

Climbing Development Guidelines

Draft 2 - Public

Draft 2 - Public

Please note that this document is not finalised, it is in draft stage.

All feedback is welcome.

Please send feedback to Mountaineering Ireland's Climbing Officer, Damien O'Sullivan – damien@mountaineering.ie

21/01/2020

Contents

Section 1 – Introduction.....	2
Foreword.....	2
Climbing Ethics.....	2
Section 2 – Prior Considerations.....	3
Access.....	3
Discovery.....	3
Consent.....	3
Occupiers’ Liability.....	4
Environment.....	5
Protected Sites.....	5
Birds.....	6
Animals.....	6
Plants and Trees.....	6
Parking.....	7
Paths.....	7
Section 3 – Practical Considerations.....	8
Developing a Trad Climbing Venue.....	8
Maintaining Existing Routes.....	8
Developing New Routes at an Existing Venue.....	8
Developing New Routes at a New Venue.....	9
Bolts and Pitons.....	9
Descent.....	9
Recording New Routes.....	9
Developing a Sport Climbing Venue.....	10
Cleaning for Sport Routes.....	10
Finding the Climbing Line.....	10
Types of Bolts.....	10
Placing Bolts.....	11
Closed Sport Climbing Projects.....	11
Recording New Routes.....	11
Developing a Bouldering Venue.....	11
Cleaning.....	12
Landings.....	12
Closed Projects.....	12
Recording New Problems.....	12

Section 1 – Introduction

Foreword

The development of climbing areas, both new and existing, is an integral part of climbing. Without the passion and effort of those who maintain existing climbs, develop new climbs and indeed develop entirely new climbing areas the climbing community would have a far more limited range of climbing options available.

A balance must be sought between the development of climbing areas for the benefit of the climbing community on the one hand, with the rights of landowners and the natural environment on the other hand.

It is the aim of the Climbing Development Guidelines to inform best practice and inspire others who may develop climbing areas in the future. The guidelines are a gathering of the collective knowledge and expertise of those who currently develop climbing areas as well as experts in relevant legal and environmental fields.

The guidelines include a broad range of information relevant to the development of climbing areas. It is beyond the scope of the guidelines to include in depth technical, legal or other highly detailed information. If you require any further information or assistance, please contact Mountaineering Ireland.

Climbing Ethics

Prior to developing a climbing area, you should have a good knowledge of the climbing ethics of the relevant area. Climbing ethics are the unwritten rules of climbing and are agreed by the consensus of the climbing community. As a developer of a climbing area you are in an enhanced role of responsibility, to communicate our climbing ethics and to help other climbers appreciate and adhere to them.

The climbing ethics of climbers on the island of Ireland are underpinned by a strong sense of self-responsibility and respect for the environment in which we climb. Our climbing ethics have evolved over time, practices that were integral to how we climbed in the past are now unaccepted, and vice versa. For example, the placement of pitons was once a common and accepted practice, whereas the use of chalk was once frowned upon.

Climbing ethics will continue to change just as climbing itself evolves. These changes are often driven by advances in training methods, technology, and even the discovery of new climbing areas. Changes to our climbing ethics must be agreed upon by the community through a process of consultation and agreeing a consensus.

Climbing ethics vary from country to country and at times from place to place within a country. The climbing ethics of the Irish climbing community are common to all areas in which we climb and call home. Visiting climbers intending to develop climbs must educate themselves on Irish climbing ethics in advance of any work to be undertaken. Mountaineering Ireland will be able to advise visiting climbers.

Section 2 – Prior Considerations

Access

We enjoy access due to the goodwill and tolerance of landowners. As a developer of a climbing area you are in a prime position to create and maintain good relations with landowners.

There is no general right of access to land for recreation in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. Even if the land is unfenced and looks unoccupied you do not have an automatic right of access.

All land on the island of Ireland is owned, either privately or by the public sector, with more than 80% of land being privately owned. Some land is jointly owned by several people with specific shares in it, this is known as a commonage.

Your actions as a developer can affect relationships with landowners. Inconsiderate or dishonest actions may not only jeopardise access at the area you intend to develop, it also reflects on the entire climbing community and could result in a loss of access in other areas as well as a loss of access for other recreational users. If you are unsure how to proceed please contact Mountaineering Ireland for advice.

Discovery

Prior to developing a climbing area, you should make local enquiries as to who owns the land and with the information contained within these guidelines approach that person or organisation seeking a discussion about developing a climbing area on their land. This applies to both privately-owned land and publicly-owned land such as Coillte forestry and National Parks.

