



# Annual Report 2024-2025



This is Into Ultra's first annual report. It describes the support Into Ultra provides, how we deliver this support, our future plans and priorities, and also financial and governance information. The report covers Into Ultra activities since it started operating (on an unincorporated basis) in April 2023.

The report includes the information required by the Charity Commission for a small non-company charity (which is how Into Ultra is classified) for the period 15 August 2024 (when it was constituted as a CIO and registered as a Charity) to 31 December 2025.

## A word from our Chair



We launched Into Ultra back in 2023 wanting to help more people ultrarun. We loved ultras ourselves and had experienced its many benefits. By helping others into the sport we hoped we could also improve inclusion and diversity – most people on ultra start lines looked like me: white, male, reasonably well off, and little bit older.

We are thrilled with the impact we had over the last three years. Underneath the surface of the number of people supported (150) are some truly inspiring stories: how running with Into Ultra's support has helped tackle severe depression or addiction or helped people achieve what they thought was impossible. Our runners value the practical help we provide – such as free race places or trail shoes – that make participation possible. What I didn't expect was how for many it was not a free place or shoes that made the biggest difference but being part of a safe and encouraging community that is looking out for them. Our runners tell us that our help provides significant benefits for them. As one put it: ***“There's no way that without the team at Into ultra that I'd be in such a good position [mentally] and I'm eternally grateful for their help in giving me the foundations to thrive”***. A recent survey we conducted also demonstrated the impact we are having with 100% of respondents stating that their mental health had improved since joining Into Ultra and 100% reporting that they feel supported by the Into Ultra community.

It is also very pleasing that we have helped improve inclusion: 56% of the runners we support are female (versus 20% of participants in typical ultras); and 10% are ethnic minority (versus around 1% for ultras).

***Into Ultra helps get more people ultra running by providing advice and, for those facing financial barriers, free race places, coaching, kit and other support***

All this has only been possible with the support of the brilliant and open-hearted ultra running community. We have over 130 partners – race organisers, coaches, kit suppliers and many more – that have offered free and discounted support to our runners which allows us to give them much more support. It also means Into Ultra provides great leverage for donors and grant funders, because over 70% the value delivered is through the marshalling of in-kind rather than financial contributions. We are enormously grateful to our partners for their support and for the trust they have placed in Into Ultra.

And now that we are a charity, donations from and fundraising by the community has also provided a huge help. We also recently won our first grant for £7,000 from the Merrell Fund.

Personally, it has been an absolute joy to be part of Into Ultra and see it grow. There are few 'jobs' where you can help people to do something you love yourself and see first-hand the clear benefit it has. And I can do it with a team that shares the passion to help others and has the experience and expertise to make Into Ultra a success. A special shout out for Shirin Shabestari who has been instrumental in creating such a strong community for our runners.

There are thousands more runners that could get into ultrarunning with Into Ultra's support – we are well set up to do that and we really look forward to helping them.

It feels that we are just getting started.

**Andrew 'Basil' Heaney, Chair of Trustees**



## What we do and why



Into Ultra was founded by a small group of longer-distance runners with a simple aim: to help more people access ultrarunning.

In doing so, we realised we could also improve the diversity of the start line - including women, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, those on lower incomes, LGBTQ+, and disabled runners. We want to reduce the barriers that prevent these communities from participating.

### What is ultrarunning?

**Ultras (or ultramarathons) are running events longer than a marathon (26.2 miles). Distances typically range from 30 miles to 200+ miles, with some of the longest event lasting more than five days. Ultras are more than simply longer races. Most take place off-road - on trails, in forests, and in mountainous terrain. But more importantly, because they are slower and involve lots of walking, they are more an event or adventure than a race.**

## Benefits of ultra-running

Running has significant and well understood physical and mental health benefits. However, there are significant further benefits from running longer 'ultra' distances. This is because the pace is typically slower than shorter road races, with most participants incorporating walking. For most runners, personal bests and finishing times are secondary to enjoying an outdoors adventure, embracing the challenge, and being part of a supportive community – as one of our partners puts it: **“it is not about the ‘time’, but having a ‘good time’”**. Because of the slower pace and challenging environments, ultrarunning tends to be very collaborative and sociable, with strong mutual support between runners, volunteers, and organisers.

Some of the cited health benefits of ultrarunning (compared to regular running) are summarised below.

**Physical health benefits of ultras** include improved cardiovascular fitness, increased muscle strength, improved bone density, enhanced endurance, and reduced obesity risk. Because ultra runs tend to be slower and on varied off-road terrain, there is less stress on joints than road running.

