards the Providence Pot entrance as the exit via Dowber Gill junction into Dow Cave was now flooded.

'As the beck at Providence Pot entrance was rising alarmingly, team members laboured to construct a dam and used plastic sheeting to carry the flood water past the cave entrance.'

At 3.30 pm the first missing caver was brought out of the cave and taken back to Kettlewell. The remaining two were still being moved slowly out of the system. By 6.00 pm, they'd reached Bridge Cavern, but rising water levels were making the traverses difficult. The cavers reached Stalagmite corner at 11.30 pm on the Friday evening, at which point, they split into two separate groups. The second missing caver was finally brought to the surface at 2.30 am on Saturday morning. The third was moving more slowly, but with a lot of help finally made it to the surface at 4.30 am, and was carried by stretcher to the warmth of Hag Dyke, before being taken down to Kettlewell at 5.40 am for onward transport to hospital by ambulance.'

Team members were finally stood down at 7.45 am, leaving 'only' a mountain of wet kit to dry out and sort ready for the next call-out! All in a day's work...



Images: Mountain and cave rescue team members from Upper Wharfedale FRA, Cave Rescue Organisation, Swaledale MRT, Calder Valley SRT, Derbyshire CRO and the RAF MRS were joined by additional volunteer cavers in the 36-hour rescue effort to recover three missing cavers in October 2025. Images show the conditions above and below ground, with heavy rain causing the rising water levels and flooding which hampered the operation © UWFRA.

News snips

from around England and Wales

Raising funds at both team and national level remains absolutely key to keeping this voluntary mountain rescue service operational and last year saw some stunning fundraising efforts across the length and breadth of the country — literally, in some cases.



APRIL TO JULY 2025: Land's End to John O'Groats in aid of mountain rescue, the start and finish line marked by a butty with Paddington

On 1 April, walker Martyn Culley set off on a journey from Land's End to John O'Groats, to raise funds for both MREW and Scottish Mountain Rescue. Along the way he took in many of the major ways and paths across the UK, joined on some legs by his son Sam (online 'influencer' and also a keen supporter and fundraiser), and meeting up with many teams en route. Paddington and his famous butty also featured. And as if that wasn't enough of a challenge, he cycled all the way back! 'Some might call it madness,' he said, before setting out on his epic journey, 'but I call it an adventure', and epic it certainly was, raising over £15,000 for MREW. And, as we go to print at the end of April 2026, Sam was setting off to walk the 630-mile South West Coast Path, with his camping kit on his back, aiming to raise a further £10,000!

Above: Just a few images from his epic journey, pictured with son Sam and Paddington © Martyn Culley.



APRIL 2025: John O'Groats to Land's End on a bicycle

As Martyn Culley left Land's End to walk north, Sam Williams was setting off from John O'Groats on a cycle ride south to raise funds for MREW. He took up the incredible challenge after being inspired by the work done by mountain rescue teams and to show his appreciation for the team members who came to the aid of a pal, after a climbing accident in Llanberis. He substantially passed his original target with an impressive £1,966 raised.

Left: Sam on arrival at Land's End © Sam Williams.



AUGUST 2025: Off-road cycle from Land's End

Retired Patterdale team member Morris Rodham cycled his off-road route from Land's End to John O'Groats to raise funds for the team's Welfare and Social Fund. His 'AMOR' (Adventurous, Mountainous, Off Road) cycle covered 1,600 miles with 170,000 feet of climbing more than doubled his target, with over £6,600 raised.

Above: Morris at Land's End © Morris Rodham.



AUGUST 2025: Hal's Hike LEJOG walk with tent

Hal undertook his version of LEJOG to raise funds for the North of Tyne team, of which his dad is a member. Just over six weeks on, carrying all his kit on his back and camping out every night, he arrived at journey's end with £2,320 raised.

Above: Hal at John O'Groats and running through his home territory © Hal Hodkinson.



JULY 2025: 'Gang of Six' cycle south to north off road

The self-styled 'gang of six' — including Brecon team member Chris Kerr — shared a passion for the outdoors and for cycling, and were looking (in their words), for a 'later life' challenge. Their LEJOG efforts raised £9,769 for the Brecon team.

Above: The 'Gang of Six' and supporters as they set off from Land's End © Brecon MRT.