For coastal climbing, the foreshore (the seabed and shore below the high-water line of ordinary tides) generally belongs to the state. Sea-cliffs above this line would generally be part of the adjoining landholding and as such owned by the relevant landowner.

If local enquiries do not reveal the owner of the land, ownership can be checked online:

- Northern Ireland - <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/topics/land-registration/land-registry>
- Republic of Ireland - www.landdirect.ie

If you are unable to discover the identity of the landowner, please contact Mountaineering Ireland for assistance.

Consent

Open and honest communication is the bedrock for positive relations with all landowners, both private and public. Be clear and honest about your intentions and explain them clearly in layperson's terms. Your aim should be to secure informed consent for the development of the climbing area from the landowner.

Before meeting with the landowner consider the possible positive and negative impacts of the climbing development for the landowner, their property, the environment and the local community. Consider how the positive impacts could be amplified, and the negative impacts mitigated.

It may be helpful to discuss your plans with the nearest Rural Recreation Officer (Ro) or the Countryside Officer (NI).

Mountaineering Ireland may also be able to provide additional information and advice.

Occupiers' Liability

Many landowners will be happy to provide access to develop a climbing area, but others may be reluctant because of concerns that they might be held responsible should someone become injured while climbing on their land. There are several pieces of information which you can convey in order to help allay these concerns.

A study carried out in 2011 for Sport Northern Ireland on occupiers' liability case law, and cases settled out of court in Britain and Ireland over the previous decade, showed that not one single case has emerged of a successful claim related to the informal recreational use of the natural environment.

It is a fundamental principle of climbing that we are responsible for assessing and managing the risks that are inherent to climbing – including loose rock and the suitability of any protection whether fixed or not. The Mountaineering Ireland *Participation Statement* sets this out clearly:

“Mountaineering Ireland recognises that hillwalking, climbing and rambling are activities that can be dangerous and may result in personal injury or death. Participants should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.”

The law recognises that people enter onto private land to engage in recreation activities and that this should not place an unfair burden of responsibility on landowners. This is covered under Occupiers' Liability legislation. As legislation is specific to each jurisdiction they will be dealt with separately for the purpose of clarity.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, occupiers' liability issues are considered under two pieces of legislation: 1) Occupiers' Liability Act (NI) 1957; and 2) Occupiers' Liability (NI) Order 1987. In brief, the 1957 Act concerns situations where the landowner has given permission (express or implied) to be on their land, and the 1987 Order concerns situations where there is no permission.

The 1957 Act says landowners owe a “common duty of care” to all visitors who come onto land by invitation of the landowner or who are permitted to be there. The duty is to take care over the state of the premises so that visitors will be reasonably safe in using it for the intended or permitted purposes. However, the Act also provides that this duty does not impose any obligation on a landowner to a visitor who willingly accepts risks – like the risks encountered by climbers.

The 1987 Order states, “no duty is owed by virtue of this Article to any person in respect of risks willingly accepted as his by that person”.

Lending credence to the legislation is the House of Lords case of *Tomlinson v Congleton Borough Council* (2003). Lord Hoffman stated, “*I think it will be extremely rare for an occupier of land to be under a duty to prevent people from taking risks which are inherent in the activities they freely choose to undertake upon the land. If people want to climb mountains, go hang-gliding, or swim or dive in ponds or lakes – that is their affair.*”

Republic of Ireland

In the Republic occupiers' liability issues are considered under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1995. Under the provisions of this act the landowners' duty of care to a recreational user is minimal. It is, “not to intentionally injure that person or damage the property of the person, nor act with reckless disregard for the person or the property of the person”.

It is worth noting that under the Occupiers' Liability Act 1995 the duty of care can be extended. For example, where a "structure" have been provided for use by primarily by recreational users, the occupier has a duty to take reasonable care to maintain the structure in a safe condition, so if any structures are put in place specially to facilitate access to a climbing area then a programme of inspection and maintenance should be agreed in advance with the landowner.

Case law also exists to provide further evidence of the strength of the landowners' position. There are two very pertinent examples of case law which lend further confidence, they are, 1) Weir Rodgers v The S.F. Trust Ltd. and 2) Wall v National Parks and Wildlife Service.

In the case of Weir Rodgers v The S.F. Trust Ltd., the Supreme Court ruled that a landowner can assume that those on private land for recreational purposes will understand the risk that is inherent in their activities, have regard to the nature of the terrain they are crossing, and take measures to ensure their own safety.

