

## **Fixed Gear Guidance on BMC Lakes Area Crag and Quarries (Current - September 2022 - draft proposal)**

The BMC Lakes Area (comprised of the County area of Cumbria) seeks to be a guardian of best practice, setting the tone for sustainable behaviour on our local crags and rock. We have a limited supply of rock and a balance of responsibilities towards other climbers, landowners, other users of the area and future generations and also the environment. This document represents guidance gathered from decades of use, a consultative process and current best practice throughout the UK. The UK has a rich history of climbing and a nuanced picture of how things work across different rock types, natural and quarried. We welcome views from other climbers, within the BMC and beyond.

1. It is accepted that the traditional (trad) style of climbing should be undertaken on the established trad crags e.g. Castle Rock; Dow Crag; Gimmer Crag; Scafell; Great Gable etc.
2. This guidance looks at the use of fixed gear such as pegs, bolts and abseil points.
3. No **new** fixed protection or lower-offs should be installed on existing routes without prior discussion and agreement at a BMC Lakes Area meeting. The first ascensionist should be consulted where possible, and their opinion be taken into account, but their consent alone is not sufficient.

### **PEGS**

4. Where a peg or bolt is deteriorating and doing the route without fixed protection would result in a significant increase in grade, the policy should generally be to replace the fixed gear, with the new gear sited as close as possible to the existing placement to maintain the character of the route. However, maintaining the grade of the route should not always be the default, changes in climbing standards and styles should be considered during the fixed gear discussion.
5. Pegs are now much more expensive than bolts and are also more prone to corrosion. However, before a peg is replaced by a bolt this should be discussed and agreed by a BMC Lakes Area meeting or by a delegated group and also if possible the first ascensionist.
6. See related document - <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/use-of-pegs-in-british-climbing-bmc-position-statement>

### **BOLTS**

7. The use of bolt protected routes is currently accepted at the following locations

- a. Quarries - limestone, sandstone, slate etc - e.g. Hodge Close, Dalt Quarry, Coudy Rocks, Bram Crag Quarry
  - b. Limestone - e.g. Chapel Head, Scout Scar, Brough Scar
  - c. Sandstone - St Bees
8. Where considering bolting of a new crag the landowner's permission should be sought prior to any bolting taking place. If any landowner makes access conditional upon any specific approach to the use of fixed gear on their property, their requirements should be carefully considered, and complied with if appropriate and agreed by a BMC Lakes Area meeting.
9. When considering bolting of a new crag consideration should be made as to whether the crag is part of an SSSI. This could have restrictions on what can be done on the crag. The DEFRA GIS website has details of all SSSI's and lists what may trigger damage at those sites. If the crag is on an SSSI then notification of proposed bolting should be given to Natural England for consideration of whether or not bolting is allowed.
10. The Cumbria Bolt Fund (CBF) was established to oversee the placement of bolts and fixed gear in the Lakes area and such placement should be directed through the CBF.

One of the main reasons for establishing the CBF was in relation to the replacement of old bolt (some 20/30 years old !) and this is progressing with a list kept documenting the state of play of the rebolting and also bolting of new routes.

Anyone placing bolts must be competent to do that. The CBT organises training sessions for all those who wish to place bolts using the CBT system and equipment.

Website - [www.cumbriaboltfund.co.uk](http://www.cumbriaboltfund.co.uk)

11. Any bolts placed will likely be there for many years to come. The bolts and associated equipment costs money and also time to place and the bolts placed should be up to the standards agreed by the BMC.

See related standard - <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-drilled-equipment-and-dry-tooling-position-statements>

12. The thin end of the wedge issue - the bolting of crags and sports climbing started in the 1980's and has progressed over time (and various rocky periods) but now sports climbing is well established. Most new climbers now come into the sport via climbing walls and they are only used to clipping bolts on a climbing wall and not going through a "trad" climbing introduction of 50 years ago. There is however an

established divide as to what crags should be retained as “trad” and those which are potential sports crags - it is the crags in the middle which can cause issues.

Sports crags have been established due to various reasons –

- Limestone crags, in particular, are steep and do not run to having good gear placements and the placing of bolts can transform such a crag - e.g., Scout Scar, Millside etc.
- There are many crags which have been developed but have just not maintained interest and are left and not climbed on. Bolting of these crag can ignite interest in that crag - e.g. Runestone Quarry.
- Currently bolting of volcanic rock (traditional Lakeland crags) is not accepted - but many, particularly in the north of the Lakes, are vegetated and not climbed on - what about these e.g., Walla Crag, Car Park Crag, Yew Crag (Thirlmere), Mart Crag (Deepdale) !! - the thin end of the wedge !

13. Any consideration of bolting and development of new crags should take into account issues of potential of environmental damage and effect of any such development.
14. Any consideration of bolting of established routes and crags should go through discussion and agreement at BMC Lakes Area meetings.

#### **ABSEIL POINTS OR ANCHOR POINTS**

15. Abseil points have been established over time at crags throughout the Lakes.
16. Anyone using any abseil point does so at their own risk and should inspect the system in place before abseiling.
17. In order to help preserve a tree, abseil ropes should, if possible, not be put round the tree and subsequently pull round that tree - a sling or strop should be placed round the tree and this used for the abseil. A thick rope or protection padding should be used to reduce any harm on the tree.
18. Where an established abseil point has been made then a safe, permanent system should be established with either a double rope, chain or strop with an abseil ring.
19. Where the rope system is in place it should be at least double industrial strength rope
20. The CBF has a list of known abseil points and with help from others in the outdoor world, will look to replacement of abseil points and have a date-tie/tag to indicate when it was replaced.
21. Bolted abseil points are currently not accepted in the Lakes. The one exception being at Sergeant Crag Slabs where it was placed due to the insistence of the

landowner for ecological reasons and the stopping of creating paths and erosion down the side of this newly developed crag.

22. The placement of abseil points with rope, in particular, but also chain or strop necessitates regular checking on the state of the abseil system. Consideration of bolted abseil points should be considered where -

- on ecological grounds
- on safety grounds
- there are no alternatives
- and also, for convenience

23. Any consideration of placement of bolted abseil points should go through discussion and agreement at a BMC Lakes Area meeting.

**SIGNAGE** (this was discussed at BMC Volunteers Meeting )

24. There is now a wide mix of climbers with differing knowledge and experiences of crags and crag etiquette and also knowledge (or lack of knowledge) of the BMC.

25. Consideration should be given, particularly in quarries and sports climbing venues, to signage at the crag setting issues such as follows -

- Rock climbing is a dangerous sport and those participating do so at their own risk and responsibility.
- Any issues or concerns about the crag, bolts or whatever should be reported to Local BMC Access Rep - details on BMC Website - [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)
- Ensure you have parked reasonably and preferably at the car park.
- Users of the Crag should act responsibly and be aware of others in the area and not spoil their enjoyment.
- No litter should be left and any litter there should, if possible, be removed.