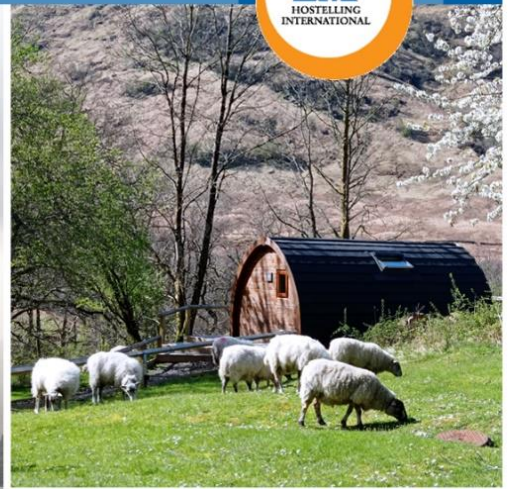




Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023-24

Unleash your sense of adventure!



Message from the Chair



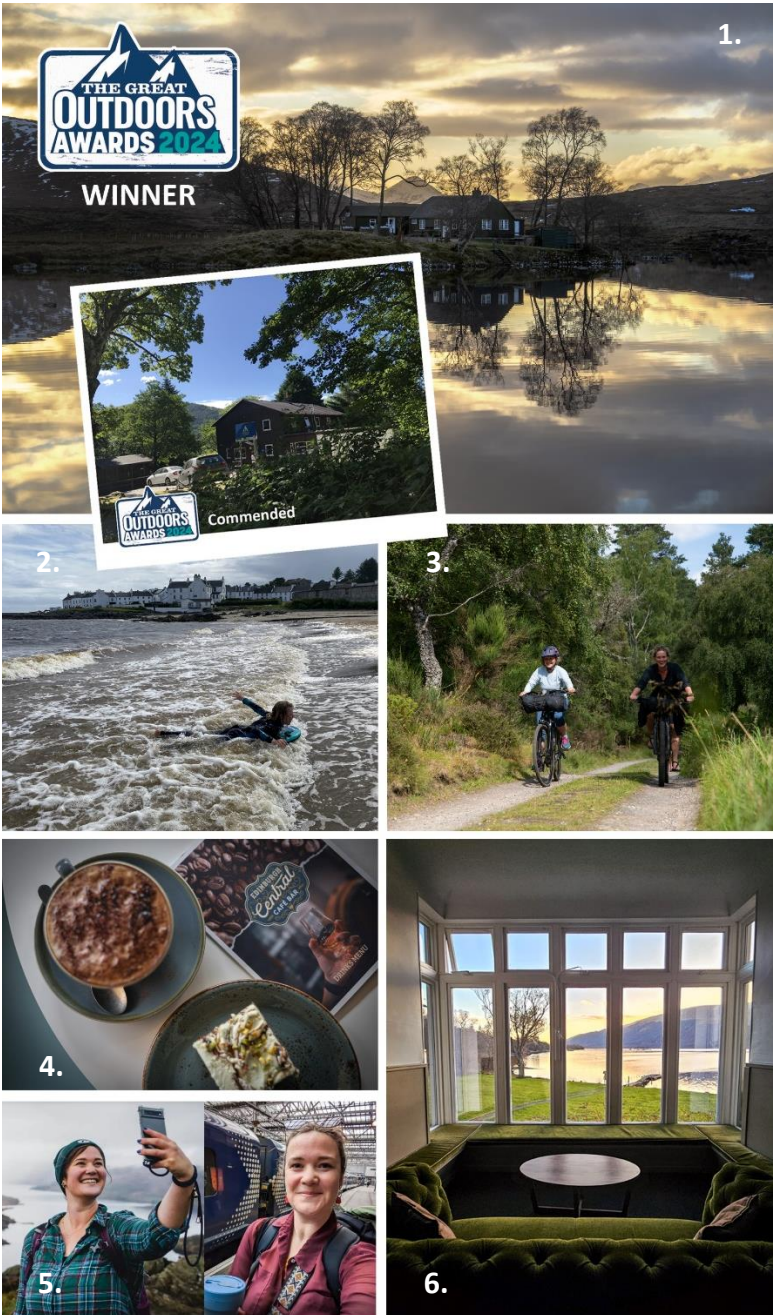
2023-24 was the first year of our 3 year Recovery Strategy and what a year it was! We welcomed more guests than last year and having enjoyed staying in hostels on my travels, it was great to see how busy they were and have the pleasure of meeting fellow members.

It was a busy year of planning which included phase 2 of our refurbishment project at Rowardennan Youth Hostel and development works at our Braemar Youth Hostel, made possible by the proceeds from the sale of the former Aberdeen Youth Hostel.

Thank you to all individuals, trusts, funders and corporate organisations that have supported our charitable objectives during the year. Your support is greatly appreciated.

I am extremely grateful to our own people, for their hard work and dedication as employees, to volunteers for their contributions, to our members and guests for their custom and support, and to those who have provided financial support by gift or waiver.

Claire McCorquodale, Chair



1. Loch Ossian Youth Hostel was crowned Hostel/Bunkhouse of the year in the 2024 TGO Magazine Reader Awards with Glencoe also receiving a commendation.
2. Travel influencer Jenny Eaves enjoyed a family hostelling break on the Isle of Islay.
3. The Adventure Syndicate took their mothers on an e-bike cycling and hostelling adventure in the Cairngorms National Park.
4. The Café Bar at our Edinburgh Youth Hostel was given a fresh new look.
5. Travel influencer Kathi Kamleitner shows that Scotland is one of the safest countries in the world for solo female travel.
6. Our newly refurbished Rowardennan Lodge Youth Hostel will make the perfect stopover for weary travellers on the West Highland Way.
7. Our new bespoke bedding has been rolled out across the network.



Governance and Strategic Aims

Principal Charitable Objective

The principal charitable objective of SYHA is ‘the advancement of education, for the public benefit, by helping all, but especially young people, to experience and appreciate the Scottish countryside, environment, natural heritage and places of historic and cultural interest in Scotland, and through the promotion of their health, recreation and education, particularly by providing low cost accommodation for them on their travels’.

Trustees and Directors

The Board, who are the Charity Trustees and Directors of the Company, received no remuneration for their services. Those who served as Board members during the year were:

		Current Term
Claire McCorquodale	(2023-26)	Re-appointed 16.09.23
Paul Randall	(2022-25)	Re-appointed 17.09.22
Sophie Bell	(2021-24)	Re-appointed 04.09.21
Martin Davidson	(2022-25)	Appointed 19.11.22
Donald Martin	(2021-24)	Appointed 04.09.21
Yvonne Milne	(2022-25)	Appointed 19.11.22
Jennifer Ruddick	(2020-23)	Retired 16.09.23
Robert Swinfen	(2021-24)	Appointed 04.09.21
Carolyn Wright	(2022-25)	Appointed 19.11.22
Andrew Aldous	(2023-26)	Appointed 16.09.23
Catherine Ratcliff	(2023-26)	Appointed 16.09.23

Executive Management

Chief Executive & Company Secretary: Margo Paterson

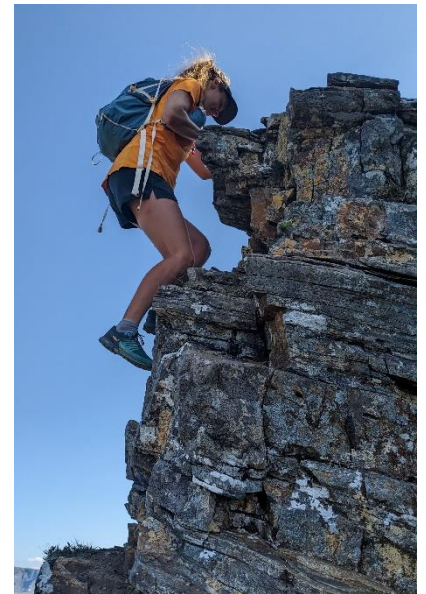
Director of Operations & Deputy Chief Executive: Sabine Mackenzie

Director of Property and Health & Safety: Audrey Greenwood

Registered Office:

7 Glebe Crescent
Stirling
FK8 2JA

Telephone: 01786 891400
Facsimile: 01786 891333
Email: info@hostellingscotland.org.uk
Website: hostellingscotland.org.uk



We were very pleased to have been able to support the wonderful Lotti Brooks with her self-propelled Munro round.



