

UIAA POLICY ON THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL ROCK
FOR ADVENTURE CLIMBING

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Executive summary

Despite earlier attempts by the UIAA to offer guidance on fixed equipment and the conservation of natural rock, bolts continue to be placed in areas where many climbers wish they were not.

This document evaluates the history and appeal of different forms of rock climbing, and considers earlier attitudes to fixed gear.

It also considers how the case for adventure climbing can be re-stated more effectively and asks for guidance from the UIAA for Federations in developing countries on how to sustain the balance between sport and adventure climbing.

Finally, in the appendix, it offers the views of leading climbers and climbing thinkers on how progress can be made in reaching a more balanced approach to meeting the needs of adventure and sport climbers – and the environment.

The reasons for this document

In May 2000 the UIAA Council approved a policy, embodied in the document 'To bolt or not to be', on the use of fixed equipment – notably bolts and stanchions – on mountain crags and cliffs. It set out what was assumed by Robert Renzler, then President of the Mountaineering Commission, and his team of advisors to be “an acceptable compromise” between the preservation of some rock in its natural state suitable for traditional climbing and the bolting of cliffs for sport climbing and the securing of mountain routes.

This was a brave step forward, but the results have not been to everyone's satisfaction. In some mountain areas the drill is still used so indiscriminately that climbing with an adventurous spirit is either severely limited or, at worst, no longer possible. In some countries, such as Hungary, all available rock for climbing has been drilled and bolted to make sport climbs.

Twelve years on, it is clear that the May 2000 policy on bolting needs reiterating. Further guidance is needed to assist climbing Federations in deciding the balance between the preservation of rock in its natural state and its taming with bolts and other fixed equipment.

Countries that are only now developing their rock climbing are particularly interested in receiving guidelines on drilling and traditional climbing from the UIAA.

There is no doubt that a small group of climbers armed with cordless drills can have an influence out of all proportion to their numbers in changing the character of a crag in a very short space of time.

The UIAA would like its member Federations to ensure that when sport climbing areas are developed, this is only done after proper consultation with local climbers and other interest groups, and takes into consideration existing ethics, traditions and styles of climbing.

Definitions

Adventure climbing, traditional climbing or 'trad' climbing is the style adopted in the early days of rock climbing in which the leader places all the equipment necessary to prevent a dangerous fall. This equipment is then removed by subsequent members of the party.

Protection developed differently from country to country. In Britain, the first protection was simply putting a sling on a spike or around a chock stone inserted into a crack. In other countries pegs were used, except on soft, Bohemian sandstone where removable jammed knots prevented damage to the rock.

A common ideal of traditional climbing was and remains that a team leaves no trace of their passage – and is thus considered environmentally friendly. Even so, with the phrase “traditional climbing” is problematic. In some countries the tradition was to rig mountains with ropes attached to stanchions as on the Dent de Géant and Matterhorn.

Other labels for this style of climbing are ‘minimum impact climbing’, ‘natural climbing’ or just ‘climbing’. Currently the preferred option is ‘adventure climbing’, a term which 30 years ago referred to virtually all climbing.

Sport climbing is rock climbing that relies on permanently fixed anchor points to protect routes. This protection is generally a drilled hole with a bolt or staple inserted, which is often glued into place.

Since the climber no longer has to worry about protecting his or her life, they can concentrate on the actual climbing moves and progress in safety to a higher technical standard.

Bolts are not always inserted properly, especially in countries developing the sport, and all bolts, especially those in sea cliffs, should not be taken for granted.

Bouldering is mentioned for completeness. It is a style of rock climbing usually less than five metres without rope and with just climbing shoes, a chalk bag and a mattress-like crash mat. This style of climbing can be very dynamic requiring power and strength to make short sequences of moves.

This document, alongside the UIAA safety recommendations, aims to help avoid conflict by prompting climbers to organise and make provision for **all** styles of climbing rather than leaving it to other agencies to sort out disagreements.

There have been so-called ‘bolt wars’ on many crags throughout the climbing world. In most instances a settlement was brokered through national federations.

In other cases, agreement could only be reached after intervention from national parks, conservation lobbies, mountain rescue groups, health and safety regulators, town councils and even law enforcement agencies.

Striking a balance between those climbers who prefer bolted rock and those who would like, or even prefer, access to rock that has been left in its completely natural state is more feasible when this range of opinion is properly known to policy-makers.

