

# **Cumbria Bolt Fund: proposal to change constitution**

## **Introduction by Rick Graham**

I have been in the process of formulating some proposals to update the Cumbria Bolt Fund Constitution.

This started as a "one man working group" orchestrated by the BMC Lakes Area and the Cumbria Bolt Fund to (hopefully) clarify any misunderstanding and stretching of the guidelines.

Bolting is not (quite) the controversial activity it was thirty years ago. Ethics of bolting have stabilised and become generally accepted through the same process as the development of other ethical aspects of climbing, such as aid / free ascents through to 8000m peak expedition tactics. A crucial additional factor with bolts is that the BMC got involved and held local meetings to achieve a workable consensus together with a written policy.

I have attempted in these proposals to:

- a) encourage the sustainable funding of bolted climbs;
- b) raise awareness of bolt safety issues; and
- c) maintain the relatively harmonious acceptance of where bolts can and cannot be placed.

This will all have to go through due process with the CBF and BMC Lakes Area. This is your first chance to have an input!

Bolting is an emotive subject that often gets "lost in translation" and word usage, so we need some definitions.

## **1. Definitions**

### **1.1 Retrobolting**

This is the placing of bolts on routes previously climbed without.

### **1.2 Rebolting**

Replacing bolts on a route on a like-for-like basis.

### **1.3 Re-equipping**

When replacing bolts on an existing route, it is often impractical to reuse the original drilled hole or drill a hole nearby. Sometimes holds fall off and change the optimal clipping position.

- Re-equipping a route may require more bolts than on the original ascent.
- When the intention of the first ascensionist was to create a sport route with bolts and possibly a combination of manufactured and fixed gear, it is suggested that the route is fully re-equipped with bolts. Manufactured gear can include holes drilled to create a thread, drilled holes with a peg hammered in, and drilled slots to take a wired nut.

## **2. Existing route styles on crags within Cumbria and state of current consensus / suggested treatment**

### **2.1 Routes on natural crags outside the Bolting Agreement**

These routes are the fundamental basis of our British climbing tradition and international reputation. Expect them to be vigorously protected by the vast majority of the climbing fraternity.

- NO BOLTS with the exception of isolated historic relics, usually untrustworthy, and certain bolts placed for environmental and access reasons in exceptional circumstance.
- The replacement of historic bolts (often from old aided ascents ) is unlikely to gain approval.
- Retrobolting underused and unpopular natural crags is also unlikely to be accepted in the short term. To be

honest, the effort required to achieve agreement on this issue at the present time is better spent in maintaining the existing bolted routes to an acceptable standard.

- On natural crags (outside the bolting agreement/policy) the use of combined Trad and Sports Grade above E5 can continue unaffected; it should reinforce the fact that the unbolted and partially bolted routes in Hodge (and other climbing areas within the bolt policy) need special treatment.

## 2.2 Routes on crags within the Bolting Agreement

### 2.2.1 No bolts placed on first ascent.

- Any new bolting would have to be approved by the recognised procedures. Retrobolting historically important and classic routes is unlikely to be agreed.
- Guidebooks encouraged to use only UK trad grade (FRCC already agrees).

### 2.2.2 Isolated or occasional bolts. Same treatment as 2.2.1

### 2.2.3 Sports routes, fully bolted or relying mainly on fixed, drilled or manufactured placements.

- As stated above, when the intention of the first ascensionist was to create a sport route with bolts and possibly a combination of manufactured and fixed gear, it is suggested that the route is fully re-equipped with bolts to maintain the route to an acceptable modern standard.
- It is also proposed that the assumption in this case is that no "approval" is required from the first ascensionist.
- Guidebooks encouraged to use only French sport grade (FRCC already agrees).
- Some indication of bolt quality should be included in the description of all bolted routes, such as date of last known equipping (FRCC agrees). Unfortunately in most cases this is also the date of the first ascent.
- Guidebook producers should accept that bolted climbs are unsustainable without regular funding for maintenance. Profit from the bolted area/crags should be paid to bolt maintenance programmes.
- It should be made to be thought unacceptable for individual sport climbers not to have contributed for bolts they have clipped. This can be in the form of guidebook purchase, individual donation and/or the setting up of some system for small suitable payment after each climbing session, such as "penny a clip"?
- It follows that the use of a guidebook from a non-contributing producer is not acceptable.

The above statement combines existing policy, status quo and personal proposals based on my perception of what is possible, practical and may lead to general acceptance. We have to start somewhere.

## **Extract from existing Cumbria Bolt Fund constitution**

### 2. OBJECTIVE

a. The overall objectives of the Fund shall be to assist in ensuring that protection bolts placed on crags in Cumbria are safe.

b. This will be achieved by:

- i. The replacement of old bolts on crags in Cumbria with new and correctly placed bolts;
- ii. Assistance in the control of bolting and rebolting of crags in Cumbria;
- iii. Promotion of good practice in placement of bolts.

c. The placement of bolts on crags in Cumbria should comply with generally accepted practice in the area determined by the climbing fraternity through the Lakes Area of the British Mountaineering Council.

d. Activities undertaken to contribute to the achievement of one or more of the following objectives:

- i. Educate individuals in the correct placement of bolts;
- ii. Set up a database of individuals recognised to be involved in bolting;
- iii. Co-ordinate and arrange fund raising to cover the cost of bolts and related items;
- iv. Bolting activities will be on crags which will be available for use by all climbers.

