

### **Appendix 3: The Area Bolt (Drilled Gear) Policy**

The current local policy on bolts was agreed in 1994, through the BMC Area Committee, as amended substantially and incrementally by the BMCSW Area.

**Aim:** To preserve and maintain the integrity, spirit and ethos of climbing in the Avon and Cheddar locality.

**Objective 1:** To safeguard the original character of established climbs and therefore to preserve the local climbing history.

**Action 1:** No retrobolting (i.e. the placing of bolts on climbs in locations where they did not exist previously).

**Objective 2:** To acknowledge and maintain the historically accepted mix of climbing styles in the locality (the preservation of the status quo of ethics).

**Action 2:** To ratify the cliffs, crags and quarries or crag sector where:

- a) bolts have been used and accepted in their densities.
- b) bolts are unacceptable.

**Objective 3:** Not to hinder the development and progress of the sport locally, and thereby recognise and accommodate the need for new routes in the mould of sports climbs, projects, or bold/adventure climbs at appropriate venues.

**Action 3:** Monitor and review development and effect control by consensus if necessary in cases which blatantly stray outside the operating area ethic.

**Objective 4:** To maintain (or improve if practical) the safety standard of individual pieces of accepted fixed gear on established climbs (within the constraint of Action 1).

**Action 4:** To support the funding of local re-equipping campaigns (like-for-like gear replacement).

**Objective 5:** To sanction fixed gear placement to help alleviate local access problems or to make a genuine contribution to the environmental integrity of a cliff, crag, or quarry.

**Action 5:** To identify the venues where abseil stations, in particular, should be provided and as funding permits carry out a programme of installation using trained volunteers.

#### **Acceptability of bolts in Avon Gorge**

Existing (minimal) bolts accepted, although:

- New Quarry: high density bolting accepted;
- Suspension Bridge Buttress: bolts unacceptable.

In an area with contrasting operating styles and degrees of bolting, terminology is crucially important to prevent inadvertent transgression. For example, one could not prescribe 'bolts acceptable' at Avon for inappropriate bolt ladders materializing amidst traditional routes. 'Bolts accepted' simply reflects established consensus opinion, those bolts which have proved unacceptable having been removed.

In relation to Avon Gorge, the policy was supplemented in 1996 by a resolution that the BMC has no fixed gear replacement policy for Avon Gorge', but this was replaced by two resolutions in 2002 which are reproduced below.

#### **2002 BMCSW Area Resolutions**

For belay placements where the belay is reliant on fixed protection, it is acceptable to replace current gear with bolts if the fixed protection is rotten. Bolts should not be placed unless the fixed gear is seriously defective and cannot be replaced with new pegs and there are no adequate natural gear placements at or near the stance.

For runner placements if there is no natural protection available and the current fixed gear is rotten, like-for-like replacement of fixed gear is acceptable. No replacement should take place if it is not possible to replace like for like.

#### **2011 BMCSW Area Resolution**

The 2002 resolution was augmented at BMCSW January 2011 in relation to belays on Main Wall with existing bolts (authorizing their renewal in the specified cases) and the North Wall of Suspension Bridge Buttress (authorizing various first-time bolted belays to compensate for the loss of tree belays in conservation work).

## **2012 BMCSW Area Resolutions**

Remit of ClimbBristol Project Steering Group (PSG) in connection with drilled gear approved at BMCSW 25.1.2012:

- To make decisions about drilled and other fixed gear in line with the like-for-like bolt policy for Avon Gorge, as amended at BMCSW meeting January 2011.
- To make decisions about drilled and other fixed gear where the effects of those decisions lie outside what is permitted under the Avon Gorge bolt policy but where there is a tangible benefit to conservation or public safety and therefore to the sustainability of Avon Gorge climbing; e.g. provision of bolt belays in place of: (a) vulnerable trees (b) trees lost through conservation or rock safety work and (c) exits or belay methodologies that cause a threat to public safety (i.e. to that of users of Portway). It is not envisaged that any such decision would sanction retro-bolting (protection bolts) but – if circumstances were so limited that such action was considered necessary — the consent of the first ascensionist to be sought before any action is taken.
- In order to implement a successful fixed gear renewal programme for the New Quarry, which was subject to a resolution at BMCSW January 2011, to authorize the placing of what is expected to be no more than a small number of additional protection bolts, provided (a) the character of any so-affected climb is maintained and (b) the first ascensionist has consented. (This, in effect, to be a crag-specific dispensation to the Avon Gorge bolt policy.)

## **Drilled Gear Policy Principles (Decision Rules)**

The following seven policy principles were agreed by ClimbBristol Project Steering Group (PSG) on 6.11.2012 after debate. A number of them had already been approved by BMCSW as a guideline framework within which the PSG could exercise its delegated authority to make decisions on appropriate bolting issues for the purposes of the ClimbBristol Project.

- Where a crucial tree belay has been lost or is ailing and unsafe the CBPSG will approve a first-time 2BB if there is no equivalent or sustainable alternative, e.g. above Thanatos, above the Stranded slab, above Troillus, on Breakfast Ledge.
- Where there is a fixed belay which serves as an abseil point for multiple single pitch routes the CBPSG will approve a new or first-time 2BB if there is no sustainable alternative or if the fixed belay already contains a legitimate bolt, e.g. above Kranz & Magic Theatre, the Krapp's Last Tape/ Think Pink belay.
- Where a significant improvement to public safety will arise the CBPSG will approve a first-time 2BB, e.g. atop the left-hand end of Upper Wall to serve the routes left of New Horizons.
- Where vegetation or dangerous rock has completely closed down the exit of a route, and it is highly unlikely that these conditions will be adequately managed, the CBPSG will approve a first-time 2BB if there is no alternative reasonable means of descent.
- Where a peg on a pitch containing multiple protection bolts cannot be replaced the CBPSG will approve a first-time protection bolt in place of the peg, e.g. Tremors, Defining Limits. (It is implied by the area policy that retrobolting is not permitted without the first ascensionist's consent but — in this scenario where a pitch already contains multiple bolt protection that was present on the first ascent or first free ascent — the CBPSG does not consider the view of the first ascensionist to be paramount.)
- The CBPSG considers drilled pegs to be a form of bolted protection. Therefore in relation to pegs inserted in holes drilled by a climber the CBPSG will approve the replacement of the drilled peg with a suitable bolt. In relation to pegs inserted in existing holes (e.g. engineer-driven) the CBPSG will approve replacement of the drilled peg with a bolt only if the original peg cannot be extracted and replaced with a suitable peg.
- The CBPSG considers there is a case to plan for dealing with the quarrying industry's iron spikes that are degrading and which will become progressively unsafe. For those spikes that perform the function of protection or an abseil anchor the CBPSG will approve the addition of a suitable bolt or bolts, e.g. the Depravity-Steppenwolf belay. However, the CBPSG also recognises that iron spikes represent part of the industrial heritage of the Avon Gorge and, while there will be cases where they are complemented with bolts to ensure their safe use, the CBPSG does not approve their removal.
- The CBPSG does not approve the renewal of bolts that are relics of original aided ascents and which have not become of critical use as protection bolts since alternative protection is available, e.g. M1, Pigeons Nest (bolt 2).