OCTOBER 2025: Walking 20,000 miles to iconic peaks to support individual teams

Jon Ryley began his impressive challenge in memory of his parents Maureen and Terry, who passed away in 2019/2020, just 70 days apart. He'd initially set out to walk 10,000 miles, supporting six teams across the UK, a milestone he achieved in April 2025, on the summit of Ben Nevis. That first stage, between 2021 and 2025, raised £40,000, each 2,000-mile leg supporting a specific team and ending up at a significant landmark — Scafell Pike for Wasdale, Helvellyn for Patterdale, Cairngorm for Skye, Snowdon for Llanberis, Scafell for Duddon and Furness, and Ben Nevis for Lochaber.

He upped his goal to a further 10,000 miles, in support of a further six teams, with stage two beginning with Glossop MRT, with Loughrigg Fell, scheduled for January 2026. At the time of writing, he had raised £2,342 for Glossop team. Still to come are Cockermouth (where he will be heading for Haystacks and Fleetwith Pike), Bowland Pennine (Clougha Pike), East Cornwall (Coastal Walk or Brown Willy), Brecon (Pen Y Fan/The Fan Dance) and Cairngorm (Ben MacDui).

Top: Jon (far left of photo) on the top of Helvellyn. Below: With Duddon & Furness team members at their base in late-2024 © Jon Ryley.



MAY 2025: Eight-day camping trek to raise funds

Rachel Ardley of Lakeland Horse Trails undertook a 90-mile camping trek through the Lakeland Fells with her Norwegian Fjord Horse, Emiline, over eight days, raising £2,500 for the Patterdale team.

Right: Rachel with 'Em' at Patterdale team base in Glenridding © Patterdale MRT.



clocking up the miles

...to raise valuable funds



Four-legged stars of stage and screen

Mountain rescue search dogs featured on television several times during 2025, from 'SOS: Extreme Rescues' to BBC 'Crimewatch', with a starring role for Lake District Search Dog Morag on BBC 'Countryfile' too. And, just as they tend to steal the show when supporting fundraising events, the search dogs featured seemed very at home with all the attention of appearing on screen.

BBC 'Crimewatch' was maybe the more unusual of the features, with two search dog handlers from the south west region (PenMaCra), their dogs, two trainee search dogs, and a trusty 'dogsbody' volunteer. Steph McGovern and Rav Wilding were the presenters on the programme, which was broadcast live in October from the BBC Cymru studios in Cardiff.

Paula Holbrook, from Dartmoor SRT Ashburton, appeared with Search Dog Amber and Trainee Search Dog Mia. 'When we were invited, they mentioned wanting a positive story to balance the usual focus on crime. When we got there, it was clear the crew were really looking forward to having so many dogs in the studio. They got a lot of fuss and pats.'

Search dogs fall into four categories

- **Open-area air scenting dogs** trained to search for any human scent and locate any human being in the search area
- **Scent-specific trailing dogs** which work on a long line and are able to discriminate between different human scents, working from the scent of an article of the missing person's clothing
- **Combined dogs** combine the two disciplines into scent-specific open area and will be useful in large busy areas. This dog will work off lead as a normal open area dog, and also look for a particular person or scent by using an article from the missing person.
- Nationally, there are also some **water dogs** that can detect human scent coming out of water. These dogs are a useful resource if the person has gone missing near large bodies of water, such as reservoirs.

Karen Purrington, a North Dartmoor SRT team member and regular 'body' for search dog training in the region, was also featured along with Catherine Davis from North Dartmoor SRT, her Search Dog Jack E Chan and Trainee Search Dog Midget.

'It was a long day for the dogs in the studio, with several rehearsals as well as the piece itself,' says Catherine, 'but the BBC were incredibly thoughtful and attentive — and having Karen there to help with the dogs was invaluable. The 'Crimewatch' opportunity enabled us to explain the important role dogs still play in a search — often enabling missing people to be swiftly located even in dark or misty conditions. We even took the dogs out on to the streets of Cardiff where they were a big hit with the public!'

Also in Wales, but further north in Eryri, the latest series of 'SOS: Extreme Rescues' for the BBC featured two partnerships, handler Dave Jones with Search Dog Chloe, and handler John Mawer with Search Dog Barney.