## **Proposed revised wording**

### **2. OBJECTIVE**

- a. The overall objectives of the Fund shall be to assist in ensuring that protection bolts on crags in Cumbria are safe and that the placement of bolts on crags in Cumbria should comply with generally accepted practice in the area determined by the climbing fraternity through the Lakes Area of the British Mountaineering Council.
- b. This will be achieved by:
  - i. Rebolting and re-equipping routes with bolts placed to current best practice; retrobolting will only be undertaken after the completion of due process as decided by the BMC Lakes Area.
  - ii. Educating individuals in the placement of bolts to current best practice. Training will be offered to all potential new routes and re-equippers.
  - iii. Setting up a database of routes and crags where bolts exist and their condition; this will enable optimum targeting of bolt renewal and funding requirements.
  - iv. Encouraging guidebooks to indicate bolt quality in descriptions, such as date of last equipping.
  - v. Co-ordinating, encouraging and arranging fundraising from individuals, guidebook producers and other organisations to cover the cost of bolts and related items for the sustainable maintenance of bolted climbs.
  - vi. Ensuring that bolting activities by the CBF will only be on crags which are available for use by all climbers.

## **Appendix A**

### **BMC position statements on Drilled Equipment and Dry Tooling**

#### **Introduction**

This document sets out the BMC's position on the separate but related issues of drilled equipment and dry tooling as agreed by National Council on 8 February 2014.

#### **a. Drilled Equipment**

##### **Background**

The BMC's position on drilled equipment was debated by the Area Meetings and National Council in 2012-2014; this position statement was agreed by National Council on 8 February 2014. For the purposes of this document drilled equipment refers to bolts and drilled pegs (i.e. pegs placed in drill holes), and retro-bolting refers to the placing of drilled equipment in a position where there was previously no drilled equipment in place.

##### **BMC position**

British climbing has a rich history and a well-established code of ethics which has evolved over many years through debate amongst climbers. The BMC recognises that, as the representative body for mountaineering in England and Wales, it is the de facto guardian of the heritage of the sport in all its forms. The BMC strongly supports the approach to climbing based on leader-placed protection which makes use of natural rock features.

The diversity of climbing styles and the existence of 'bolt free' areas are distinct and internationally important aspects of British climbing. It is the responsibility of all climbers to promote and respect agreed drilled equipment policies.

Debates about the use of drilled equipment have taken place across the country for many years and there is a continuing need for a clear understanding about where bolts are acceptable and where they are not acceptable in terms of climbing ethics. The Pembrokeshire and Cornish sea cliffs, the mountain crags of Snowdonia and the gritstone edges are examples of places where traditional (i.e. bolt free) climbing is the accepted norm. There are also many crags across the country where sport climbing is agreed and accepted and some crags where both approaches co-exist.

Access, environmental and land ownership considerations have a significant bearing on decisions about the use of drilled equipment. The BMC believes that care and concern for the crag and mountain environment is of paramount importance in such decisions.

Site specific and regional drilled equipment agreements and proposed changes to those agreements must be debated and agreed by climbers at open meetings arranged by the BMC. The Area Meetings provide a structure for such debates. No proposal for changing the drilled equipment status of a crag should be voted on at the meeting where it is first proposed. Proposed revisions to drilled equipment policies and / or retro-bolting proposals should be widely publicised prior to discussion, and agreed on a consensus basis.

In these discussions the following factors must be given careful consideration:

- Access, environmental and land ownership issues.
- The history of the area or crag in terms of the established climbing ethics.
- Existing drilled equipment policies and agreements in place.
- The views of the first ascensionists.
- The level of importance (i.e. local / regional / national) of the area or crag in question.
- The nature of the rock (i.e. natural or quarried) and the availability of natural protection.
- The aspirations of current and future generations of climbers.

In the case of substantive and potentially controversial proposals to use drilled equipment, wider consultation should be carried out through National Council, the BMC Area structure and the BMC's media outlets prior to agreement. The document provides further guidance to the BMC drilled equipment policy 1992.

## **b. Dry Tooling**

### **Background**

The BMC's position on dry tooling was debated by the Area Meetings and National Council in 2013-2014; this position statement was agreed by National Council on 8 February 2014.

Dry tooling is a form of climbing which takes place on outdoor crags and indoor climbing walls using ice axes and crampons. This statement refers to dry tooling on outdoor crags in 'summer' conditions; it does not refer to mixed climbing or dry tooling in winter conditions or to dry tooling in climbing walls. Dry tooling typically occurs on overhanging quarried rock (or other rock faces generally unsuitable for conventional rock climbing) and usually involves the use of fixed equipment and drilled / manufactured axe and crampon placements.

### **BMC position**

The BMC acknowledges that dry tooling has a place in British climbing. The suitability of individual sites for dry tooling should be considered on a case-by-case basis by the relevant BMC Area Meeting. Dry tooling is not considered to be an acceptable practice on established rock climbs.

D Turnbull  
31 March 2014

## **Appendix B**

*I have been unable to source the Lakes Area fixed gear policy. The latest Langdale guide summarises it as "bolts are accepted on certain quarried crags and a few agreed limestone and sandstone outcrops". You get the drift.*

**Draft 1 for comment and feedback  
14 February 2016  
Rick Graham**