Wall v National Parks and Wildlife Service held that the duty of reasonable care to maintain a "structure" in a safe condition is not an absolute duty. The Occupiers' Liability Act 1995 did not require a structure to be in a pristine condition. Because of the vigilance expected from recreational users, a structure might be degraded and yet objectively safe having regard to the self-care expected of the user population and having regard to its location, purpose of use and utility.

Developers of sports climbing areas should be aware that Mountaineering Ireland has received legal advice that bolts may constitute a "structure", and thereby require a maintenance regime. On the other hand, Mountaineering Ireland has also received legal advice that solitary pitons, stuck gear, in-situ abseil points, all common in trad climbing venues, would not constitute such a "structure".

Environment

As a developer of a climbing area you are in the privileged position of being able to make it possible for other climbers to experience the environment of that area. You also have the responsibility to be aware of and attempt to minimise the impact of the development and subsequent climbing on the environment.

The climbing environment contains much more than just the climb itself - it is the home to a whole host of plants and animals. Additionally, the environment in which we climb can play as large a part of the attraction of climbing outdoors as the activity itself.

For advice on any environmental matters related to the area you intend to develop you should contact your local National Parks and Wildlife Services ranger in the Republic of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in Northern Ireland. If you are unsure who to contact, please contact Mountaineering Ireland for advice.

Protected Sites

Due to their unique and/or sensitive nature certain sites have designations which are intended to provide increased protection. These sites contain legally protected habitats or rare or endangered species of plants and animals. Activity that negatively impacts on these sites can be prohibited by law.

In both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland the EU designations of *Special Protection Areas* and *Special Areas of Conservation* are applied to certain areas. Solely in the Republic of Ireland the designation of *Natural Heritage Area* can also apply. In Northern Ireland sites can also be designated as *Areas of Special Scientific Interest* and *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*.

The location of protected sites is mapped on the following sites:

- Republic of Ireland: National Parks and Wildlife Service website - <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>
- Northern Ireland: Environmental Agency's Natural Environment Map Viewer - <https://apps.d.aera-ni.gov.uk/nedmapviewer/>

If you intend to carry out any development of a climbing area which falls within any of these designations, you should contact the relevant authority in advance. If you are unsure how to proceed please contact Mountaineering Ireland for advice.

Birds

The places which are often most appealing for climbing are home to birds such as ravens, peregrine falcons and kestrels. As a developer you should be acutely aware that your actions may negatively impact on nesting birds. Disturbance caused during development work as well as subsequent disturbance from climbers should be considered.

It is particularly important to avoid disturbance during the breeding season. The generally accepted bird breeding season is from the beginning of March until the end of August, but this varies depending on the species. It should be noted that it is illegal to disturb nesting birds in Northern Ireland regardless of the time of year.

When breeding birds are disturbed, they may exhibit behaviour such as circling around, dive bombing, calling or acting in an agitated manner. You should be mindful of these behaviours and stop any development activity if they are observed. If parents leave a nest with eggs for an extended period, the eggs can cool and perhaps then fail. When the chicks are hatched, disturbance results in the parents being unable to fly in to feed the chicks or protect the chicks in cold weather.

Animals

The climbing area you wish to develop may be on farmland, or you may have to cross farmland to reach it. Unfortunately, each year dogs kill, injure or worry livestock. These impacts to animal welfare and a landowner's livelihood are unacceptable. The landowner's policy for dogs on their property should always be respected and should be adopted into the guidelines for the venue.

In wilder areas animals often go unseen by people, leading to the incorrect assumption that there are no wild animals in the area. Many animals are more active at night, or have effective camouflage, or are small and as such are not easily seen, but just because we do not see them does not mean that they are not there. Again, disturbance by dogs and climbers should be considered and minimised.

Plants and Trees

Plants and trees manage to thrive in some very unlikely places, and often in some very unhelpful places from the perspective of climbers. Prior to developing a climbing area, it is worth considering the impact that the work will have on the delicate ecosystem in front of you.

You should remember that very often the areas which provide the best habitats for plants provide the least attractive climbing. Wet cracks fed by natural drainage lines will most likely remain wet throughout the year. Dark and wet corners rarely provide ideal climbing conditions and may be prone to being covered in lichen, moss, etc. There are; however, exceptions to this generalisation - Fairhead being an excellent example where the sheer quality of the rock rewards the effort to clean it on occasion.