'The "SOS Extreme Rescues" series was filmed on live jobs,' explains John Mawer. 'It is a testament to the skill of the camera crews that they managed to capture



the essence of why search dogs are such a valuable resource. Not only did they show the dogs' characters and the relationships between handler and dog, but they did it all whilst not impacting on the job at hand.'

Later in November, it was the turn of Search Dog Morag and her handler, Matt Nightingale of Penrith MRT in the Lake District. They were filmed outside in the Cumbrian rain rather than in a warm and dry studio, but the location created plenty of opportunities for Morag to demonstrate her amazing skills.

'The request for filming came through after Morag won the animal category of the BBC Radio Cumbria "Make a Difference" Awards,' says Matt. 'It was fairly typical weather for us being out on the fells and Morag did a great job of showing just how useful search dogs can be in tough conditions.'



Opposite: Paula Holbrook with Search Dog Amber © Paula Holbrook. Top: Dave Jones with Trainee Search Dog Chloe © Max Swinhoe; Matt Nightingale with Search Dog Morag © BBC. Above: Left to right: Catherine Davies with Trainee Search Dog Midge and Search Dog Jack E Chan, Paula Holbrook with Search Dog Amber, Steph McGovern and Rav Wilding with Trainee Search Dog Mia © BBC.



Taking to the skies to tackle a burning issue

Drones increasingly feature in search and rescue activities and volunteer drone pilots from mountain rescue teams are playing their part. As mentioned in last year's Annual Review, one important application of this technology — and the skills of the pilots and observers — is in providing support to the statutory fire and rescue services during wildfire incidents.

'Drone capability allows us to provide real-time footage and data,' says MREW Drone Officer, Brendan O'Neill, 'and thermal imaging cameras can be used to identify priorities for helicopter water drops and work on the ground, even when smoke is high and thick.'

Real-time information enables incident controllers to make better decisions and all while reducing the risks to fire service personnel. And, of course, the rescue volunteers can operate from a distance too, without having to go near the fires themselves. One particular incident, in April 2025, late in a period of very dry and hot weather in the Peak District, showed how valuable effective drone monitoring could be.

'We received a call for drone support on a moorland, north of Buxton,' says Brendan, 'and three of our pilots agreed to attend. Our early priority on Day One (of three, as it turned out), was to get an overview of the extent of the fire. This was relayed to a large screen on one of our vehicles for those alongside us and it was also live-streamed for wider viewing. A second run then gave an indication of how and where the fire was spreading!'

Later that day, the drone crews were also able to provide information about the movement of the fire close to an occupied farmhouse, enabling effective evacuation of the family, and details of

how and where the fire was approaching a forest plantation above Errwood Reservoir.

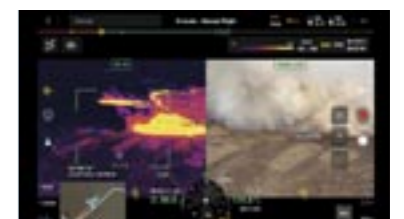
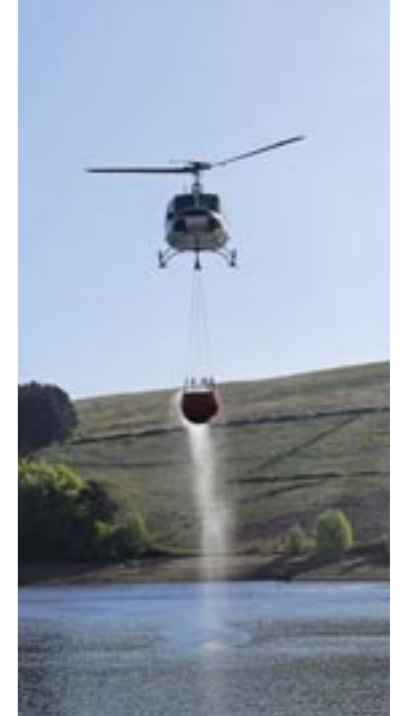
'We worked until midnight that first day, and it felt like our contribution made a real difference to the safety of local people and the fire crews too.'