*“I am no longer inflamed, sluggish and overweight. I sleep better than ever before and my stress is better managed.”*

Many runners report that the **mental health benefits** of preparing for and completing ultras are even more important and significant:

- Reduced stress and anxiety, particularly as a result of spending time in nature
- Improved mood and overall wellbeing
- Increased self-esteem and confidence from completing a demanding challenge
- Stronger social identity and connection through a supportive community

Ultrarunning can be transformative. As one runner put it **“Into Ultra has changed my life”**.

# How Into Ultra supports runners



We focus on helping people overcome the barriers that commonly prevent participation such as:

- “It’s not for people like me”
- Financial cost
- Lack of confidence or familiarity
- Lack of skills or knowledge

**We provide two main types of support: practical support and community support.**

## Practical Support

The costs of entering and preparing for an ultra can be significant, and this can be a real barrier for runners on lower incomes. We provide flexible, tailored practical support such as race entry, coaching or kit. This is funded through a combination of partner donations-in-kind (providing free or discounted places) and Into Ultra’s own funding so that it is provided to our runners at no cost to them. Over 70% of the value of support provided is donations-in-kind.

Support is personalised to reflect an individual’s circumstances and needs. Into Ultra is a ‘one stop shop’ for support.

Race places		Support we have provided		Run club membership
1:1 coaching	Clothing	Specialist kit (packs, poles)	Travel and accommodation	
Tailored training plans and training apps		Loan of sports watches and headtorches		Books and learning resources
Skills courses (mountain skills, navigation, using poles, night running)		Physiotherapy		Trainer drainers
		Nutrition support		Guide runners for visually impaired participants

## Community Support

Alongside practical support, we also provide community support – many runners value this even more highly than the direct financial support. This includes:

- 1:1 conversations typically with one of the team providing a friendly ear, reassurance and guidance
- Social Zoom sessions and a moderated Facebook community for Into Ultra runners to catch up and share stories with each other
- Advice on topics such as nutrition, menopause, motivation, and race selection (via articles and webinars)
- Stories from experienced runners and ambassadors, such as Jasmin Paris and Damian Hall (two of the UK’s pre-eminent ultrarunners) as well as regular back-of-the-packers for ideas and inspiration

For many participants this sense of community, expert advice and knowing that someone ‘has their back’ is critical to their confidence, success and health.



“Being part of Into Ultra as helped me realise that I can dream big, set previously believed, unobtainable goals and go out there and try. It has truly helped me grow as a person and believe in myself.”

## Stronger Together courses

Following a successful pilot in 2025, we launched four Stronger Together courses for 2026.

These 6 month programmes support small groups (of around 12 runners) who are mostly new to ultrarunning. Delivered by experienced coaches, the courses include: structured training plans, in-person and online meet-ups, recce runs, skills and advice sessions, peer community support. Each group works towards completing a local ultramarathon event together.

The cost for self-funded runners is typically £200. For Into Ultra-supported runners, the course is free (like other support we provide). Into Ultra provides national promotion, helps find race partner races, access to expert speakers, and a peer network for coaches to share ideas and best practice.

The courses are cost-effective, scalable, community-driven and, we are told, great fun.



## Our Impact

Since Into Ultra started we have supported approximately **220 people** to run ultras (as at 31 December 2025):

- We have helped 150 runners with a range of practical support such as race places, coaching and kit
- The value\* of the practical support we provide to these runners (such as race places and coaching) has grown steadily from £9,700 in 2023, £12,500 in 2024 and £20,500 in 2025. In 2026 it is likely to be over £30,000.
- We have provided community support to 190 runners (primarily those receiving tangible support, but also to 40 others)
- The Stronger Together courses we launched have helped around 30 self-funding runners to complete an ultra – in many cases their first one

We have also helped to improve **diversity and inclusion** in ultra-running:

- 56% of supported runners identify as women or non-binary (compared to about 20% participation in typical ultras)
- 10% identify as non-white (in a sport where minority ethnic participation is typically around 1%^)
- We have supported blind runners and runners living with Parkinson's