Trees on a route deserve our respect and should be left intact even if getting around them causes some awkward manoeuvres. It is important to understand that some trees are extremely rare and may be protected. Although a little pruning may be acceptable in certain circumstances, it is strongly advised not to remove any trees. Trees can also be home to nesting birds and it should be noted that it is illegal to remove trees during the bird breeding season; from the beginning of March until the end of August.

If the area you develop necessitates an abseil descent, trees can provide a suitable anchor. Using a tree for an abseil can damage the bark and lead to the death of the tree. If a tree is going to be used as an abseil point, an in-situ anchor should be left – a doubled up length of static rope and a stainless-steel ring provides a suitable solution.

Parking

If the venue is already used for climbing or other activities then there may be some infrastructure or arrangements already in place; however, you should still take time to consider the scope of the development you are undertaking to determine whether it is likely to dramatically increase the volume of traffic to the venue. If it is a new venue you should try to anticipate the different ways that the venue is likely to be used and the traffic it is likely to attract. Designated parking that keeps potential impacts to a minimum and is sustainable over time is the goal, even if it adds some distance to your approach.

You will need to work closely with the landowner to determine the best solutions for them, the environment and other land users, so that the venue can be enjoyed sustainably by all for years to come. The onus largely rests with you to communicate with the climbers who will use the area in the future in order to maintain the relationship with the landowner.

Paths

Habitat erosion is becoming increasingly problematic in climbing areas. Foot traffic can cause vegetation damage, which can lead to water gullying and soil loss. To minimise impact, use robust, established paths when possible.

- For existing venues with already established paths, consider whether the path is robust enough to withstand any potential increase to foot traffic.
- Where there are established paths, stay on them, do not walk next to them or create new paths.
- If there are wet areas prone to muddy conditions, lay stepping stones to prevent pathway drift caused by people walking around the wet area.

Section 3 – Practical Considerations

Developing a Trad Climbing Venue

Trad climbs often follow cracks and natural lines of weaknesses on the rock. The features which lend themselves to trad climbing also lend themselves to gathering soil and debris. The result of this is often the need for a significant amount of work in cleaning to develop new routes, and an ongoing amount of work to keep existing routes climbable.

The development of a trad climbing area may fall into several categories:

1. Maintaining existing routes.
2. Cleaning new routes at an existing venue.
3. Developing new venues.

The following is guidance on these three categories.

Maintaining Existing Routes

Maintaining existing routes can make the climbing experience more enjoyable and safer for others.

- Soil can gather in cracks and plants will grow.
- Sections of rock may become loose due to erosion or traffic.
- Shaded and damp sections of rock can be prone to growths of lichen and moss.

Before starting to clean an existing route, you should consider the following:

1. Does the route really need to be cleaned?
2. Do you need to inform the landowner? Have awareness of impact of cleaning on landowners' attitude towards climbers.
3. What is the environmental impact of the cleaning?
 - a. Can you limit cleaning to loose rock, grass, lichen, moss etc.
 - b. Cleaning should not use power tools or chemicals.
 - c. Do not remove trees.
4. What impact will the cleaning have on other climbs?
5. Have you checked with local climbers before attempting to remove substantial blocks as they may be 'loose but solid' and an integral part of the climb?
6. When cleaning, can you remove or replace rusted pitons?
7. When cleaning, are you posing a risk to others?
8. Where will you publicise that the route has been cleaned?

Developing New Routes at an Existing Venue

Many existing climbing areas contain unclimbed sections of rock. Sometimes these sections of rock are unclimbed due to the level of climbing difficulty, and as the climbing standard rises these difficulties become surmountable challenges. Other times sections of rock are unclimbed for more pragmatic reasons; loose rock, natural drainage lines, vegetation etc. If a line has been left unclimbed due to lack of natural protection, then manufactured placements or bolts should not be added.

Before cleaning a new route at an existing venue, you may want to ask yourself some of the following questions:

1. Does the new route have to be developed? If it will require significant cleaning or other disturbance perhaps it is best left alone. Not every piece of rock needs to be climbed.

2. Having decided it is worth developing then follow the above notes on cleaning existing routes.

Developing New Routes at a New Venue

Discovering a new climbing venue is the dream of many climbers. The opportunity to develop new routes and to leave your stamp on climbing history is a rich prize. Before proceeding with the development, it is worth doing some background work to make sure that your efforts will be duly rewarded.

Having discovered a potential new climbing venue, you should establish a relationship with the landowner (see Prior Considerations).

