



Bolt Allocation Policy

Version 1.0 - white paper

Aims and Objectives

As a leading climbing club on the island it is important for the MCC to take a proactive role in the maintenance as well as the further development of sport climbing infrastructure in terms of equipping routes at existing crags as well as at new crags / climbing areas.

As a general principle, it does this by generating funds which are used to provide route equippers with the material resources necessary to:

- develop new routes,
- replace ageing or potentially unsafe route hardware, and
- potentially retro-bolt certain existing trad routes.

It is intended that this will further the development of the sport of climbing on the Maltese islands, in accordance with the MCC statute.

Guiding Principles

This application and approval process is meant to:

- promote new route development as well as the replacement of ageing hardware;
- promote best practice in route equipping, e.g. by ensuring that:
 - any equipment is placed correctly;
 - trad routes are only retro-bolted with the consent of the first ascensionist (unless this is not possible to determine, in which case this is subject to general consensus)
 - bolting should respect general consensus on bolt-free areas
 - routes do not encroach on each other or on established trad routes

Eligibility

As a general principle, club membership is a prerequisite for access to club resources. However, the committee may allow, at its discretion, the use of club resources by non-members. For example, this may include visiting climbers or local climbers who already make a significant contribution to local climbing. Such exceptions are taken on a case by case basis and are approved by a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority.

Prerequisites

Correct placement of climbing bolts and anchors requires a certain level of knowledge on the part of the equipper. Ideally, this would include formal training in rope access and bolt placement. While there are rope access courses available locally, to our knowledge there is no formal training available on the placement of climbing bolts and anchors. However, there are a number of local climbers with significant experience. The MCC encourages route equippers to get formal training and certification where available. In the absence of this, mentoring by experienced route equippers to ensure correct and safe placement of protection must be relied on. In particular, new route equippers are expected to accompany an experienced and trusted route equipper on a sufficient number of bolting outings until the new equipper can be considered competent to work unsupervised. Mentoring and observation is best carried out while retrobolting routes, rather than when equipping new lines. The presence of existing protection facilitates the placing of bolts and the previously equipped route can be used to demonstrate both good and less desirable practices.

Remuneration

When the MCC provides equipment and resources for the placement of climbing anchors and protection bolts, it is understood that such work is done on a purely voluntary basis and is not done for or on behalf of the MCC. Consequently, there will be no financial remuneration for any such work.

Approved Bolters

The club will maintain a list of members who are approved to bolt. Approval is a very subjective matter, and is at the discretion of experienced committee members who will have assessed a person's mastery of the skills involved in bolting.

Requests for bolts

A climber wishing to equip a route may approach the MCC for bolting resources and equipment.

Such resources shall be provided subject to availability in the light of any priorities or other pending applications or projects.

Should the resources not be available at the time, the committee may agree to refund the cost of glue and bolts to the climber at a later date, provided that the materials used are of a quality approved by the MCC as in the appendix.

It should be made clear that the MCC's policy is NOT to bolt:

1. Existing trad routes unless there is general consensus plus consent of the first ascensionist;

2. Too close to existing trad routes (a climber on a trad route should not have the option of clipping a bolt at any time during the ascent);
3. Areas where access may be a problem. If this is the case then the location of the route to be bolted should be discussed openly with the committee to avoid future problems with landowners, and also to avoid waste of funds on routes which may in fact be / become inaccessible;
4. Rock of unstable or dubious quality.

The equipper will need to provide some information to the committee about his bolting project, whether just a single route or a whole crag. The more information provided by the equipper to the committee the more chance he or she will have of receiving the requested bolting resources.

In general however the committee will need to ensure, by any means at its disposal, that all the above points are clarified and understood prior to providing the equipment, and that the climber is fully capable of competently and safely bolting a route in the context of local practices and issues.

It is understood that the equipper may request further bolts and glue from the committee should these be required as work progresses and new lines may be discovered.

The allocation of any bolting resources is at the complete discretion of the committee.

Expectations from Equipper

Once a route is bolted the route equipper is expected to provide a topo to the MCC including:

- name of first ascensionist
- route name
- suggested grade
- route length
- number and quality / type of bolts used
- a sample of resin from each new cartridge used

Any unused resources (including bolts, anchors, and resin) must be returned to the committee. If any of the resources were used on unapproved routes the equipper may be asked to compensate the club for this material. The equipper must also report any accidental loss or damage to resources and may be asked to compensate the club accordingly.

Approval Process

Approval shall be provided by consent of at least $\frac{2}{3}$ of the committee, and subject to the above conditions, shall not be withheld unreasonably thereby allowing a more natural and organic development of the sport in terms of grades and areas being developed.

Note: *Given the current need for rebolting, for every new route that is approved for bolting, the equipper shall undertake to rebolt one existing sport route of equivalent difficulty (to bolt) with titanium bolts to be provided by the club. It is hoped that this constraint will become obsolete or can be loosened once the bulk of rebolting backlog is dealt with. The committee will provide the prospective equipper with a choice of routes that need attending to, taking into account the bolting competence of the equipper. If the prospective new route equipper has recently (say, within 3 months) contributed to the rebolting effort then this will be taken into account.*

Publication and Non-Disclosure Period

When a route equipper is first given material resources, it is acknowledged that the time required for bolting will vary greatly depending on whether one route or a number of routes are being bolted and the relative difficulty of bolting such routes.