The attraction of sport climbing

1. Opportunity to improve climbing standards and techniques is more likely on a climb with fixed protection since the climber concentrates fully on the moves unburdened by a rack of gear and without the worry of having to place it.
2. Sport climbing allows climbers to experience the pure fun of climbing with the fear of falling reduced.
3. Sport climbing allows young climbers starting out indoors to take the first step onto rock outside in relative safety. Young climbers can then go on to widen their climbing experience by learning about adventure climbing, providing there is rock left in its natural state for this purpose.
4. The popularity of sport climbing brings employment to mountain areas. Those who might benefit economically are hut wardens and guides and more generally those that normally benefit from mountain tourism.
5. Various organisations find sport climbing a help in achieving their aims, such as mountain rescue groups, educationalists, therapists and other groups using climbing as an antidote to anti-social behaviour, the fight against obesity etc.

The benefits of adventure climbing

1. The development of a sense of responsibility and risk management especially for young people. "Rock climbing routes with little protection require a special measure of accountability by the climber for his own safety and that of his partner." (page 5, *To Bolt Or Not To Be*)
2. The personal satisfaction from such climbs since there is a greater demand on the resourcefulness of the climber. Every act of self-protection is different from the last, as he exercises imagination in using limited resources. This includes the placement of pegs, although with the continuous development of nuts and camming devices, pegs are used less and less. There is a vast difference between placing a peg and drilling a bolt since pegging is limited by the geology of the rock and the element of uncertainty is preserved. Relevant comments on pegs can be found in the *To Bolt Or Not To Be* document, attached.
3. The art of self-protection brings the climber into a more intimate relationship with the rock. For the leader to have to fix his own protection, as the American John Long wrote, is " more testing of the spirit ... it also offers greater rewards in terms of intensity and lasting memories. Climbers who limit themselves strictly to clip-and-go routes deprive themselves of the finest that climbing can offer".

4. There are those who consider pioneering new routes in traditional style to be an art form. This is what Duncan Ferguson, a well-known Coloradan climber, was moved to write on hearing that bolts had been placed alongside a classic ice climb: "It is the nature of the climbing community worldwide that the vision and art of the first to ascend is respected and celebrated, because it is a tangible reflection of the potential of that human at that moment in time. It is up to us to live up to that or put it aside as a wondrous point of inspiration or a mirror for humanity – most often both at the same time."
5. Those with a sense of history will appreciate climbing a classic route only if it remains untouched by the bolt, not devalued for financial gain or dumbed down by those who could not meet the challenge taken on by courageous pioneers such as A. F. Mummery, Riccardo Cassin, Walter Bonatti, André Roche, Max Niedermann, Reinhold Messner and Alex Huber, whose routes shine like a beacon because of the originality of their line and purity of style.

Co-existence and diversity

Readers of this document should know that everyone involved in producing it climbs sport routes as well as on natural rock. The authors share the hope expressed by leading British rock climber Dave MacLeod in his blog on the Torello Mountain Festival in November 2007: "...we agreed that sport climbing has a place in the whole sport that should grow alongside, rather than at the expense of, other climbing disciplines."

The value and significance given to climbing varies a great deal from one person to another. It is a fact that not all Federations elect active climbers to run their organisations. It may be that in some Federations those receiving this information will be mountain walkers and not sport or adventure climbers.

Nevertheless the UIAA hopes that Federation leaders and administrators will grasp the importance of this document and disseminate the information to all relevant members of their climbing Federation. To this end the UIAA office will assist wherever possible with identifying suitable recipients of this document and help with distribution.

Climbing thrives on diversity. It is crucial that a whole range of climbing styles are allowed to flourish and co-exist, so more than just one option is available. Climbers can choose between different styles depending on their tastes, moods, and life circumstances. Parents of young children or the elderly may have good reason to prefer sport climbing. Circumstances change, and having a variety of climbing styles to choose between makes climbing stronger.

There are those who slot in a few hours climbing at the local indoor climbing wall or easily accessible crag between work and home, or at weekends between other sporting and leisure

activities. Such climbers may have little knowledge of the traditions of climbing and its development nor of the debate taking place between sport and 'trad'.

At the other end of the spectrum there are those who organise their whole life around climbing -- domestically, socially and in their choice of job. These climbers care passionately about the activity's ethical direction since they eat, sleep and drink climbing.