As one of a series of mini hosting adventures, The Adventure Syndicate enjoyed a sustainable trip exploring the beautiful Isle of Islay.



Our Glenbrittle Youth Hostel felt the full force of the Scottish weather, losing its roof just before the start of the season.

Recovery Strategy 2023-25

Hostelling Scotland (also known as Scottish Youth Hostels Association) exists to inspire all, but especially young people, through the provision of great value and welcoming hostelling accommodation.

Our charitable objectives and our values will be central to the delivery of our 2023-2025 Recovery Strategy.

The 2023-2025 Recovery Strategy concentrates on improving the long term viability of the organisation through meaningful activities that will have the greatest impact on retained surpluses.

This will provide Hostelling Scotland with the necessary reserves to develop, invest and grow the organisation ahead of the Centenary in 2031.

Strategy Aims & Activities

This Recovery Strategy is built on four central and interdependent themes.

1. Nurture our Charitable Objectives and Activities

- a) Progress a governance framework that fulfils our social responsibilities in particular focusing on improving diversity and inclusion opportunities.
- b) Develop partnership and community engagement initiatives that promote the good work and reputation of the organisation.
- c) Formulate a plan to enable the relaunch of youth and family explorer programmes and volunteering opportunities.



2. Foster a Culture of People Development

- a) Create an environment that promotes diversity, inclusiveness and engagement.
- b) Provide personal growth opportunities for everyone.

3. Operate and Promote our Hostels Sustainably and Responsibly

- a) Protect the assets through enhancement and development of our estate, hostel facilities, website and systems including where possible implementation of initiatives that will improve accessibility.
- b) Deliver the best, affordable and flexible hostelling experiences.
- c) Inspire travel and promote the Hostelling experience to a wider audience, encouraging adoption as a lifestyle choice.
- d) Develop an environmental plan to support the delivery of responsible tourism specific to the hostelling sector thereby reducing our carbon footprint and improving operational efficiency.



4. Protect our Financial Future

- a) Rebuilding of cash reserves to allow for future expansion and financial growth.

Outcome of 2023-24 Objectives

If Carlsberg did hostels... Along with Ratagan, probably one of the best hostels in the world. Can't speak highly enough about Glencoe Youth Hostel and the team.

Guest Review, Glencoe Youth Hostel

1. Nurture our Charitable Objectives and Activities

a) Progress a governance framework that fulfils our social responsibilities in particular focusing on improving diversity and inclusion opportunities.

2023-24 objectives:

- Trustees to connect with their network and external organisations to promote involvement in governance.

Achieved. Trustees had active involvement ahead of 2024 call for applications to stand for Board Election resulting in a higher level of interest.

- Board of Trustees to review the effectiveness of the current governance recruitment processes and bring forward a programme of recommendations for change ahead of the call for nominations 2024.

Achieved, with changes made in advance of the 2024 call for applications resulting in the recruitment process being shared via social media channels in particular business network platform LinkedIn.

b) Develop partnership and community engagement initiatives that promote the good work and reputation of the organisation.

2023-24 objectives:

- Through social media storytelling and media communications, grow awareness of Hostelling Scotland as a sustainable charity to the broadest possible audience.

Achieved. This is achieved through the use of current social channels and the successful launch of our TikTok channel. Across all platforms Hostelling Scotland is maximising reach through Influencer social channels, blogs and Podcasts along with paid advertising.

Media coverage has included:

- Edinburgh Spaniels article in Times Alba.
- WoofHostelling press trips to Glasgow and Oban have taken place working with DogFriendly.co.uk, featuring in their monthly newsletters.
- Kathi (Watch me see) solo female travel Podcast.
- Mother and Daughter trip with Lee, Alice and Phil covered in print by The Herald and also on Podcast.
- Gabby Secomb-Flegg's Rent-a-Hostel adventure in Loch Ossian featured in The Scotsman.
- Press trip with Mark Jones (Daily Mail) focussed on dispelling 'Youth' Hostel misconceptions completed
- Times Alba, editor trip to Loch Ossian had to be cancelled at the last minute due to adverse weather conditions. This will be revisited in the New Year.
- Newsletters continually enjoying +50% open rate.



Hollie Jenkins and the adorable Edinburgh Spaniel's WoofHostelling adventure in the NW Highlands was enjoyed by readers of The Scotsman.

This is a magical place. It does have the feel of a mountain hostel - and it has been built to a Norwegian design. We were grateful of the large drying room, as we had been caught in a storm. The beach is a 15 min walk away. Super friendly staff. We loved it here.

Guest Review, Glenbrittle Youth Hostel

- **Grow partnership connections that support, through association, the promotion of hostelling with a particular focus on under-represented groups.**

Achieved. This has been achieved through:

- The Adventure Syndicate: A series of mini campaigns captured on video and on Podcast including: Boot Camp Aviemore, Lochinver Pie Run, Islay Whisky, Mums and Daughters and Coast to Coast.



Aviemore Bootcamp was one of a series of hostelling adventures captured on film by The Adventure Syndicate and available to watch on our YouTube channel.

- SOYT: Eco hostelling trip to Loch Ossian helped promote youth group travel, responsible tourism and celebrated inclusivity, diversity and the social aspect of hostelling.



Scottish Outdoor Young Team enjoyed a sociable break, enjoying nature and making the most of the great outdoors in Loch Ossian.

- HI: A closer working relationships with Hostelling International and Member Associations individual marketing teams is work in progress. A content sharing platform has now been established and regular meetings will be scheduled across 2024 to share best practice and encourage broader cross member association (international) promotion.
- Lochaber Chamber of Commerce: Press trip with Mark Jones (Daily Mail) was done in partnership with Lochaber Chamber who worked with local activity providers and food and drink businesses in the provision of activities and fresh local ingredients for him to prepare in the hostel's self-catering kitchen.
- Girls on Hills: Future partnership agreed and projects for the 2024 season at the planning stage. Girls on Hills have already announced on their social channels that they will be teaming up with SYHA for events in the New Year.

c) **Formulate a plan to enable the relaunch of youth and family explorer programmes and volunteering opportunities.**

2023-24 objectives:

- **Assess the role of Charity Youth Engagement Officer to ensure it best meets the needs of the charity in delivering youth and family breaks.**

In progress. The Youth Engagement Coordinator job description is being finalised. The post has been included in 2024-25 budget.

- **Working with key partners to provide access to youth and family breaks.**

Achieved. Parent Network Scotland weekend has taken place in Lochranza and discussions have commenced in regards to ideal hostel location to support families and children. Throughout the year through the Respiteability Breaks partnership, Hostelling Scotland has offered short bed and breakfast breaks including an end of year carer's event which took place in Glasgow Youth Hostel in November 2023.

This was perfect for our family of four. The facilities were beautiful and we loved being so close to a lovely hike. We enjoyed the common room and pool table. We'd definitely recommend it!

Guest Review, Aviemore Youth Hostel

- **Provide opportunities for individuals to apply for volunteer projects.**

Achieved. Hostelling Scotland has hosted volunteer projects in Loch Ossian and Gairloch Youth Hostels. Both have been with pre-existing contacts and the project work (primarily maintenance and upkeep) was agreed mutually and scoped out directly based on the individuals' time available and capabilities.

Furthermore the existing volunteer policy, volunteer contract and volunteer guidance notes for managers have been updated.

Next step is the HR team to attend the postponed volunteer strategy course in the New Year (2024) with a view to expanding the volunteer programme.

2. Foster a Culture of People Development

a) Create an environment that promotes diversity, inclusiveness and engagement.

