



ABC Training Trust

Chair's Annual Report

May 08- May 09

Since its launch last spring NICAS has come a long way. After over two years of trials, development, consultations, meetings, working groups and negotiations with the ABC, BMC and MLTUK, the ABCTT was constituted in early 2008 and the scheme officially launched last May. From the initial 22 ABC Primary Centres that originally supported the scheme, the scheme has now grown to include over 80 registered centres covering the four countries of the UK and Ireland (and soon France!) These centres range in variety from small school climbing walls, through to large public climbing centres and big organisations like the Scouts, armed forces and PGL. In our first 12 month period over 12,000 log books have been sold with an estimated 10,000 individuals coming into contact with the scheme in its first year. This has exceeded our expectations and, with the overwhelmingly positive feedback from these centres, gives me great confidence for the future.

The scheme has provided a structure and impetus to climbing instruction and coaching for participants and deliverers alike. A great deal of advice, induction and training has been delivered to walls through NICAS where otherwise it may have never occurred. It is particularly gratifying to see some of the expertise residing in the Primary Centres being disseminated to other walls to improve instructional and coaching standards. In some cases applicant walls have had to make physical improvements before joining the scheme and have taken technical advice where otherwise they would have had none.

Although this report covers the 12 month period from May 08 – May 09 I need to acknowledge the huge amount of preparatory work that was undertaken before this to set up the ABCTT and develop the NICAS scheme into a credible and acceptable system. The BMC and MLTUK in particular have been very supportive of the scheme and without this we would never have gained the recognition and status that NICAS needed and currently enjoys. I would particularly like to thank Steve Long, Andy Say, Dave Turnbull, Nick Colton and Rob Adie for their involvement in this process. I also want to thank Steve Richardson for setting up our excellent website.

Remarkably, in my view, we failed to secure start up funding from Sport England at the beginning of 2008 and so it fell back to the ABC membership to support the scheme in its entirety. Without the faith and investment from the original 22 Primary Centres NICAS would never have got off the ground. The ABC and these centres in particular can be proud of what they have created with no external backing. For a fledgling company and charity, the finances look healthy and the future is optimistic. We have already bought

our second round of log book stock with cash reserves to spare and look forward to the revenues that these should generate. Our stock control, storage and distribution system has evolved into an efficient process with our designers and printers taking on much of the responsibility. Another reason for our financial health is the massive support we have had from Leicester City Council in providing Sophie Mitchell's administration time and Mark Highton's temporary officer time. Ian McKenzie deserves special thanks for this.

Sophie has done an excellent job of being the 'front door' of NICAS and diligently processing centre application forms. She has caught more than one centre and technical advisor out with poor applications. Mark's focus was on our stand at the Outdoor Show in March where we ran two climbing towers non-stop for three days. This was superbly organised by Mark and really raised the profile of the scheme. DMM have also come on board with a sponsor partnership and we look forward to developing this in future.

Now that NICAS is entering its second year the main challenge facing the board is, I feel, to respond to the rapid growth of the scheme. I feel we should concentrate on two main areas: organisational infrastructure and quality assurance. We need more support with administration and accounting due to the volume of work now required to run the trust as a professional business. It would also be highly desirable to appoint an officer to support the Primary Centres with delivery, induction and training as well as providing advice and publicity with a quality assurance role. All of the trustees have given much of their own free time over the last year as we have not had this executive to rely on and I must thank them for all their hard work. I hope we can relieve them of some of this burden if we can appoint the support we need.

Other interesting ongoing developments are a Welsh translation of the scheme and an adaptation for visually impaired climbers.

As for the future, NICAS has many challenges and opportunities ahead of it. Our first year's objective was to launch, sell and build the scheme around the UK. This appears to have been a success. We now need to establish a firm financial plan for the future based on our past experience and build up our internal support and QA systems. From there I would like to see NICAS and its accreditation become more widely recognised by other bodies and able to draw on central funding. No new scheme will be perfect and we can learn from other more established schemes as well as from our own user base. I would like to review the scheme in 2010/11 and see if any changes need to be made. Events on the horizon which may influence this and the future direction of the ABCCTT are the developing National Coaching Framework and the industry's response to the LOtC Quality Badging Scheme.

Finally I would like to thank all those managers and instructors around the country who have taken on NICAS with enthusiasm and embraced what it is trying to achieve. Hopefully we can pass on this enthusiasm to young climbers and inspire a new generation with the challenges and rewards of a climbing life.

Guy Jarvis
Chair of the Trustees

29th June 09