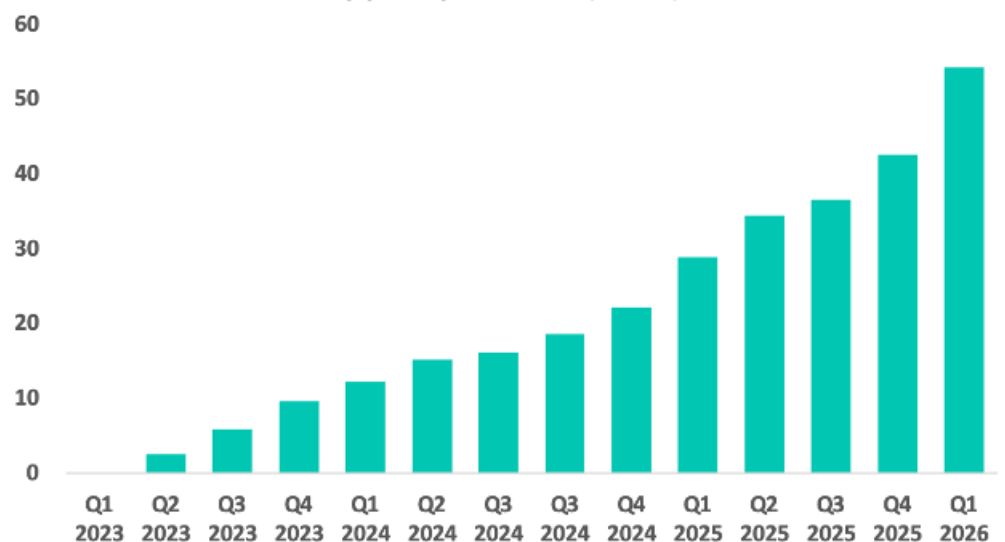
Many of the runners Into Ultra has supported have experienced trauma, homelessness, substance misuse, or significant mental health challenges – which may in turn lead to low income. Individuals with these difficulties may have most to gain from the mental health benefits of ultrarunning – but paradoxically also face the biggest barriers.

\* The value is based on the standard 'market' price for the support / service

^ Less than 1% of participants in ultramarathons are from a minority ethnic background (as against 18% of the overall population in England (Office for National Statistics census data))

***“It is an incredible charity, run by incredible people, supporting us very ordinary people and we are so grateful!!!”***

**Cumulative value practical support provided (£000)**



## What our runners say about us



**“ This time last year I had a suicide attempt due to my inability to feel like I had a purpose and this year I’m looking onwards to what I can achieve and for the most part keeping my mental health demons at bay. There’s no way that without the team at Into ultra that I’d be in such a good position and I’m eternally grateful for their help in giving me the foundations to thrive.**

**“ At a time in my life when my mental health was absolute rock bottom having just split up with my husband and my health taking a dramatic decline. Into ultra have quite literally come to my rescue and given me something to focus on in the future and the financial support to make it possible. These guys at into ultra are literally changing people’s lives ... I am forever grateful**

**“ Running in nature has been the one thing that kept me going, important as it is for my mental health, sobriety and ADHD brain, and Into Ultra helped make that possible!**

**“ I just want you to know how much the support from Into Ultra has meant. Much more than a medal. Much more than a finish line. It’s the belief that I’m worth more than my bad times so from the bottom of my heart thank you**

**“ The support started when Into Ultra said ‘yes’ ... They believed in me and my love of running and wanted to help. Having that support is phenomenal.**

**“ Into Ultra has helped me get my confidence back to enter races by providing me with a supportive coach and backing me every step of the way with races I’ve wanted to do . Im really excited about the coming year and Im really grateful for their on going support.**

**“ I can’t thank ‘Into Ultra’ enough for their support on my running journey. Having a coach is something I would not have been able to afford on my own, and it has already made such a difference to my life, not only in terms of developing my fitness and ability as a runner, but also in improving my mental health, developing confidence and getting out exploring further.**

**“ I’ve been made to feel so welcome and inspired in this community. Thank you**



# Supported runners survey



47 of our supported runners responded to a survey in April 2026 which asked them to comment on their experience with Into Ultra to date, and asked for suggested areas of improvement.

We were delighted with the results:

## Mental wellbeing



■ Yes

Every respondent reported that their mental wellbeing has improved since being supported by Into Ultra.

One runner said:

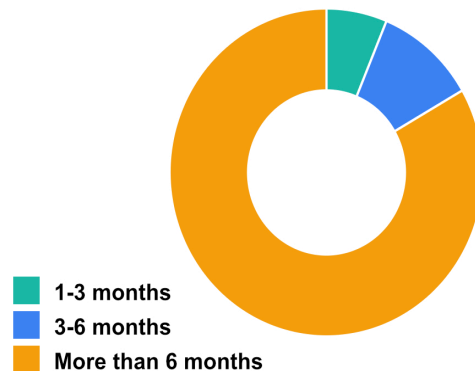
*“My endurance levels have improved, my asthma is better which helps my overall wellbeing, and my depression is not as heavy as previously”*

What’s more, 83% of respondents believe that the positive impact on their mental wellbeing will last for over 6 months, proving that this does not simply provide short-term benefits.