2023-24 objectives:

- **Create a new induction programme that equips employees with the knowledge and tools to succeed in their role.**

Achieved ready for the 2024 season. A more detailed Group Manager Induction programme has been developed which includes off-site training at Head Office, Stirling and work shadowing another Group Manager.

The standard employee induction schedule was also refreshed for 2023 but ahead of 2024 this has been further developed with core training now accessible via an online platform.

This will cover topics to include:

- safeguarding
- GDPR
- food safety
- health and safety

- Training on absence management course for managers to focus on absence reduction and managing absences correctly.
- **Develop communications within the organisation to include re-energising the employee forum.**
Achieved. Development of the structure of monthly management team meetings with Head Office and Group Managers.

The in person pre and post season Group Hostel Manager Meetings now include an invite to all Head Office employees. This provides an opportunity to catch up and share information with hostel colleagues.

Information on individual hostel financial outcomes and guest feedback is now cascaded to all hostels.

Developments within technology allows us to invite representatives from hostels to communicate on an internal platform via video conference or call.

All employees can now access their own information and company policies via our HR information system.

The format of the colleague forum has been finalised with the relaunch planned in the first business period of 2024-25 when the network reopens for the season.

b) Provide personal growth opportunities for everyone.

2023-24 objective:

- **Provide opportunities for personal development that enhance employee skills to facilitate career progression within the organisation.**

Achieved. The internal promotion development plan has allowed for appointment of the following promoted roles within the organisation; 3 Supervisors, 3 Duty Managers, 2 Managers (Hostel and Relief), 1 Group Manager and 1 IT Manager.

Mentoring and coaching sessions are in place for new manager posts supporting and equipping colleagues with the knowledge and the confidence to perform in their roles.



New furniture has improved the guest experience at our Glasgow Youth Hostel and Achmelvich Beach will benefit from development work in 2024

3. Operate and promote our hostels sustainably and responsibly

a) Protect the assets through enhancement and development of our estate, hostel facilities, website and systems and including where possible implementation of initiatives that will improve accessibility.

2023-24 objectives:

- Refresh the website by improving navigation and product information to enable guests to access content improving their browsing and booking experience.

Achieved. Improvements have been made to wording and imagery on the current website which includes changes to the access guide and hostel facts sheets making them easier to update and access.

The current website while migrating to the latest version of Umbraco has been streamlined with initial discussions on future website development taking place in advance of 2024 plans with a view to making the main interface and booking experience seamless for everyone.

In tandem with the website refresh to improve search engine optimisation, we have also updated Hostelling Scotland Google AdWords in an effort to make online advertising easier and more effective. This will allow us to target ads to google on a regular basis to promote traffic and various promotions.

Throughout the hostel network the broadband connectivity has been improved. By doing this it allows all users to access systems a lot quicker with better connected speeds.

Linked to the Rowardennan legacy project we were also approached by BT Openreach to have full fibre broadband installed free of charge. This is part of the government's broadband rural project to get fast broadband to remote locations, providing faster broadband and full Wi-Fi coverage which will allow our guests and employees to keep in touch with family and friends while at the hostel.



Rowardennan Lodge Youth Hostel will re-open to guests this season after a major refurbishment.

- Completion of phase 1 of Rowardennan legacy project in March 2023 and commencement of phase 2 from October 2023.

Achieved. Phase 1 of the project to create washroom facilities is complete.

Phase 2 is underway with work having commenced January 2024.

- Upgrading of composting toilets in Loch Ossian.

In Progress. Working in partnership with a specialised company, a solution is being sourced that will improve the facilities during the 2024 season. This project will be funded through the Small Hostels Fund.

- Replacement of roofs at Ullapool and Glenbrittle.

Achieved. Roof works have been successfully completed on both properties.

- Feasibility assessment of Braemar Youth Hostel refurbishment works

Achieved. Contractor appointed January 2024.

- Develop a small hostels project from donation received.

In progress. Having also considered Gairloch and Ratagan, Achmelvich Beach has been identified as the hostel that would benefit most from additional works that would enhance guest comfort. These works will be carried out in 2024.



Work has been carried out to improve awareness of the food and drink available for guests to enjoy across the hostel network.

b) Deliver the best, affordable and flexible hostelling experiences.

2023-24 objectives:

- **Enhance the guest experience and stay satisfaction through the improvement of in room guest facilities including washrooms.**

Achieved. Enhancements have taken place across the network to increase comfort which includes window dressings and midge screens fitted in three hostels; under bed storage lockers purchased for Rowardennan; new beds for Portree and Broadford; and bed side lamps procured for Stirling. Inverness received new self-catering dining chairs.

Additional furniture has also been purchased for Glasgow to complete the public area upgrade. Furthermore, the lounge and dining furniture from Aberdeen was repurposed and transferred up to Pitlochry. Additional furnishings from Aberdeen, namely bedframes, mattresses, lounge chairs and tables have been placed into storage awaiting completion of the works in Braemar. A full replacement of beds and mattresses were procured for Ratagan and the mattresses awaiting replacement in Aviemore have also been installed improving the look and comfort for our guests.

A programme for upgrading shower rooms and a project to provide additional sockets in all bedrooms has been developed to be rolled out in 2024.

- **Develop the hostelling catering provision with a particular focus on breakfast delivery and availability of food and beverage choices.**

Achieved. The food and drink section of the website has been updated with the inclusion of sample menus for Edinburgh and Cairngorm Lodge.

To encourage early booking and additional uptake, all guests that book a bed and breakfast package at the point of booking will receive a small discount.

Improvements have been made to promote the availability of hostelling food & drink through better pre-arrival communications, signage, menus and introduction of in-house QR codes to help raise awareness of what is on offer. Improvements have also been made to the visual display of breakfast across all hostels.

In response to feedback from guests and teams, the breakfast price was reduced which has had a positive impact in terms of value for money.

- **Enhance customer responsiveness through developing team product knowledge and improving processes and guest communications.**

Achieved. Pre-arrival communications and hostel information has been centralised directing all guests to one point which is accessed through a link to the hostel website page. This has created a better guest experience and internally is managed when hostel details have to be updated.

Rolling out the room plan (showing available beds and rooms) of each hostel to be visible across all sites through the Central Reservations System has improved guest response time and onward sales for the network.

Head Office Reservations team pre-season conducted site visits to expand their knowledge of the hostels which has greatly supported them through the season when speaking to guests.

A new sales system has been developed and is in the process of being rolled out across the hostel network. The system provides a smoother process for employees to offer and sell various food and beverage products.



Travel and lifestyle influencers continue to play a key role in raising awareness of hostelling as a great choice for anyone travelling on a budget.

c) Inspire travel and promote the Hostelling experience to a wider audience, encouraging adoption as a lifestyle choice.

2023-24 objectives:

Through targeted marketing activities and supported by influencer/partnership working, stimulate travel by celebrating hostelling's core strengths to include:

- Fantastic and unique locations
- Affordable, flexible, informal and welcoming accommodation that is open to all.
- Part of the communities in which we operate and supporting responsible and sustainable travel.

Achieved. We have welcomed 27 influencers, press or partnership related trips during 2023-24. Key themes have focused on dispelling misconceptions of hostelling, highlighting safe and welcoming hostel accommodation, sustainable active travel, solo female travel, affordable and flexible family travel, inclusion and diversity, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, and support of local communities. Through our social channels we have looked to inspire future travel plans by promoting affordable accommodation in unique and stunning locations, the social aspect of hostelling, sustainability, cultural city breaks, dog friendly 'WoofHostelling' escapes and the range of food and drink available for our guests to enjoy.



Working with photographer Ailidh Beaton, we continue to offer inspiring imagery of the fantastic hostels and unique locations we have on offer.

d) Develop an environmental plan to support the delivery of responsible tourism specific to the hostelling sector thereby reducing our carbon footprint and improving operational efficiency.

2023-24 objective:

- Working in partnership with VisitScotland and Keep Scotland Beautiful, progress a climate action plan.

