

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

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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
s/off/con/ManRegs/BMCpol/Drilled Eq_Dry tooling
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