Day Two started early, with cooler air enabling the drone cameras to pick up more temperature details and 'hot spots'. Those early scans were then used across the landscape to enable a helicopter to target a huge number of water drops on key areas of fire or smouldering ground.

On Day Three, the wind picked up and the 360-degree images captured by drone teams informed the continued fire fighting and water bombing, getting the bulk of the fire under control that day, before the Derby MRT volunteers were stood down.

The story of those three days featured on 'BBC Countryfile' in late June, after a much wetter few weeks in the Peak District, but wildfires remained an issue in different parts of Britain throughout the year.

'We learnt a great deal over those three days,' says Brendan. 'Unfortunately, it looks as if wildfires will continue to be a high risk and our experience is likely to be invaluable to mountain rescue drone pilots across the country in the months and years to come.'



Opposite & above: Scenes from the Goyt Valley moorland fires, 20 April 2025 © Brendan O'Neill. Below: The Schiebel S-100 drone during trials in Avonmouth © Brendan O'Neill.



Mountain rescue drone teams involved in unmanned aircraft trials

The joint exercise in late November, with the NPAS team, was based in the Severn Estuary Avonmouth, and involved the NPAS Unmanned Trials team, and members of the Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA) Beachley. The aircraft tested was the Schiebel S-100, weighing 110kg, a single-engine aircraft with a 3.4m main rotor and additional tail rotor. Due to the location, the team were able to set up both land and water-based scenarios to test the equipment. Overall, the trials proved really useful on a number of fronts, proving the NPAS capability, highlighting the need for robust comms between the different agencies and demonstrating how multiple unmanned assets can operate together.



Looking after our team members

It's a day most team members say they dread — and would walk over hot coals to avoid — but when the chips are down, who better to treat you and carry you to safety than your own trusted mountain rescue colleagues? And May 2025 saw not one, but two such incidents, one in a quarry in Lancashire, the other in the Lakes. One case in particular proved a case study in how the Rescue Benevolent Fund can support team members in need.

The first incident saw Bowland Pennine team members called to a climber who had fallen twenty feet and was suffering severe back pain. Shortly afterwards, a message came in from one of their own members: 'I'm the cas, guys... sorry!'

Knowing they were heading out to one of their own, and the potential for severe injuries, made it a difficult call-out, but teams are adept at pulling together to effect a rescue, supporting each other and talking through decisions to manage a situation.

The first on scene carried out a medical assessment. The injured climber was given Entonox for pain relief and secured in a pelvic binder and vacmat to prevent any spinal movement. After careful extraction down steep ground, the team were able to get their teammate to the road and the waiting ambulance. They thanked the other climbers in the area who had helped in various ways, adding that their team member was 'now recovering from surgery to pin his spine after fracturing his L1 vertebra'.

Later in May, Keswick team were called to an incident above Derwentwater. One of their own members had raised the alarm from a training exercise with the Lake District search dogs. One of the dog handlers, a Kendal team member, had slipped and fallen on a greasy slab of rock, sustaining significant injuries.

Surrounded by dogsbodies and dog handlers, the casualty had been quick to receive help. Keswick team members gave medical assistance and carried him by stretcher to a waiting ambulance.

John Leadbetter had been training with his Trainee Search Dog Jura when he fell. He had sustained three major trauma injuries affecting both legs, leaving him in hospital for two months. The first week, he says, was a series of X-rays, ultrasounds and an MRI scan to fully diagnose the extent of his injuries. This was followed by

a five-hour surgery to rebuild his ankle and knees, after which he was confined to a hospital bed and hoisted into a wheelchair at visiting times.

'Slowly but surely, the NHS teams helped me progress to a frame, with restricted flex on my left leg and a cast and cricket splint applied to my right leg. I could use a Zimmer frame to move about the ward, but anything further needed the support of a wheelchair.'

'Over time, the hospital physio team supported me so that, on discharge in July, I was just starting to use crutches for short distance, still with the wheelchair for anything longer and with supportive braces on both legs.'

Meanwhile, John's wife Clair was in contact with the Rescue Benevolent Fund, and discussions had already begun as to how the fund may be able to help in his long-term recovery.

The Rescue Benevolent Fund was set up in 2013 — a collaboration between MREW and BCRC — to help support team members in need, be that physical, psychological or financial.