On-going. We continue to work with VisitScotland who are a key partner in supporting the delivery of the Scotland Outlook 2030. They provide us with excellent resources and guidance on our continuous journey to being a Responsible Tourism organisation.



We are reviewing how we can work in partnership on what more Hostelling Scotland can do to inspire action and changes in behaviour that will make a positive environmental difference.

On a day to day basis we have removed single use plastic products such as cups, straws and plastic bottles and where possible we use refillable soap dispensers. LED lighting is also being installed across the network and whenever feasible, we will work with local food and drink suppliers.

Whenever possible we will always partner with third sector organisations to donate old Hostelling Scotland bedding, towels, uniforms, furniture so they can be reused or repurposed – locally where possible.

The organisation is progressing with a three year programme that will focus on upgrading bike sheds in the most popular locations which will improve facilities for cyclists and include provision of e-bike charging points.

Utterly surprising. Just brilliant. Views stunning. Youth Hostel team couldn't have done more to help us. A wonderful much needed escape from the city. We'll be back!

Guest Review, Torridon Youth Hostel

Throughout the year in our Marketing communications we have championed the message to our guests that we all have a responsibility to travel in a sustainable and responsible manner (Responsible travel). We have consistently shared sustainable travel options to include walking, bike-packing and train travel.



Our 'Cross Generational Hostelling' Campaign brought together mums and daughters enjoying a sustainable cycling adventure in Cairngorms National Park.

Hostelling Scotland continues to progress with ensuring that sustainable options are being considered when hostel upgrades and refurbishments are being carried out.

4. Protect our Financial Future

a) Rebuilding of cash reserves to allow for future expansion and financial growth.

2023-24 objectives:

- **Continual review of hostel pricing strategy**
Achieved. All hostel business including availability and pricing is reviewed at the monthly revenue meetings which is attend by all members of the Central Management team.

Furthermore, Hostel Managers in partnership with the Reservations Manager review competitor pricing, hostel peaks and troughs and guest feedback. With their awareness of special events, they work towards driving accommodation income when demand is higher and look to increase volume through promotional offers during less popular days/months.

The team also ensures that the all accommodation is available to book for all hostels as far in advance as possible.

- **Explore potential cost efficiencies and additional income streams**

Achieved. Utility savings have been made across the network of 14% for electricity and 7% for gas.

Renegotiation of electricity contracts following the 2022 unit cost increases will make savings in the winter months ahead.

Detailed review of billing and usage has resulted in capacity reductions being made in Glen Nevis and Edinburgh.

Installation of energy saving monitors in Edinburgh which will monitor usage 24 hours in all areas allowing for improvements to be made within Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel and the learnings to be implemented in hostels across the network

A beautiful hostel, very cosy and lovely hosts. We loved our stay and have recommended it to our friends. Great location by Loch Lomond. Beautiful lounge. Perfect double room. A very special place!

Guest Review, Rowardennan Lodge Youth Hostel

We have extended the wild camping area at Rowardennan Youth Hostel and developed the food and beverage offering at Edinburgh Central Café in addition to introducing a loyalty card to encourage repeat local business.



Enjoy some delicious food and drink at our Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel.

Furthermore we have made significant progress in our bid to becoming a paperless organisation with the HR Department progressing with contracting new employees electronically and moving all employee information online. Cost benefits are being realised through reduced printing, postage and paper costs.

In preparation of landlines phones expected to be phased out in 2025, all hostels have been moved onto our new VOIP telephone system called RingCentral. Having all locations on the same connected phone system allows us to connect with everyone in the organisation via a variety of methods (voice, messaging, video calls). This has meant that cost savings have been made as we no longer have to pay for telephone lines at each hostel location and calls will be cheaper.

- **Work with online third party agents in the delivery of targeted promotions**

Achieved. Hostelling Scotland has and is successfully running promotions in Perth, Cairngorm Lodge, Oban, Glasgow and Inverness. Running these promotions during periods of low demand has increased visibility to the hostel network and ensured the listing is featured more often than not on the first page.

Winter 'Late Escape' deal has been introduced on third parties to drive volume to open hostels and generate additional base business for the winter months.



Oban is one of our locations that has benefitted from strategic promotions with 3rd party booking agents.

- **Sale of Aberdeen Youth Hostel**
- **Research the potential to expand Hostelling Scotland student residency services**

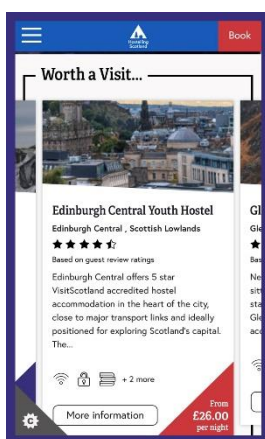
Achieved. Aberdeen Youth Hostel was sold on 10th October 2023.

Ongoing. Discussions continue with Orkney College and Heriot Watt University with a view to Kirkwall Youth Hostel being available for student use over the winter period. The Perth Residency three year contract was successfully extended by one more year to 31st August 2024.

- **Consider rescheduling of borrowing**

Achieved. Part settlement of the CBILS loan, thus reducing interest payments.

The Board of Trustees approved the following Objectives for 2024-25:



Key priorities for the future include raising awareness of our charitable status, improving the online booking journey and building on our core audience.

1. Strategic Aim: Nurture our Charitable Objectives and Activities

a) Progress a governance framework that fulfils our social responsibilities in particular focusing on improving diversity and inclusion opportunities.

2024-25 objectives:

- Launch of annual Trustee teambuilding and governance day.
- Review of Articles of Association

b) Develop partnership and community engagement initiatives that promote the good work and reputation of the organisation.

2024-25 objectives:

- Develop opportunities with new and existing partners, raising awareness of Hostelling Scotland to our core 'Adventure Seeking /Outdoor Enthusiast' audience.
- Promote sustainable travel and the benefits of hostel accommodation over alternatives such as wild camping and bothies.
- Champion the "good element" of Hostelling to all social backgrounds, in particular under-represented groups, to highlight that hostelling is open for all.

c) Formulate a plan to enable the relaunch of youth and family explorer programmes and volunteering opportunities.

2024-25 objectives:

- Creation of the role of Youth Engagement Coordinator
- Provision of work placement and volunteer opportunities to support network opening and end of season close down of hostels.

2. Strategic Aim: Foster a Culture of People Development

a) Create an environment that promotes diversity, inclusiveness and engagement.

2024-25 objectives:

- Launch of the colleague forum
- Roll out of diversity training for all colleagues
- Regular production of Wellbeing Newsletter

b) Provide personal growth opportunities for everyone.

2024-25 objectives:

- Review of current Hostelling Scotland recognition and reward package
- Develop performance review procedures
- Develop a pipeline of talent to feed into our succession plan
- Create a structured mentoring programme

3. Strategic Aim: Operate and Promote our Hostels sustainably and responsibly

a) Protect the assets through enhancement and development of our estate, hostel facilities, website and systems and including wherever possible implementation of initiatives that will improve accessibility.

2024-25 objectives:

- Embark on a 2 year website development programme aimed at improving the web accessibility and online experience including booking journey.
- Upgrade of WI-FI coverage throughout the network in hostels and employee accommodation.
- Strengthen network security by installation of new Firewalls and introducing 24/7/365 security monitoring.



Refurbishment works will improve the hostelling experience at Braemar and Rowardennan.

We will continue to promote responsible and sustainable travel.

- Completion of Phase Two of Rowardennan Youth Hostel legacy project in May 2024 for re-opening in June 2024.
- Carry forward: Upgrading of composting toilets in Loch Ossian.
- Completion of Braemar Youth Hostel refurbishment works in June 2024 for re-opening in July 2024.
- Development of a Small Hostels project at Achmelvich Youth Hostel.

b) Deliver the best, affordable and flexible hostelling experiences.

2024-25 objectives:

- Commence on a 2 year programme (Feb 2024 to January 2026) of improving shared dorm accommodation comfort and facilities through the provision of adequate secure storage for each guest and ensuring sufficient availability of plug and USB points.
- Enhancement of self-catering facilities and opening hours across the network.
- Relaunch of customer feedback form to provide better understanding of guests' needs.

c) Inspire travel and promote the Hostelling experience to a wider audience, encouraging adoption as a lifestyle choice.