You should make every effort to identify any environmental issues affecting the crag or access to it e.g. bird restrictions, designations such as SAC, SPA etc. These issues may limit or preclude access.

If there is other climbing in the wider area developers should also consult local climbers – there may be a good reason for lack of development at certain venues.

Some preliminary cleaning and exploration should be carried out to establish the nature of the climbing. Find out the following:

- Is the rock of sound climbing quality – not every cliff is suitable for climbing or needs to be developed?
- Is there suitable access for climbers e.g. parking, access and descent routes etc.?
- Is there adequate natural protection and belays.?
- Is the cliff more suited to development as a sport climbing venue?

Bolts and Pitons

The placement of bolts at trad climbing venues for both protection and descent runs contrary to the accepted ethics of the Irish climbing community. Historically the placement of pitons has been an accepted part of climbing ethics in Ireland, as climbing equipment has evolved the need to rely on pitons has dramatically reduced, and they should now be viewed as a last resort. Though some local exceptions have been accepted following extensive consultation with the local climbing community the use of bolts and pitons is to be avoided.

Descent

In most areas descent from a route is possible on foot. If the area you develop necessitates an abseil descent, trees and boulders can provide a suitable anchor. Using a tree for an abseil can damage the bark and lead to the death of the tree. If a tree or a boulder is going to be used as an abseil point, an in-situ anchor should be left – a doubled up length of static rope and a stainless-steel ring provides a suitable solution.

Recording New Routes

When recording new routes, you should provide details of the location and brief details of the route to allow identification, providing photographs where possible. Descriptions of routes should be concise, but with enough information to find, climb, and descend from the route.

Unless otherwise stated the assumption made regarding new routes is that it has been climbed without prior inspection, that no gear was pre-placed and that it was climbed ground up in a single effort. Any deviations from this should be reported.

When assigning a grade to a route it should reflect an on-sight grade. Where a route has been climbed after inspection, practice or with pre-placed gear the first ascensionist should be mindful of this for subsequent climbers who may attempt to on-sight the route.

New routes can be submitted to local guidebook authors or to the Irish Climbing Route Database on www.climbing.ie.

Developing a Sport Climbing Venue

Some potential climbing venues lend themselves towards being developed for sport climbing. Having identified such a venue and following an initial inspection of the rock you confirm that it is more suitable for development as a sport climbing venue there are several steps to go through before equipping a climb. By following these steps, the long-term future of climbing at the venue is far more likely.

1. Follow the guidance in the section on Prior Considerations.
2. Establish if there are existing climbs at the crag.
3. Place bolts following current best practice.
4. Communicate access arrangements with climbers.

The current lack of readily accessible sport climbing venues in Ireland will inevitably mean that any new sport climbing venue will see a significant amount of traffic - this is a key consideration in developing any new sport climbing venue.

The accessibility of sport climbing will attract novice climbers who may not be as aware of the climbing community's accepted practices/values, and extra effort may be needed to communicate these.

Cleaning for Sport Routes

Cleaning routes for sport climbing is often a very different task from that of cleaning routes for trad climbing. The nature of the rock which makes it suitable for sport climbing should mean that there is less vegetation. The focus should be on ensuring that the rock where bolts are to be placed is sound, this may involve the removal of sections of loose or unconsolidated rock.

Finding the Climbing Line

Ahead of placing bolts the line of the climb must be established. This usually involves climbing the potential line on top-rope to establish where the route will go, and where the bolts will be placed. The placement of bolts requires sound rock, this may not be exactly where a climber would want the bolt to be placed. The challenge for the developer is to balance the wants of the climbers for the bolt to be in a convenient location, with the need to attempt to keep the climber in a 'safe' position, all the time dealing with the practical realities of the rock with which you are presented.

Types of Bolts

Bolts fall into two broad categories; mechanical bolts and chemical bolts. Both have advantages and disadvantages in given situations. Any bolts, and ancillary equipment used should conform to the relevant standards and be suitable for use as climbing anchors. Care should be taken to ensure that the material and type of bolt is suitable for its intended environment, do not use inferior materials to limit cost. If cost is limiting your choice of material, you should seek support for your work. You can contact Mountaineering Ireland for information on where and how to get support.

Placing Bolts

Once the work of finding the climbing line is complete and suitable types of bolt has been decided on the hard work of placing the bolts begins. The placement of bolts should only be carried out by suitably trained and experienced developers. Subsequent climbers may rely on your work for their safety.

