**Peak Area general guidelines to placing bolts and other fixed gear.**

The issue of placing and replacing fixed gear is a can of worms especially in an area as intensively climbed and ~~clouded~~ rich in history as the Peak District.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide the current consensus view of what is acceptable good practice as well as raise awareness on problematic issues and the alternative views of the environment, other climbers, visitors, landowners and other users.

In applying these guidelines attempt to use common sense, good judgement and consideration for other people weighing up the various (and sometimes conflicting) environmental, access, aesthetic, ethical, historical and safety factors .

These general guidelines are supplemented by crag-specific guidelines given in the crag introductions:

**Environmental and Access**

First and foremost you have a (potentially prosecutable) responsibility to be aware of the environmental impact and existing access arrangements when gardening and gearing new and existing routes. Crags are owned by a diverse range of landowners, some of whom are conservation organisations. Some crags are located in/on environmental sensitive areas and maybe classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Such designation affords legal protection in the UK. SSSI’s are so designated by virtue of the fauna, flora, geological or physiographical features in the area, e.g. a rare or special lichen or plant or rock feature. Whilst any activity that could harm the special interest should not be carried out within an SSSI, other non-harmful activities are not restricted.

Climbing styles change with time and with them crags rise and fall in popularity. Routes may become overgrown and/or covered in ivy. Unless specifically ‘banned’ under conservation agreements, climbers should be encouraged to climb all developed routes lest they become reclaimed by nature. Where they have become overgrown re-cleaning activities should be undertaken sympathetically and if in any doubt after due consultation (with BMC office/Access Reps etc.)The Regional Area Database (RAD) on the BMC website tends to cover the major areas well but if in any doubt on the detail or for more esoteric locations then call the BMC Head Office before embarking on something that might jeopardise access not only for those routes but a whole crag !. The Area Reps are in regular contact with the landowners and may need to confirm permission for what you propose and stipulations might be attached. For example a stipulation might be that you add a lower-off for a trad routes to minimise the impact of trampling at the top of a climb and on descent paths.

**Aesthetics**

Many, owners, visitors and climbers alike, often prefer crags to look as natural as possible. Consequently pay heed to the visual impact of any fixed gear as it could stick out like a sore thumb to some people. Be especially conscious if a crag is owned by Environmentalists and in open view of a footpath. Consider painting bolts and pegs to match the rock. Brightly coloured in-situ threads can be especially intrusive and in some circumstances replacing a thread with a bolt on a trad route might override climbing ethics on aesthetic and access grounds. In sensitive areas the use of chains belays should avoided with dual bolt lowers preferred.

Leaving in-situ “perma-draws” on long term projects to all intents falls into the category of fixed gear and the same issues apply. If you see in-situ draws or colourful carabineers in a place that you don’t like, be a brave soldier and take them out. You can return them to the owners via the lost and found boards on UKClimbing and/or UKBouldering.

**Ethical and historical**

In general the coexistence of bolt and trad routes in the Peak is a triumph of commonsense and compromise – let’s try to keep it that way!

Be considerate of the history of a buttress or route. It is generally not acceptable to detract from classic existing routes by adding inferior new routes either very closely adjacent or that cross through with fixed gear too close, especially if you can clip that gear from the classic route. Even when re-equipping sport routes consider the original character of that route in terms of any run-outs or the belay position. Greyer ethical areas apply to retro-bolting neglected existing trad routes. Whilst the first ascentionist doesn’t have absolute rights to the original route they will undoubtedly have an emotional stake (however esoteric the route) and generally speaking if they approve of the retro-bolting this is likely to reduce objections. So be considerate and contact the First Ascentionist for their views as your first point of call. In this day and age getting in touch via social media is usually quite easy.

If the first ascentionist is un-contactable then sound out your ideas with other experienced local climbers or at the Peak Area Meet. This might be a bit of pain when you are at the crag with a fully charged drill but in the longer term repeated placement and removal of fixed gear does nobody’s savour faire any good. If you are planning on doing something very ambitious like the wholesale retro-bolting of a large buttress of trad routes then in the interests of gaining consensus backing it would be wise for you to add this to the agenda for a proper debate at a Peak Area Meet.

The following climbs are examples of routes (this list is by no means exhaustive...) which are of either classic/historically significant status and therefore (according to current consensus opinion) should NOT be retro bolted or crossed by new bolted lines despite being on crags which have substantial bolt-protected climbing:

Chee Dale: Nettle Buttress - General Incompetence; Summer Wine; Terra Incognito

Chee Dale: Two Tier – Ninth Life; Mad Dogs and Englishmen

Chee Dale: Plum Buttress – Sirplum

Chee Dale: Chee Tor – Mortlock’s Arete (a re-gearing of the peg protected top pitch would present an ethical dilemma if they can’t be replaced like-for-like!); Golden Mile; Ceramic; Tequila Mockingbird (no extra bolts)

**Safety**

In general bolt spacing on sport routes should make the route safe with bolts positioned in the optimal place for clipping and in good rock.

Whether establishing new or re-equipping existing routes only 316/A4 stainless (or better) bolts and pegs should be used. Substandard bolts will corrode quickly and need to be replaced by shortly after leaving unsightly scars and in some cases old studs in the rock. An example of particularly poor re-equipping is: Too Old to Bold at Rubicon which is already on its second set of rusty bolts. If you are still unsure about the type and grade of bolt to use then please seek expert advice or refer to the Bolting Guidance report on the BMC website. If using ‘through’ style bolts then over drilling is highly recommend so that on (eventual) replacement they can be hammered home. If you are re-gearing a bolt route then the equipment and metalwork can be provided free of charge by the Peak Bolt Fund. There is a long list of Peak sport routes with dangerous gear and a shorter list of people with the time, aptitude and psyche to do the re-gearing. Volunteers to help spread the load are very welcome.“

**Overstepping the mark**

If you see a new piece of fixed gear which you judge is unacceptable what do you do? If you feel strongly enough, and the gear is easily removed, then remove it. The next step is to directly contact the person that did it (if possible) to get their justification and if possible reach a resolution.

If this isn’t reached then to get a consensus view you could debate it online or get it placed as an agenda on the next Peak Area meet. This generally enlivens the evening and helps bump up the numbers.