Another runner told us:

*“Into Ultra creates a space that is both inspiring and aspirational.... I have never been in a better place with my mental health”*

## Mental wellbeing duration

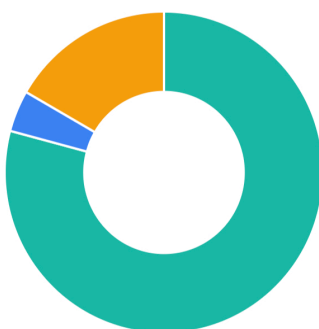


■ 1-3 months

■ 3-6 months

■ More than 6 months

## Physical health



■ Yes

■ No

■ Unsure

A total of 81% of respondents believe that their physical health has improved since joining the Into Ultra community, with many referencing more motivation to go running and feeling supported by others.

One runner told us:

*“My activity is more consistent and sustainable. I eat better and generally look after my physical health much better”*

## How we operate

We describe below the main steps of how we practically deliver support to runners from raising awareness, the application process and identifying suitable support.

We use multiple ways to raise awareness of Into Ultra and promote the support on offer, including:

- **Social media.** We have 5,000 followers on Instagram and 1,400 on Facebook
- **Events.** We have had stands or talks at events including National Running Show, Serpent Trail, Love Trails, Tea and Trails Ultra, Adventure Sports Events Conference and Kendal Mountain Festival.
- **Podcasts.** We have had around ten appearances on podcasts (including Tea & Trails, Runners World, West Coast Ultra, SheTrails) where Into Ultra is discussed and frequent 'shout outs' on other podcasts
- **Press.** We have had several articles and mentions in RunnersWorld, Trail magazine, Adventur, ULTRA magazine, RunUltra and others

Once they hear about us, runners can apply via a simple online form outlining their running background, goals, and (where relevant) financial circumstances. Two people review all applications and then together decide whether to support runners.

Following selection, we then engage individually with each runner to identify and deliver the most appropriate form of support and also which partner is most suitable. We also send out weekly emails to all supported runners highlighting new support that is available – for instance, shoes from a partner or a race that is offering places – as well as news, upcoming socials, webinars and other community support.

Core to our operations is a bespoke database (the 'Hub') which was developed pro bono by one of the team. It supports: runner applications and communications, partner onboarding, arranging and tracking support, data protection compliance, surveys, and reporting and allows us to operate and grow efficiently and reliably. We are further developing the Hub to strengthen community interaction by providing a portal for runners to share profiles, connect and communicate, and also to allow self-serve for lower cost support types.

We aim to limit the costs of (albeit necessary) 'non-support' activities such as marketing, events, IT, partner recruitment and reviewing applications and so maximise the funding that flows into supporting runners. As we have grown we have gained scale and become more efficient and these non-support activities now account for about 20% of total costs and 13% of the value of support we provide. We expect to reduce this further.

We endeavour to operate in a sustainable way so, for instance, we encourage doing local events and using preloved / second-hand clothing and kit. In how we operate and work with partners, the interests of would-be ultra runners take priority.



*"You have provided me with clothing, shoes and entry into races so that I can compete and challenge myself to be the best version I can be"*



## Our team

Into Ultra is delivered by a team who all share a passion for our purpose. They also have deep knowledge of ultrarunning, experience of operating and governing charities, as well as experience of key areas such as social media, grant writing, legal, marketing, governance, and IT.



**Andrew Heaney**  
*Chair*

Andrew ('Basil') is one of the founders of Into Ultra and provides overall coordination. He has been running ultras for over 15 years.



**Damian Hall**  
*Trustee*

Damian is a founder of Into Ultra. He holds a range of ultra-running records and has represented GB. He is also a running coach.



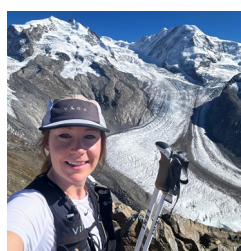
**Robert Kenny**  
*Trustee*

Rob brings valuable experience and lessons from other charitable roles and has been running ultra marathons for 30 years.