2024-25 objectives:

- Develop our in-hostel and online messaging, raising awareness of Hostelling Scotland's charitable status, helping to differentiate our organisation and offering guests a tangible benefit from choosing to stay with Hostelling Scotland.
- Continue to invest in influencer activity (recognised as one of the most trusted sources of travel inspiration) raising awareness of Hostelling Scotland to a wider audience, dispelling misconceptions and encouraging trial, especially with those who wouldn't normally consider hostelling.
- Commence the upgrade of bike sheds across the network to provide charging points for E-bikes.

d) Develop an environmental plan to support the delivery of responsible tourism specific to the hostelling sector thereby reducing our carbon footprint and improving operational efficiency.

2024-25 objectives:

- Promote and encourage sustainable travel and responsible tourism through PR opportunities, partnership working, social media and our regular marketing communications.
- Creation of Hostelling Scotland Environment and Sustainability Commitment and Actions charter.

4. Strategic Aim: Protect our Financial Future

a) Rebuilding of cash reserves to allow for future expansion and financial growth.

2024-25 objectives:

- Aim for a surplus of £1M
- Early repayment of CBILs borrowing by August 2024.
- Re-opening of Braemar Youth Hostel following a closure period of 2 years
- Upgrade of facilities at Rowardennan Youth Hostel
- Increase incremental sales and breakfast ratings
- Tender for Energy Consulting Services to support the management of current utility cost challenges.
- Progress with the Perth College tender negotiations to deliver student residence management services and summer hostel accommodation.
- **Carry forward:** Re-energise the potential to expand Hostelling Scotland student services
- **Future project development:** conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the opportunities of developing alternative accommodation, reviewing location, practicality and return on investment. This will be completed in advance of submitting a new project proposal to commence in 2025-26.

Our Values, Mission and Vision

Our Values:

- We promote our charitable objectives by being open to all.
- We work together with pride and integrity to get things done.
- We are committed to operating in an environmentally sustainable way.
- We actively promote and take equality, diversity and inclusion into account in everything that we do.
- We pledge to give back and provide young people and families, who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity, the chance to experience Scotland and develop their skills for life, learning and work.
- We empower our teams by providing a fair work environment with meaningful opportunities for advancement.
- We work proactively in partnership with local communities, authorities and agencies.

Our Mission:

Inspire all, especially young people to experience Scotland through the provision of great value and welcoming hostelling accommodation.

Our Vision:

Staying true to our values, we offer the best hostelling experience throughout Scotland for everyone.

Where to stay?

From cities to islands, beaches to hills and mountains and all points in between, there's no better way to explore and discover Scotland - #GoHostelling

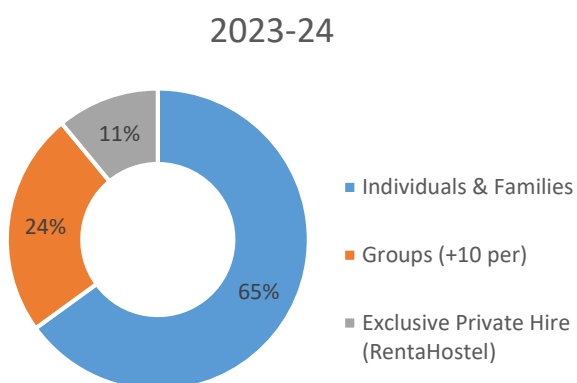


Review of Annual Activities

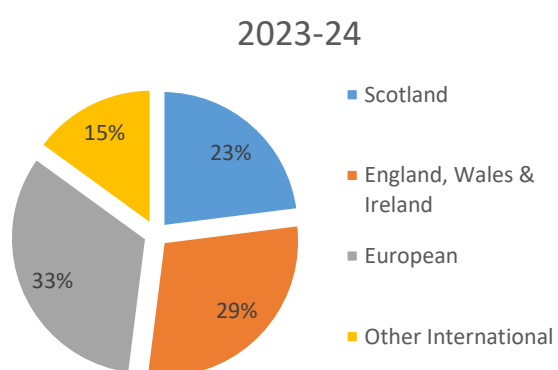
Hostelling Guests:

We welcomed 317,447 overnight guests (2023: 292,744) during the year, an increase of 8% on the previous year.

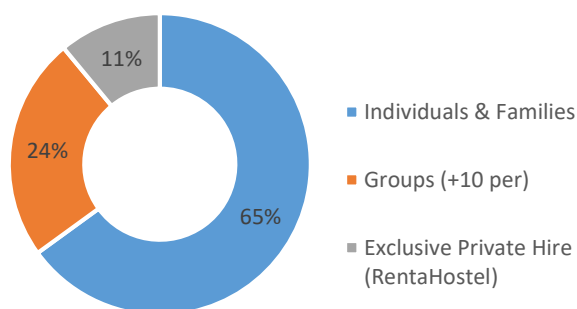
Guest profiles were:



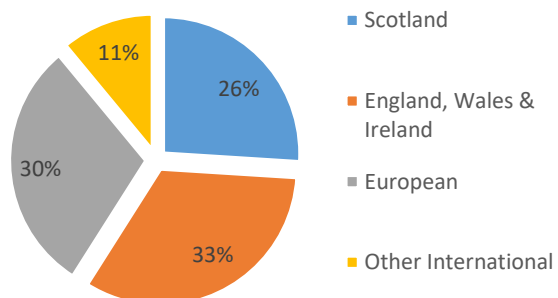
Guest nationalities were:



2022-23



2022-23



Affiliates

24 affiliated hostels within our network welcomed 55,853 overnight guests during the year.

Membership

Membership increased to 12,763 (2023: 11,784), with lifetime membership continuing to be popular with 385 new members in this category during 2023-24.

Loch Ossian is legendary, and well deservedly. Cared for by Jan, it's a unique experience in probably the most stunning location most of us will ever see in Scotland. Embrace its features, its quirks and create a memory sitting with morning coffee on a lochside table or sharing tales by the fire.

Guest Review, Loch Ossian Youth Hostel

Working with young people and families:

Explorer Fund

We hosted the final postponed group trip as a result of lockdown in 2020 and look forward to re-launching our youth engagement programme in 2024-25.

Respitality and Parent Network Scotland

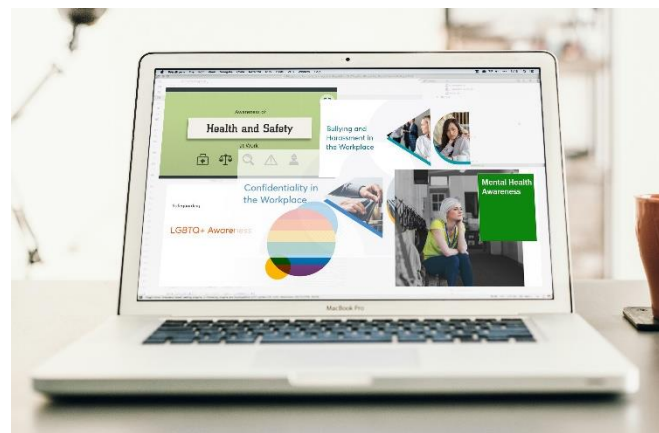
We continued our partnership working throughout 2023-24, with 12 much needed short breaks enjoyed by unpaid carers and families.



Hostelling People:

Training

A new suite of online training was launched in 2023 working in partnership with learning platform Virtual College. Courses are tailored to each job level focusing on softer skills, key legislative and health and safety knowledge. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, data protection, confidentiality in the workplace and fire safety and manual handling training is provided for all employees.



Working with Virtual College, we provide an extensive range of online training courses for our teams at Head Office and across the hostel network

HR System

A new HR Information system went live in 2023 resulting in all contracts being sent digitally enabling quick turnaround for all employee documentation. Colleagues also have access to their own information, with employee information now uploaded securely leading to the achievement of paperless communication and onboarding. This has made significant savings in postal costs and contributes to our environmental objectives.