The equipper will be loaned the equipment and will communicate with the committee regarding progress and expected duration of the bolting project. He will have to return the equipment immediately on request should it be needed elsewhere.

As a rule of thumb a project(s) should not take more than about 6 months starting from the receipt of the equipment until completion of the first ascent(s).

During this time, details of the route(s) are considered confidential and shall not be disclosed to third parties. It is also expected that the route equipper will be using this time to attempt a first ascent of the new route(s). Should for whatever reason the equipper require more time then this shall be considered by the committee and granted or denied accordingly.

The MCC will go public with the new route information in agreement with the equipper, or at latest when:

- all routes for which bolts have been provided have been bolted and:
- have seen a first ascent by the equipper, or
- the equipper gives their consent for publication
- the six month period elapses, in which case:
- any route that is equipped but not climbed is considered an open project; in this case the equipper's wishes for the name of the route(s) in question will be respected;
- any route that remains unbolted or only partially bolted is considered incomplete; in this case it is expected that the equipper shall reasonably consider granting his consent to other individuals who may wish to complete bolting the route(s) in question;

At this point the MCC will assess the completed routes. The equipper accepts that the MCC will publish information about the completed routes via a topo on its various media channels in order that the rest of the climbing community may enjoy them. *MCC channels will therefore be the first to publish the information.*

Additionally, note that:

- If an applicant undertakes the equipping of an entire new crag, irrespective of grade, then the time limit applies for the entire crag.
- During the time limit, an equipper may allow the disclosure of the location to people outside the committee, and may invite other approved equippers to bolt routes that the equipper is not interested in. The committee will be bound to the applicant's wishes of secrecy or lack thereof.
- In the event of two or more persons claiming first discovery of an area the committee will consider as first discoverer the person who first approached it with the location and was allocated bolts.
- If bolts have not been allocated and there are concurrent claims as first discoverer then the two or more parties are expected reach an amicable solution before any material is allocated.

Quality Control

Prior to publishing the route information but after the equipper has claimed the first ascent or given their consent, the committee will seek feedback about the route from other climbers for confirmation of the grade and feedback about the nature of the bolting. Should any concerns be expressed then the matter should be discussed with the equipper to see whether changes should be made. It may be the case that an equipper has bolted a route in a certain style to provide a specific challenge in which case this should be highlighted on the topo accordingly (ex. spicy symbol). This should be the exception to the rule and it is expected that falls will not lead to a high risk of personal injury.

The general quality of the equipper's bolting and their cleanliness at the crag (after bolting) will be taken into consideration when approving future allocations of material.

Appendix - Bolting methodology

Materials

- Due to the corrosive environment in Malta seacliff crags shall be bolted with titanium or high corrosion resistance bolts (HCR);
- Inland cliffs may be bolted with 316SS/A4 with a minimum shaft diameter of 10mm
- For glue-ins Hilti RE500 should be used, or similar.
- Lower offs will be provided according to stock availability and perceived importance of a new route or crag, since chain/ bolt combinations are very expensive and may not be used on each route. Cheaper combinations may be suggested such as 2 bolt and ring combo or simply two bolts.

Bolt placement

Bolts shall be placed in accordance with industry good practices. Specifically:

- Assessment of rock integrity and character around the bolt placement (avoiding loose rock, voids, flakes, quickdraw alignment and resting on flakes etc.);
- proper preparation of drilled holes (sufficient hole depth, brush and blower cleaning, notching for eye bolts);
- manufacturer approved use of chemical anchors (ensuring that the mix is correct);
- proper placement of resin bolts (e.g. recess for the bolt eye, alignment perpendicular to the ground, using required amounts of resin, neatness, care with resin spills, etc.);
- proper placement of expansion bolts (use of a torque wrench, ensuring plate rests completely on rock face);
- ensuring that a route is bolted so as to eliminate ground / ledge falls, within reason and respecting the current bolting ethic;
- to minimize drag.

A pragmatic approach needs to be taken particularly with respect to the last two points. One wouldn't expect a grade 4 climb to have 3m runouts, but likewise one wouldn't expect bolts placed every 50cm. Particular attention needs to be paid to the first 3 bolts from the ground and any two bolts following a ledge or rock feature. It is also understood that run outs and bold passages are very subjective, however the emphasis should be on the safety of the likely fall. The aim is to strike a balance between boldness as desired by the route equipper and a sensible approach to safety.

Skills

Assuming a top-down bolting ethic, the practical skills required to equip a climbing route include:

- rope access work;

- creation of natural top anchors;
- use of natural protection while on a fixed rope;
- use of power tools;

Equipment

The MCC will endeavour to maintain two sets of bolting equipment, each consisting of:

- cordless drill
- glue gun
- air pump
- hammer
- set of spanners of the required sizes
- static rope (60m), rope protector
- grigri, ascender, four steel locking carabiners, four slings, bandolier sling
- carry bag for the above

Each set of equipment shall be kept together at all times to facilitate inventory keeping.

The equipment kit will be provided subject to availability and should ideally be booked well in advance of the work being undertaken. The return date for the equipment should be discussed and will depend on the bolting work to be undertaken. The committee reserves the right to recall the equipment at any time for whatever reason.

The equipment kit is to be returned in good condition, reasonably clean, and ready to be used again. If the equipment presents any problems, a fault develops, or damage occurs, the committee is to be notified as soon as possible. The equipper may be liable to pay for any damage caused to the equipment, depending on the specific circumstances.