**Shirin Shabestri**  
*Runner & Partner Manager*

Shirin is our only paid team member - she coordinates all runners, partners and support, and runs very long distances.



**Hannah Blundell**  
*Social Media*

Hannah manages our social media and is an all-round outdoor enthusiast - running, hiking and climbing regularly.



**Baljit Chohan**  
*Diversity Champion*

Baljit is highly experienced in championing diversity and inclusion, both as a solicitor and with several charities. He's also a keen runner.



**John Higgins**  
*IT Support*

John has developed our 'Hub' database helping to support runners more efficiently. He is a mountaineer by background and runs too.



**Sarah Reynolds**  
*Fundraising*

Sarah has worked in the charitable sector for 10 years and leads on fundraising for Into Ultra. She runs and cycles long distances.



**Ilona Morgan**  
*Runner Support*

Ilona provides support, advice and guidance to our runners on social zooms and social media. She is an accomplished runner.

### **James Elson and Paula Bedford**

*James Elson (Centurion Running) was one of our founders and he was part of the team for the first two years, together with Paula Bedford.*

*We thank them both for their highly valuable contributions.*



## Our Supporters

It may sound clichéd to say it, but we genuinely could not do what we do without the support of the fantastic ultra-running community and we are extremely grateful to all of those who have supported us in our first three years of operation. Thank you!



## Our Partners

A key strength is the **over 130 partners** who support us (see next page). These are companies, organisations and individuals that provide races, coaching, courses, clothing, shoes and equipment for ultra-running and share our objective to get more people ultrarunning, and improve inclusion. They have all offered or provided free or discounted support to our runners. More than 70% of the value of support we provide is donated in kind. This generosity from the ultra-running community makes our work possible. It also means Into Ultra provide great leverage for donors and grant funders, because so much of the value delivered is through the marshalling of in-kind donations rather than relying on financial donations.

We also collaborate and partner with **charities and non-profits**. **Kitsquad**, a charity that provides outdoor kit to individuals on low incomes, supplies much of our runners' essential clothing and equipment at no cost to Into Ultra. We have also worked with other organisations such as **sheRACES**, **The Green Runners** and mental health groups.

## Our Ambassadors

We are honoured to be supported by four very accomplished runners who are our Ambassadors:

**Jasmin Paris** - elite and record-breaking ultrarunner, including only ever female finisher of Barkley Marathons

**Claire Maxted** - author, back of the pack runner and journalist

**Renee McGregor** - leading sports dietitian, author and ultrarunner

**Allie Bailey** - ultrarunner, mindset coach, author, speaker and podcast presenter

All of our Ambassadors help raise awareness of Into Ultra and provide expertise and inspiration to our runners. Thank you!

## Our Donors

We rely on **donors** who provide cash funds for activities that are not funded by partner's donations in kind. Our total 'cash' costs are currently around £2,000 a month. Runners have raised money for us as part of an event, some people have provided one-off donations, and others have committed to monthly donations. Thank you to all our donors large and small – without your support Into Ultra could not provide the support it does.

In April 2026 we were awarded our first 'formal' grant of £7,000 from The Merrell Fund. We are very excited to be working with Merrell across our shared passion: to make the outdoors accessible to all.



# Our Partners



## What Next?

Our objective going forward is simple: to help more people access ultrarunning, with more comprehensive support. We believe there are thousands of potential beneficiaries and that we have only scratched the surface.

Our priorities to allow us to help more people are:

- **Increase outreach to under-represented communities.** We will look to collaborate with more groups (such as addiction groups) that can improve our reach and explore whether events (particularly those that attract high number of ultra first-timers) could highlight the support that Into Ultra can provide to their runners
- **Expand partner contributions** (i.e. donations in kind), particularly in high-cost (to Into Ultra) areas such as shoes
- **Increase cash funding** to cover costs not met by donations-in-kind. The main sources are grants, fundraising and individual donations. We will also see whether races can include an 'Into Ultra donation' button at registration. We will look to diversify funding so that we are not too dependent on any single source
- **Continue to refine the criteria for those we support** (particularly when we give free direct support) to ensure that support goes to the most deserving runners

We also plan to expand and improve the types of support we provide to runners

- We will look to see how we can support '**DIY adventures**' where runners complete a route outside of an event setting. These are lower cost and can come with less pressure and a greater sense of accomplishment
- We will continue to **develop the Hub** to provide better community support and offer self-serve
- Refine and grow the number of **Stronger Together** courses – they provide a very effective, enjoyable and low cost way for runners to run ultras. Whilst the courses are delivered by coaching partners, Into Ultra play a key role in making these successful
- We will **explore new ideas** for other areas of support (such as personal training and mindset coaching) to address what our runners see as key barriers. Often we will initially provide this using Into Ultra funds but then reach out to partners who can provide the support/service for free or at a discounted rate.