Whilst the full detail of the process of placing bolts is beyond the remit of this document, an outline of the process is as follows:

1. Ensure that the rock is sound.
2. Drill a hole as per the instructions for the type of bolt being used.
3. Clean the hole thoroughly.
4. If using a mechanical bolt insert the bolt, place the hanger, washer, and nut then tighten the nut.
5. If using a chemical bolt insert the glue into the hole as per manufacturer's instructions and then insert the bolt and remove any excess glue.
6. Check that the bolt functions as expected.

A schedule of inspection and maintenance for bolts should be considered.

For guidance on the placement of bolts please see the following documents:

- BMC – Bolts – an installers' guide: <http://www.thebmc.co.uk/Download.aspx?id=8>
- UIAA – Watch Your Anchor: https://www.theuiaa.org/documents/safety/UIAA-WARNING-ABOUT-CLIMBING-ANCHORS-FAILURES_Dec15.pdf

For further advice on the placement of bolts please contact Mountaineering Ireland.

Closed Sport Climbing Projects

As the person who has put the time and money into developing a sport climbing route – the equipper - the accepted ethic is that you have the right to attempt to claim the first ascent of the route.

If you do not make a first ascent immediately you have the right to deem the route a 'closed project' for a limited period. As well as the various communication methods available, you can let other climbers know that the route is a closed project by attaching a red tag to the first bolt of the route.

Recording New Routes

Provide details of the location and brief details of the route to allow identification, providing photographs where possible.

New routes can be submitted to local guidebook authors or to Irish Climbing Route Database on www.climbing.ie.

Developing a Bouldering Venue

Having discovered a new bouldering area or new problems in an existing area there are several steps that you can take which will help ensure the long-term future of climbing at the area.

Like all other climbing development, the development of a bouldering venue will impact on the natural environment, every effort should be made to limit this impact. Efforts should also be taken to communicate with subsequent climbers as how to minimise their impact on the area.

Cleaning

Prior to cleaning a boulder, you should aim to identify the holds and features which may be necessary to climb the problem. By keeping the amount of cleaning to the minimum you will drastically reduce the impact on any plants, lichens, mosses etc. which grow on the rock.

Due to their compact nature and often steep aspects, boulders can require less cleaning work than other types of rock formation. The careful use of an appropriate brush is usually all that is needed to remove vegetation and loose material from surface of the boulder. Once the rock has been exposed it should only be further cleaned using natural fibre brushes - such brushes have a much lower impact on the texture and friction of the rock. Maintaining the texture and friction of the rock is critical as it is often the very thing that makes outdoor bouldering so enjoyable. Once lost due to over brushing the texture of the rock cannot be recreated, you may inadvertently have destroyed the very thing which you set out to develop!

A common trait for exposed erratic boulders in Ireland is 'turf hats', where there may be up to a metre of vegetated turf perched on top of the boulder. The removal of turf from the top of boulders should be avoided, usually all that is needed is to identify a finishing hold below turf and to consider it the 'top' of the problem.

Landings

Working difficult problems and frequent falling is an inherent part of bouldering. As a developer you may need to consider the landing zone under the boulder. Modern bouldering mats and skilled spotters provide the safety system for bouldering. The use of several bouldering mats should provide adequate protection from ground impact in most situations. Where boulders are higher or there are protruding hazards, skilled spotters provide an additional level of support and safety.

You may feel the need to prepare landing areas for subsequent climbers. Before undertaking any work on landings consider that boulderers often climb in groups thus providing several boulder mats and spotters – ask yourself, if there were six mats and five spotters how would the landing be? Any work on landings should be kept to a minimum and blend in with the natural environment. Only use materials from the immediate vicinity for improving landings if necessary.

The use of bouldering pads not only protects the climber from the ground, but it also protects the ground from the climbers. When placing bouldering mats try to avoid crushing any plants, shrubs or young trees that may be growing.

Closed Projects

If you have taken the time to identify, clean and begin to develop an area or specific boulder it is generally accepted that you should be given priority on first ascents should you request it. If it is not obvious that an area has seen some effort to develop and there is no evidence of recorded projects on line, then it might not be possible to identify whether there are long standing projects or not. In this case there are no grounds for someone to be upset at the loss of a first ascent.

Recording New Problems

Provide details of location, and layout of the boulders, and brief details of the problem to allow identification, providing photographs where possible. Often areas and clusters of boulders are given names to help with Identification.

New boulder problems can be submitted to local guidebook authors or to the ShortSpan website, www.thesortspan.com