

ACAT Annual General Meeting (AGM) Minutes 2025

Date: November 25, 2025

Attendees: James Gunn (Trustee), Isaac Buckley (Trustee), Quinn McKay (Trustee), Anday Baird (Trustee), Juliet Nelson (Trustee), Erin Stewart (Trustee), Will Watterson (Trustee), Andrew Turner (Interim GM), Megan Thomson (Deputy GM)

Guest Attendees: Ross Cullen, Cameron McKay, Emma Lakin, Claudia Russell

Apologies: Mario Hernandez (Trustee)

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair, James Gunn, welcomed attendees to the 2025 AGM. The agenda included welcome and introductions, apologies, a Chair's summary, determination of office bearers, the Annual and Financial Reports, a decision on the review or audit of accounts, general business, and time for informal discussions.

3. Determination of Office Bearers

The names put forward for Office Bearers for the upcoming year were confirmed with no objections:

- Chair – James Gunn
- Deputy Chair – Will Watterson
- Treasurer – Erin Stewart
- Secretary – Erin Stewart

4. Chair's Summary (James Gunn)

The Chair provided a brief summary of the past year and the focus for the year ahead.

Key points included:

- The organisation experienced significant change.
- Three new trustees joined this year: **Isaac, Quinn, and Juliet.**
- The last founding trustees, Vicki and Erica, transitioned out of their roles.
- **Edwin is taking six months parental leave.**
- The organisation must **actively plan for succession** to ensure institutional knowledge is passed on, especially since all trustees are volunteers.
- ACAT's core mission remains to create **long-lasting access** in a sustainable and respectful way.

- ACAT is "scaling now" with two staff members, but the organisation's role remains primarily as a **facilitator and enabler**, supporting local communities, climbers, and clubs with knowledge and expertise.
- It is crucial to partner with other organisations (such as the New Zealand Alpine Club, the Tūpiki Trust, and Climbing New Zealand) to avoid fractured progress and prevent competing for financial support from individual climbers.
- ACAT is well-positioned to address **systemic problems** or issues that are difficult for single communities to solve, such as contributing to national policy development or change, and addressing issues related to public conservation land.
- The Chair acknowledged Edwin's leadership and the pressure involved in being the sole person behind the organisation, and thanked him for his hard work to date.

5. Annual Report (Presented by Andrew, Interim GM)

Andrew presented the annual report, highlighting that the work reported was led by Edwin, the board, volunteers, and partners.

- ACAT is a young organisation (less than 5 years old) but has shown rapid growth, maturity, and significant, visible, and lasting achievements in the past year.
- **Key Achievements:**
 - Work on the **Whakaari White Island High Court decision** which shifted the legal footing regarding landowner responsibilities and liabilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act. This provides clarity and a more realistic framework for access discussions.
 - Contributing to a major policy shift: the Government's commitment to **reform the Health and Safety at Work Act**.
 - Achieving **three crag reopenings in a single year**, including Pakeho and Bayley Road.
 - Continuing to support access projects in both the North and South Islands (e.g., Whanganui Bay, Mount Eden Quarry, Bowentown Heads, West Wānaka, Mount Irons, and conservation work at Flock Hill).
- ACAT's model focuses on empowering local leaders and communities rather than centralising access work.
- Operational improvements include implementing a **quarterly planning and reporting cycle** and establishing a **Board Charter**.
- The appointment of **Megan as Deputy GM** has added dedicated capacity in operations and fundraising.
- Volunteers, landowners, councils, DOC, and partner organisations were acknowledged and thanked for their constructive engagement.

6. Financial Report (Presented by Andrew)

The organisation ended the year in a strong and stable financial position.

- **Total revenue was approximately \$135,000.**
- The organisation achieved an **operating surplus of around \$17,000.**
- Revenue sources are diversified, including individual donations, sponsorships (e.g., Hangdog, Fault Line, Northern Rocks, Uprising), grant funding, and community contributions.
- The drop in individual donations is being managed by the investment in dedicated fundraising capability (Megan, Deputy GM).
- A high proportion of spending flows directly into access outcomes and community benefits, with administration costs kept tight.
- The **Kimi Worrell Fund** supported the installation of around **142 new anchors** across different crags, improving safety and protection.
- The balance sheet is healthy, showing sufficient working capital, adequate reserves, and **no debt**.
- Looking ahead, ACAT will focus on strengthening donor retention, deepening partnerships, exploring grant opportunities, and maintaining disciplined expenditure.

DECISION:

- The financial report was accepted as an accurate report of the year.

7. General Business

Kinloch Access Negotiations

- Cameron asked for an update on Kinloch access negotiations.

ACTION:

- Andrew (Interim GM) was asked to follow up with local volunteers regarding the Kinloch access status and provide an update to Cameron. Andrew confirmed this would be taken as an action item.

Standard Operating Procedures for Relationship Building

- Ross raised a question about the unevenness of relationship-building capabilities among local climbing clubs/networks and suggested developing a

standard operating procedure (SOP) for developing relationships in areas lacking an obvious club.

- Andy confirmed that ACAT is working on a process to better support existing local clubs or establish new ones. He explained that reliance on single individuals is unsustainable.
- ACAT is developing documentation to help external organisations (councils, iwi, DOC) understand what climbing is, particularly in light of the *Whakaari Island* case, to clarify responsibilities and counter the belief that they have excessive liability.
- Ross suggested support through Tihoi Venture School and Hillary Outdoors, noting their long relationship with a crag in the relevant area (implied Waikato region), which could assist with succession planning.

ACTION:

- A positive action was noted to follow up and connect the relevant people regarding the local support offered by Tihoi Venture School and Hillary Outdoors.

AGS Update

- Andy provided a short update on AGS (Auckland Grammar School crag): ACAT has heard back from the school and expects the latest response from the board shortly, aiming to know more by the end of the year, though opening the crag for summer seems unlikely.

8. Meeting Closed

- The formal part of the AGM for the 2025 year was ended.

The meeting continued with informal general discussions and questions after the formal closure and recording ended.