Volunteers

In 2023-24 we were extremely grateful for volunteer contribution in supporting the hostels to get ready for the start of the season.

Hostelling Operations:



New furniture has given Aviemore a more contemporary feel. We continue to work closely with HI, hosting the 2023 CEO Conference at Edinburgh Central.

65% of all bookings in the year (2023: 65%) were generated through Reservations, at the hostels and on our website, with 35% (2023: 35%) being generated through third party booking engines.

On a basis of 5,443 reviews (2023: 5,057), Hostelling Scotland Guest Reviews scored 94% (2023: 92%) for overall stay, with guests scoring the following for the individual parts of their hostelling experience:

	2023.24	2022.23
Good Value	92%	92%
Atmosphere	92%	94%
Cleanliness	92%	92%
Comfort	88%	88%
Facilities	88%	88%
Check-in	96%	94%
Service	94%	94%
Location	96%	96%

Hostelling Scotland Guest recommendation score was 96% (2023: 95%).

VisitScotland Quality Assurance (QA)



Visit Scotland inspected 11 properties, with the remaining hostels having their awards upheld from the inspections completed in 2019 and 2022. All 11 hostels retained their existing grading.

	Hostels 2023/24	Network %	Hostels 2022/23	Network %
4-5 Star	16	55%	17	57%
3 Star	10	35%	11	37%
1-2 Star	2	7%	2	6%
Awaiting Accreditation	1	3%	0	0%
Total Hostels	29	100%	30	100%

Sustainable Tourism



Post pandemic, Hostelling Scotland took the decision to leave the Green Tourism Business Scheme and is currently reviewing alternative sustainable tourism certification scheme providers that will support the organisation's green credentials and achievement of environmental sustainability objectives.

Hostelling Property

£1,232,261 (2023: £1,057,023) was re-invested into the network during the year. £156,482 (2023: £129,886) was expended on capital, the major elements of this being roof works, washroom enhancements and electrical upgrades. A further £187,047 was expended on the Rowardennan Project and £17,500 on the pre works for the Braemar project. £649,241 (2023: £555,908) was expended on routine property and equipment maintenance and costs relating to statutory compliance and health and safety. £117,343 (2023: £313,846) was spent on furniture and equipment across the network, with the remaining £104,648 (2023: £57,383) spent on upgrading the organisation's information technology infrastructure and system enhancements.

Hostelling International



Since our formation in 1931, we have taken an active part in the activities of Hostelling International (HI) which as a global network provides support by driving direct reservations and promoting the mission and quality of the brand on behalf of 61 Youth Hostel Associations around the world, with over 3,000 hostels in 59 countries.

We meet regularly with British and Irish Youth Hostelling Associations and other European national associations to discuss matters of mutual benefit and cooperation.

2024 is an exciting year for HI as it embarks on an ambitious transformation programme. Intent on elevating and strengthening its position as a pioneering global charity and youth hostel member organisation three main work streams are underway; brand, digital transformation and social impact.

Annual Activities Summary

Warm, welcoming and perfectly located this hostel is great. The folks working there, Jess in particular, went above and beyond to help us with anything we needed. Have already booked our next stay.

Guest Review, Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel

In 2023-24 we operated 28 Hostels welcoming 317,447 guests, achieving a phenomenal occupancy of 68% which was 8% ahead of 2022-23.

Overall it was a very successful year, the first of the 3 year Recovery Strategy. All hostels in the network enjoyed growth on prior year and we are incredibly proud that all key performance indicators (KPI's) included in our 2023-24 Objectives were in line with or exceeded targets set.

£1.2M was spent in the year on maintenance, health and safety and capital expenditure. Within this, phase 1 of the Rowardennan Youth Hostel legacy works was completed early in the 2023-24 season. Phase 2 commenced in January 2024 and the hostel will re-open from 1st June 2024 with extensive works having been carried out throughout to provide better facilities and experience for our guests.



New washroom facilities at our Rowardennan Lodge Youth Hostel.

The sale of Aberdeen Youth Hostel allowed re-investment in Braemar Youth Hostel which we are delighted to be re-opening in July 2024 following a programme of electrical, heating and decoration upgrade works.

RentaHostel and Woofhostelling continue to be extremely popular with our guests, with Glen Nevis being the latest hostel to be included in the Woofhostelling collective from December 2023.



Cairngorm Lodge is a popular choice for guests looking for a RentaHostel, exclusive private hire.

There were many successes in the year as highlighted in the achievements of our 2023-24 Objectives, including the roll out of new bespoke Hostelling Scotland bedding across the network which has proven popular with guests and the rebranding of Edinburgh Central's Café.

Our year has not been without challenges, not least resourcing gaps and losing our Glenbrittle Youth Hostel roof.

Lifetime membership continued to be popular and we are extremely grateful to all our members for their support.

Social media channels remained a key source of engagement throughout the year along with communications to our members and followers through regular e-mail and newsletter updates.



Scottish Outdoor Young Team enjoying time together at our Loch Ossian Youth Hostel.

At the end of our AGM on 16th September 2023 we welcomed two new Trustees to the Board – Andrew Aldous and Cathy Ratcliff, with Claire McCorquodale having been successfully voted back onto the Board of Trustees.

Thanks to a successful year, we ended the year with a strong cash balance, providing a secure position to move forward into 2024-25, the second year of our Recovery Strategy.

We are extremely grateful to all individuals, trusts, funders and corporate organisations that have supported our charitable objectives during the year - to our own people, for their hard work and dedication as employees and contributions as volunteers, to our members and guests for their custom and support, and to those who have provided financial support by gift or waiver.

We continue to achieve our charitable objectives through our financial management, investment in properties and drive to deliver affordable accommodation and services to guests along with our development of and commitment to social tourism and youth programmes.

The Board of Trustees and Directors is committed to rebuilding surpluses to invest back into the Youth Hostelling network ensuring our long-term future. Since 1931 it has been our mission to make more of Scotland more accessible to more people. This remains core to everything we do and we will continue to work hard to provide quality experiences for all.

As we look forward to 2024-25, the Hostelling Scotland product and offering continues to be well positioned within the budget accommodation market and for this reason we start this new financial year with confidence.



2023-24 was another popular year for youth hostelling, with all hostels busier than prior year.

We were delighted to welcome new, regular and returning hostellers to our network and it was clear to see that the flexible and affordable nature of hostelling accommodation is becoming increasingly popular. The relaxed and sociable environment that hostels provide along with facilities such as self-catering kitchens and even the ability to bring along the family pet has been welcomed by guests and makes a family break in Scotland more accessible for many.

We had a fantastic year and there was much to celebrate. Our Loch Ossian Youth Hostel picked up the top award in TGO Magazine's annual readership awards under the Hostel/Bunkhouse category with Glencoe a close runner up.

We were honoured to host the Hostelling International CEO Conference in Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel in October 2023. Colleagues from across the globe came together to develop plans for the future of the international network and a new era for hostelling, and of course all the while enjoying our famous Scottish hospitality!

Throughout the year we worked with a number of partners to promote and inspire travel to Scotland. From a series of sustainable mini adventures with The Adventure Syndicate, captured on video and available to view on our YouTube channel, to a project with Lochaber Chamber aimed at raising awareness of wonderful things to see and do in 'Scotland's Outdoor Capital'.

People make hostelling and this is demonstrated every day by the hard work, dedication and contribution of colleagues throughout the organisation to the success of Hostelling Scotland.

