



Mountaineering Ireland Bolting Policy (1999)

Placement of fixed equipment on Irish Rock Climbs

At its meeting on October 8th 1999 in Ballyvaughan Co. Clare, the Mountain Advisory Group (MAG) of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (now Mountaineering Ireland) discussed the issue of the placement of fixed equipment on Irish rock-climbing.

Mountaineering Ireland has debated this issue widely in the past and concludes that there is no place for the use of bolts at traditional rock climbing sites.

1. Rock-climbing sites in Ireland are a scarce resource,
2. The use of bolts as fixed points for lower-offs or for abseil practice for rescue is undesirable as in the main, actual accident-management situations will call for the rapid fixing of quality anchors to expedite the rescue. This can best be achieved by the safe use of modern rock-climbing equipment.
3. The presence of bolts will serve to change the character of climbing as it currently exists in Ireland.
4. The presence of bolts may tempt the inexperienced and possibly the unwary to engage in activity for which they may not be sufficiently competent. This calls into question issues such as the maintenance, management and liability relating to these bolts.

Mountaineering Ireland has a number of experts in the area of rock climbing among its members, and has close links with a number of centres who provide training in rock-climbing which includes the use of safety equipment. It will be only too happy to advise any group or agency who feel the need to acquire these skills.

Thus it asks any agency, group or service provider who may have placed fixed equipment at Irish cliffs or crags to remove same. This request is made in what is felt by Mountaineering Ireland to be in the best interest of all those who use Irish outdoor sites for recreation and sport.

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Bolting in High Mountains

The Alpine mountains are a precious resource highly valued by mountaineers of all nationalities because of the unique character of the climbing they offer.

This initiative to make some Alpine climbs safer and more popular is misguided and will take on a momentum of its own. As popular routes become crowded, the developers will look further.

Mountaineering Ireland accepts that there is a long tradition of the use of abseil points in the high mountains of the Alps.

There are numerous high standard multi-pitch bolt-protected climbs at low altitudes on which aspiring Alpinists can gain experience

1. Mountains are generally remote, wilderness areas where the essential wilderness experience and exploratory nature of mountaineering must be preserved.
2. People who climb for recreation (as opposed to monetary rewards) do so to avail of this essential wilderness experience, or/and to escape a world dominated by materialism and consumerism.
3. People who climb in the high mountains of the Alps accept that they expose themselves to risks which must be faced by their own self-reliance, knowledge, skill and experience.
4. The presence of bolts on Alpine peaks may tempt the inexperienced and ill-prepared on to the high mountains, where a greater range of mountaineering skills are required in order to climb safely.
5. Mountaineering Ireland recognises the rights of individuals to use the high mountains for financial gain. However, this should not be to the detriment of the recreation user of the mountains.
6. Mountaineering Ireland accepts that the mountain environment is by nature under constant flux, it is not inherently a safe place, thus the essential natural fabric of mountaineering must be preserved.

The Committee members of IAA are not in favour of the redevelopment of any climbing routes in the Alpine regions and feel that the UIAA should be making a stand to protect these areas from the spread of bolting. The UIAA mountain commission recommendations on bolting are unacceptable to the Irish Alpine Association as they contradict the essential fabric of wilderness climbing.

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