## Can you help Into Ultra?

There are many ways in which organisations and individuals can help Into Ultra support runners:

- **Donate in kind** – if you organise races, coach runners or supply kit then could you become a partner and provide goods or services to our supported runners (either free or discounted)
- **Donate money or fundraise** for Into Ultra
- **Donate your spare kit** – if it's a headtorch or watch then send it to Into Ultra and for clothes, shoes, poles and packs please send it to Kitsquad
- **Spread the word** – in your club, with your mates, to your social media community. Also follow us on social media. The more people know about Into Ultra, the more people we can help

*“Into Ultra have been so incredibly supportive and helpful. I feel so privileged to be part of this group”*



## Financial Information

Below we provide financial information\* for Into Ultra. The first column shows figures for our first financial period (15 August 2024 when Into Ultra was incorporated as a CIO to 31 December 2025). The last three columns show, for background information, the annual figures for each year since our launch in 2023 to end 2025.

<b>Receipts and Payments Account (£)</b>	<b>15/8/24 - 31/12/25</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
<b>Income</b>				
Donations	26,509.94	20,216.24	16,724.94	2,480.11
Grants	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,509.94</b>	<b>20,216.24</b>	<b>16,724.94</b>	<b>2480.11</b>
<b>Costs</b>				
Practical Support	6,790.96	4,992.41	4,275.46	2,228.11
Community Support	8,469.90	7377.56	4,314.63	0.00
Non-Support	9,650.19	7631.26	6,750.97	252.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,911.05</b>	<b>20,001.23</b>	<b>15,341.06</b>	<b>2,480.11</b>
<b>Surplus / Deficit</b>	<b>1,598.89</b>	<b>215.01</b>	<b>1,383.88</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<i>Notes</i>				
<i>Donations-in-kind</i>	<i>19,688</i>	<i>15,468</i>	<i>8,259</i>	<i>7,476</i>
<i>Value of practical support</i>	<i>26,479</i>	<i>20,461</i>	<i>12,535</i>	<i>9,704</i>

### Statement of Assets and Liabilities (£)

Cash	1,598.89
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Into Ultra held reserves at the end of 2025 of £1,598.89, which are all in liquid cash and are unrestricted. The charity does not have any long-term spending commitments that are dependent upon future funding. Accordingly, the trustees do not consider that it is necessary to target a particular amount of reserves.

Approved by the Trustees  
Andrew Heaney, Chair of Trustees, 23 June 2026

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#### \* Definition / Description of costs

- Cost of [practical support] is the amount Into Ultra pays for support
- Community support is Shirin's time/cost on activities such as liaising with runners, identifying/organising suitable support and managing community support
- Non-support costs are costs such as marketing, events, IT, partner recruitment and reviewing applications
- Value of practical support is based on market price for the support. Donations-in-kind is simply the difference between the value of support and the cost to Into Ultra

# Administrative and Governance Information



Into Ultra is a registered charity in England and Wales

Into Ultra was registered 15 August 2024

Registered charity number: 1209608

Into Ultra is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) whose only voting members are its charity trustees. It is governed by a foundation model constitution.

## Charitable objects:

The advancement of the amateur sport of ultrarunning for the public benefit by the provision of guidance, expertise, and facilities to those who are new to or have limited experience of ultrarunning.

## Trustees

- Andrew ('Basil') Heaney (Chair)
- Robert Kenny
- Damian Hall

Independent examiner: Stuart Secker, 4 Elm Drive, Leatherhead, KT22 8EX

Bankers: The Co-operative Bank

## Contact information:

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Phone: 07979 657965

Email: [info@intoultra.org.uk](mailto:info@intoultra.org.uk)

Website: [www.intoultra.org.uk](http://www.intoultra.org.uk)

## Governance

Into Ultra's trustees meet virtually every 2-3 months (and also on an ad-hoc basis in between as required) to assess the position of the charity, deciding on strategic direction and setting remuneration levels. Into Ultra's CEO is responsible for delivering on the strategy.

When Intro Ultra needs to recruit new trustees, the existing trustees and team will look to identify suitable candidates from their contacts and also advertise the role if necessary. New trustees will be offered appropriate training and guidance to equip them for their role.