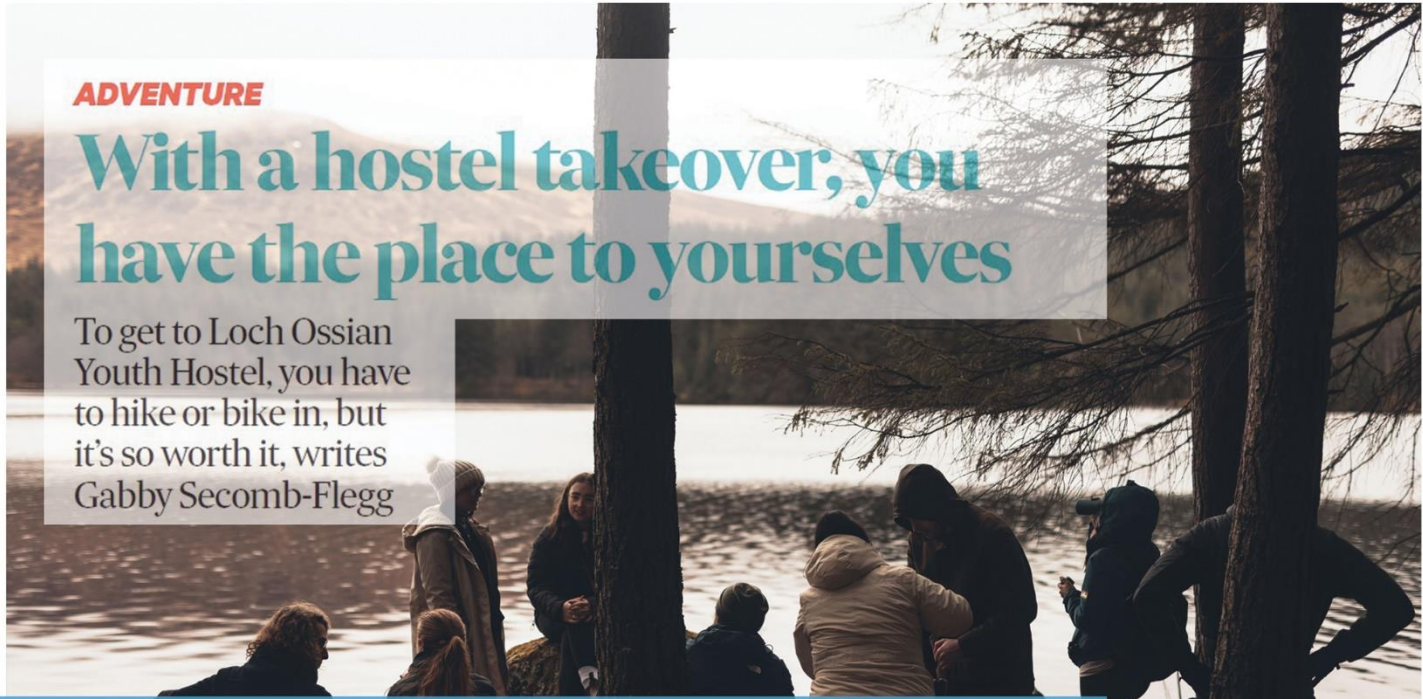
Hostelling is becoming more popular than ever and as we journey to our centenary in 2031, we will continue to improve our offering to meet the ever changing needs of our guests.

Margo Paterson, Chief Executive

ADVENTURE

With a hostel takeover, you have the place to yourselves

To get to Loch Ossian Youth Hostel, you have to hike or bike in, but it's so worth it, writes Gabby Secomb-Flegg



THE CHAOTIC SCOT SCOTTISH TRAVEL BLOG

HOME ABOUT ME MY SERVICES PUBLIC TRANSPORT SCOTTISH ISLANDS BLOG POSTS

5 SCENIC HOSTELS IN THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS 1) GLENCOE YOUTH HOSTEL

Surrounded by some of Scotland's most iconic and dramatic scenery in Scotland, Glencoe Youth Hostel is a gateway to epic adventures and the perfect base to explore.

Nestled amidst nature, on a quiet road between Glen Coe (the landscape) and Glencoe village, the hostel has everything you need: a drying room, kitchen and lounge, shop in Reception, bike storage, lockers and parking.

There are 41 beds, including shared dorms, private rooms, and even an **onsite glamping pod** for extra comfort and privacy, while still enjoying the benefits of the hostelling experience.



Daily Record NEWS • POLITICS • FOOTBALL • SPORTS • TV & CELEBS • LIFE & STYLE • PARTNER STORIES

Cosy Scottish 'eco-hostel' along edge of loch crowned best in UK for 2024

The winners of the annual The Great Outdoors Magazine Reader Awards have been crowned, and one idyllic Scottish hostel has been crowned the best in the country.



How biker mums and daughters took on the Cairngorms

Sandra Dick
WHEN three outdoors adventuring mums suggested to their young-at-heart mums to join them on a Highland bikerpacking adventure, it could have been a very bumpy outing indeed. For a start, the mums are aged from 63 to 79, and the mini-break spent pedalling up steep hills and bunking down at night side by side in a hostel may have sounded like anything but relaxing.

Instead, the three-day cycle trip through stunning Cairngorms scenery – apart from an unfortunate face-first encounter with a wasp nest after one mum's electric bike hit 'turbo' mode and sent her flying – turned out to be everything they didn't expect, and more.

For having fretted over a host of potential problems that might come from ransacking up their trio of mums for the kind of bikerpacking outing that tends to be left strictly to the young...

Feature



They may still be called youth hostels, but Hostelling Scotland's network of great value places in spectacular locations are for people of all ages, as stay-something Mark Jones discovered at Glen Nevis

Chance to be in the Glen Nevis hostel, one of the most remote and beautiful in the country, and you'll find a warm welcome and a friendly atmosphere. It's a place where you can relax and enjoy the views, or if you're feeling adventurous, you can go for a walk in the hills. The hostel is a great base for exploring the area, and it's a great place to stay if you're looking for a quiet and peaceful stay.

Make yourself at home

Hostelling Scotland
Best Hostel



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Community

Newsletter

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'That Magical Feeling' – Solo Travel with Hostelling Scotland

