

Fixed Gear Guidance on North West Crag and Quarries

The BMC North West (NW) Area seeks to be a guardian of good practice, setting the tone for sustainable behaviour on our local 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. 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. There should be no new fixed gear of any kind placed on any of the North West's natural grit crags (e.g. Blackstone Edge, Cadshaw Rocks, Cold Stone, Thorn Crag, Windy Clough).
2. The Merseyside & Cheshire areas are self-governing due to well established, and overwhelmingly agreed, fixed gear ethics. After local activists place, replace, or remove fixed gear they should update the area chair and secretary so the wider area can be informed.
3. 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 upon by a BMC NW Area meeting.
4. No **new** fixed protection or lower-offs should be installed on existing routes without prior discussion and agreement at a BMC NW Area meeting. The first ascensionist should be consulted where possible, and their opinion be taken into account, but their consent alone is not sufficient.
5. On any new route the first ascensionist should seek to use leader-placed protection wherever possible and only use fixed protection where none is available. Any fixed gear placed should take into consideration future generations and the environmental impact. Fixed gear deemed to be inappropriate may be removed after discussion.
6. Where shorter single-pitch routes are done as boulder problems with mats, such that this becomes the accepted style, any fixed gear should not be replaced. Consider removal.
7. Fixed gear removals and replacements should go through discussion and agreement at a BMC NW Area meeting.
8. If fixed gear has deteriorated or is dangerous, it should be removed (or publicised for removal if the person is not confident in removing it themselves) and only replaced if there are no suitable nearby points where modern leader-placed protection could be used.

9. 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 replacement discussion.
10. 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 NW Area meeting or by a delegated group.
11. Where fixed gear changes have been proposed at the BMC NW Area (including new fixed gear, fixed gear replacement, and fixed gear removal); a quarantine period will follow (defined as the time period between consecutive BMC NW Area meetings).
During that period, the route information and arguments for the fixed gear changes will be outlined in the meeting minutes and circulated in online channels, including but not limited to: BMC NW newsletter, Friends of Pex Hill, Lancashire Rock Revival.
At the next BMC NW Area Meeting the proposed changes will be voted on (For, Against, Abstain). If one cannot attend the meeting, votes can be emailed in advance to bmcnwchair@gmail.com and bmcnwsecretary@gmail.com.
12. Wherever existing bolts are to be replaced or it has been agreed by the BMC NW Area that new bolts are to be installed, this installation should be undertaken by a suitably trained/experienced* person delegated by the BMC NW Area. Installers will use the appropriate materials and should have the necessary skills and experience to comply with the safety standards required.

*The BMC / Area will provide training workshops for those interested.

Related documents

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/use-of-pegs-in-british-climbing--bmc-position-statement>

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