'With everything that Clair was having to deal with on my behalf in daily life, it made a big difference,' says John. 'The fund trustees were so understanding of the situation and introduced me to The Fire Fighters Charity (FFC), who work with the fund to facilitate effective rehab.'

Once John had recovered a degree of joint movement, and restored some flexion, mobility and strength, in early 2026, he had his four-night stay at Jubilee House with the FFC. Thanks to a regime of gym and pool work, still more physio and short local walks, he ended the stay with the confidence to 'waddle' with only his trek poles for occasional support and had started to learn how to tentatively kneel on his left knee — something the surgical team had said would be at least twelve months away.



TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE WORK OF THE RESCUE BENEVOLENT FUND, GO TO [RESCUEBENEVOLENT.FUND](https://www.rescuebenevolentfund.org).

AND TO READ JOHN'S OWN ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT, SCAN THE QR CODE FOR THE SPRING 2026 MOUNTAIN RESCUE MAGAZINE.



Opposite: Cohesive teamwork in action: North of Tyne team members during winter training in Scotland, February 2026 © NOTMRT. **Top:** Bowland Pennine team members attend to their injured teammate © BPMRT. **Right:** John leaving hospital in July, with Trainee Search Dog Jura and being looked after by rescue colleagues following his slip © John Leadbetter/Keswick MRT.



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Looking for a mountain rescue memento?

Our model Land Rover (barely two inches long) is one of the most popular items on our online shop, along with our super-soft Fudge Bear in his 'I support Mountain Rescue'.



Opposite: North Dartmoor water rescue training © North Dartmoor SRT.
Top: Mountain rescue Land Rover illustration © Judy Whiteside.



Thank you. We can't do any of it without your help. Here's how you can support us.

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Leave a legacy: A gift to us in your Will allows you to support our future — even a small gift can make a big difference. And it's the surest way to fund the equipment and training for the years to come as gifts are exempt from inheritance tax, capital gains tax and income tax, so the charity receives the full value of your bequest.

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MOUNTAIN RESCUE ENGLAND AND WALES

SO MUCH MORE THAN MOUNTAINS

Lake District Search & Mountain Rescue Association

Cockermouth
Coniston
Duddon & Furness
Kendal
Keswick
Kirkby Stephen
Langdale Ambleside
Patterdale
Penrith
Wasdale

Mid Pennine Search & Rescue Organisation

Bolton
Bowland Pennine
Calder Valley
Holme Valley
Rossendale & Pendle

North Wales Mountain Rescue Association

Aberdyfi
Aberglaslyn
Llanberis
North East Wales
Ogwen Valley
South Snowdonia

South Wales Search & Rescue Association

Brecon
Central Beacons
Longtown
Western Beacons

Peninsula Mountain & Cave Rescue Association

East Cornwall (Mountain + Cave)
West Cornwall (Mountain + Cave)
Dartmoor (Ashburton)
Dartmoor (Plymouth)
Dartmoor (Tavistock)
North Dartmoor
Exmoor

North East Search & Rescue Association

Cleveland
North of Tyne
Northumberland National Park
Teesdale & Weardale
Swaledale (Mountain + Cave)

Yorkshire Dales Rescue Panel

Cave Rescue Organisation (Mountain + Cave)
Upper Wharfedale (Mountain + Cave)
Scarborough & Ryedale

Peak District Mountain Rescue Organisation

Buxton
Derby
Edale
Glossop
Kinder
Olham
Woodhead

ASSOCIATED ORGANISATIONS

Avon & Somerset SAR
Severn Area RA

Cave Rescue

COMRU
Derbyshire CRO
Devon CRO
Gloucestershire CRG
Mendip CR
Midlands CRO
North Wales CRO
South East CRO
South & Mid Wales CRT

Search Dogs

Lakes District Mountain Rescue Search Dogs
Mountain Rescue Search Dogs England
SARDA Wales
SARDA South Wales

RAF

RAF Leeming MRT
RAF Valley MRT

If you require mountain or cave rescue assistance: Dial 999. Ask for 'Police', then 'Mountain Rescue' or 'Cave Rescue'

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Find us online at mountain.rescue.org.uk

Facebook: @MountainRescueUK LinkedIn: @MountainRescueEnglandandWales

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