Scotland with Sam



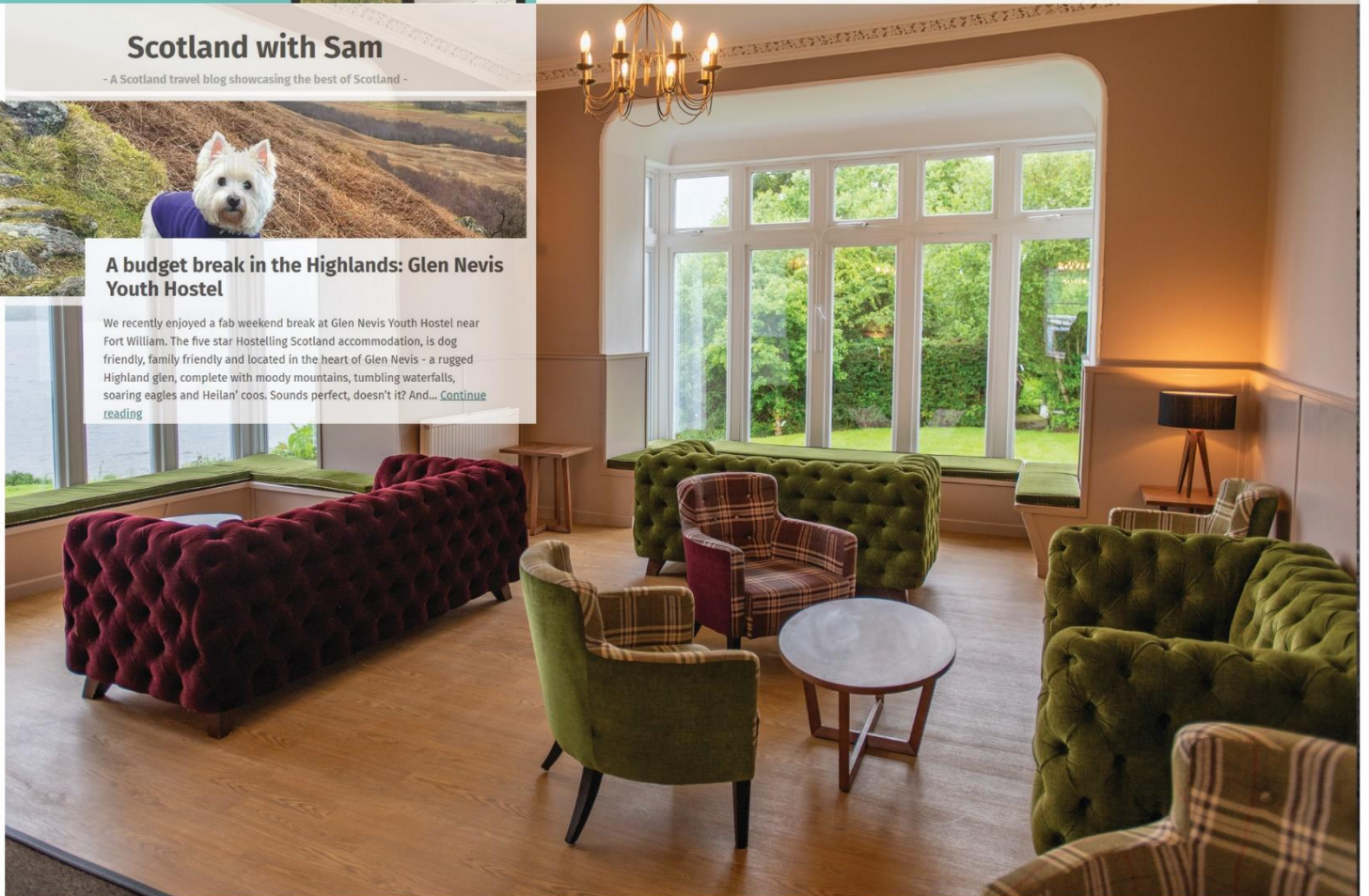
Scotland with Sam

- A Scotland travel blog showcasing the best of Scotland -



A budget break in the Highlands: Glen Nevis Youth Hostel

We recently enjoyed a fab weekend break at Glen Nevis Youth Hostel near Fort William. The five star Hostelling Scotland accommodation, is dog friendly, family friendly and located in the heart of Glen Nevis - a rugged Highland glen, complete with moody mountains, tumbling waterfalls, soaring eagles and Heilan' coos. Sounds perfect, doesn't it? And... [Continue reading](#)



Group Statement of Financial Activities

(incorporating the Group Income and expenditure account) For the year ended 31 January 2024.

Independent Auditor's Statement on the Summarised Financial Statements to the Members of Scottish Youth Hostels Association

We have examined the summarised financial statements of Scottish Youth Hostels Association for the year ended 31 January 2024. This statement, including the opinion has been prepared for, and only for, the charity's members and trustees as a body and for no other purpose. We do not, in giving this opinion, 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 our prior consent in writing.

Respective responsibilities of Trustees and auditor

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised report and financial statements in accordance with applicable United Kingdom law and the recommendations of the Charities SORP. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements within the Annual Review with the full annual financial statements and trustees report. Our procedures, which were conducted with regard to Bulletin 2008/3 (withdrawn) which was issued by the then Auditing Practices Board.

Opinion

In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full annual financial statements and the trustees report of the Scottish Youth Hostels Association for the year ended 31 January 2024.

Henderson Loggie LLP

Chartered Accountants
Statutory Auditor
11-15 Thistle Street
Edinburgh
EH2 1DF

	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Income from:		
<i>Donations and legacies</i>	85,271	164,793
<i>Charitable activities</i> - Operating Youth Hostels	8,960,286	7,374,764
Other trading activities		
Commercial Income from SYHA (Trading) Ltd	259,193	203,197
Membership subscriptions	626,684	539,100
<i>Investments</i> – bank interest	100,937	14,291
Other Income – net gain on disposal of fixed assets	-	111,259
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total income	10,032,371	8,407,404
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Expenditure on:		
<i>Raising funds</i>		
SYHA (Trading) Ltd expenditure	206,168	153,259
Membership costs	43,131	38,749
<i>Charitable activities</i> - Operating Youth Hostels	8,793,370	7,249,050
Other Expenditure – net loss on disposal of fixed assets	248,582	
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total expenditure	9,291,251	7,441,058
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Net (expenditure)/income	741,120	966,346
Transfers between funds	-	-
Net movement in funds	741,120	966,346
Reconciliation of funds		
Total funds brought forward	13,623,584	12,657,238
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total funds carried forward	14,364,704	13,623,584
	<hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

Balance Sheet

At 31 January 2024

	Note	Group 2024 £	Group 2023 £
Fixed assets			
Tangible assets		14,815,318	14,960,807
Investments		-	-
		14,815,318	14,960,807
Current assets			
Stocks		30,065	29,888
Debtors		127,809	250,660
Cash at bank and in hand		7,149,722	6,007,548
Assets held for sale		-	650,174
		7,307,596	6,938,270
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		(4,612,403)	(4,058,866)
Net current assets		2,695,193	2,879,404
Total assets less current liabilities		17,510,511	17,840,211
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than one year		(3,145,807)	(4,216,627)
Net assets		14,364,704	13,623,584
Funds			
Restricted Funds		986,746	1,053,587
Unrestricted general funds		13,377,958	12,569,997
Total charity funds		14,364,704	13,623,584

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 26th June 2024 and signed on their behalf by:

Claire McCorquodale: Director

Paul Randall: Director

Note to the Summarised Financial Statements

The summarised financial statements are taken from the audited statutory financial statements of Scottish Youth Hostels Association for the year ended 31 January 2024. The auditor's opinion on those statutory financial statements was unqualified with no emphasis of matter reporting. Further the auditor's report contained no statement under either s. 498(2) or (3) of the Companies Act 2006. The summarised financial statements may not contain enough information for a full understanding of Scottish Youth Hostels Association's affairs and members are invited to read them in conjunction with the audited financial statements of the charitable company. Copies of the full statutory annual accounts will be delivered to the Register of Companies and a copy can be obtained from The Chief Executive, SYHA, 7 Glebe Crescent, Stirling, FK8 2JA.

Hostelling Finance

Total operational income was £10,032,371 (2023: £8,407,404) a 19% increase of £1,624,967 on prior year (2023: £3,750,731 increase). Total resources expended was £9,291,251 (2023: £7,441,058), a 25% increase of £1,850,193 (2023: £2,636,707 increase). The resulting surplus of income over expenditure was £741,120 in the year after all costs including depreciation (2023: surplus £966,346).

SYHA (Trading) Ltd. a wholly owned subsidiary trading company generated, in its fourteenth year of trading, incoming resources of £259,193 (2023: £203,197), with resources expended of £206,168 (2023: £153,259) providing a net profit of £53,025 (2023: £49,938), a sum which has been gift-aided to the parent company under deed of covenant.

SYHA gratefully received general donations and legacies of £45,840 (2023: £128,249) along with restricted donations and legacies totalling £39,431 (2023: £36,544). The following expenditure was made from these restricted funds in the year:

- **Social Inclusion:** £5,824 (2023: £15,139) was expended on social inclusion youth programmes.
- **Small Hostels Project:** £800 (2023: £5,595).
- **Property Legacy:** £99,648 (2023: NIL).

After making all due enquiry, the Trustees confirm their expectation following preparation of forecasts and in consideration of key scenarios and assumptions, that SYHA has adequate resources to continue to operate as a charity for the foreseeable future. Therefore, in preparing the accounts, the Trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis.

Hostelling Scotland reports net surplus in funds for the year ended 31 January 2024 of £741,120 (2023: £966,346 surplus) after providing for all charges, including depreciation. The resulting balance of funds as at 31 January 2024 is £14,364,704 (2023: £13,623,584).



Registered Office:

7 Glebe Crescent
Stirling
FK8 2JA

Telephone: 01786 891400

Email: hello@hostellingscotland.org.uk

[hostellingscotland.org.uk](https://www.hostellingscotland.org.uk)



Scottish Youth Hostels Association (also known as SYHA or Hostelling Scotland) is a registered Scottish charity No.SC013138 and a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland, No. SC310841. Registered Office 7 Glebe Crescent, Stirling, FK8 2JA.