The UIAA hopes this document supports the views of the many sport and traditional climbers from around the world who value the preservation of rock for adventure climbing – and whose voices are often not heard or articulated. This document argues in favour of all climbers, not just a small fraction.

Pat Littlejohn, director of the International School of Mountaineering, notes many climbers have “been cowed into silence by a rapacious and rather aggressive bolting fraternity who tell them their views are outdated and reactionary.”

It is clear that concern still exists in the climbing world about the use of bolts. The recent de-bolting of Cerro Torre by American climbers and the consequent international newspaper headlines prompted illustrate this. If climbers spoke out against the indiscriminate use of the drill on their local crags as vociferously then there would be far more rock for adventure climbing.

The way forward

With the advent of the drill and bolt and the surge of interest in sport climbing there is less rock left in its natural state that is suitable for adventure climbing. It is accepted that not all rock is suitable for leader-placed protection; it was for this reason that rock such as mica schist and limestone first became bolted sport climbs.

We are concerned here with the preservation of sufficient rock that will take leader-placed protection so that, in the interests of diversity, climbers will continue to have the choice to climb either sport or adventure routes.

The only way forward is to preserve suitable crags in their natural state where traditional climbing can still be experienced as it was practised by the pioneers of yesterday and will be practised by young climbers in the future. As it was stated in *The Tyrol Declaration (2002)* “without danger and uncertainty climbing loses its defining element – adventure.”

The UIAA, mainly through the Mountaineering Commission (MC) but also through the Youth and Access Commissions is exploring all possible ways of reviving interest and knowledge in traditional adventure climbing particularly for developing countries. It has therefore embarked upon a number of initiatives:

1. The provision of expertise and encouragement through the Training Standards Panel (formerly Training Standards Working Group) of the Mountaineering Commission is seen as a good way forward, especially for those Federations who consider adventure climbing dangerous and are therefore reluctant to support it. Guidelines will help assist route-setters in both adventure areas and in areas where only sport climbing can exist. This would be of particular benefit to Federations where, due to an absence of guidelines or experience, sport routes have been created that are neither safe nor ethical.
2. The UIAA will look at commissioning DVD films and literature about adventure climbing especially for young people.
3. The UIAA helps climbers attend international adventure-climbing meets. Support and encouragement will also be given through instruction at youth camps in areas of need, mainly through the Youth Commission.
4. The UIAA will actively look at ways and means of enabling developing countries to obtain self-protection/trad equipment direct from manufacturers. It will also source funding to reduce cost wherever possible.
5. The UIAA will liaise through the Mountaineering Commission with any groups of traditional adventure climbers that which to take advantage of the above initiatives.
6. The UIAA considers it advantageous to connect with initiatives already underway to tackle the problem of keeping rock unbolted such as the Mountain Wilderness supported "keepwild! climbs" of Switzerland www.mountainwilderness.org. The UIAA will endeavour to make their activities more widely known. (See appendix.)
7. The dissemination of information is vital. Had the 'Bolt Or Not To Be' document reached more climbers, particularly in Federations just developing climbing, there would now be more opportunities to experience all styles of climbing. The UIAA will do all it can to distribute this revised document widely and in several different languages. There are many famous names in climbing backing this latest initiative who intend to support the widespread distribution of it.
8. The policy statements received from the climbing Federations that have them are on the UIAA website, www.theuiaa.org. A summary accompanies each statement to make it easier to read and compare them. The UIAA encourages all countries to refer to these statements when formulating or revising their own policies on fixed equipment and traditional climbing. The BMC, the New Zealand Alpine Club and FASA of Argentina, have produced very useful documents towards ensuring diversity as well as respect for the rock medium and the environment in general.
9. Federations are encouraged to produce a brief inventory of their rock environments under the categories 'natural' or 'bolted' - so that current state of play is known more

accurately. Only then can a meaningful debate be held about which rock should be left natural and which rock is suitable to bolt. This is something that could be of interest to national park authorities, environmentalists and conservation bodies as well as climbers. Some climbing Federations have decided that ultimately the only solution to preserving natural rock is to extend a preservation order to the whole crag or even mountain range. Where this is envisaged by climbing committees an inventory of climbable rock would be a useful guide.

10. Many Federations have created a bolt fund to ensure that worn-out corroded bolts are replaced. It would be helpful if the bolt fund was seen to be working both ways – not only in ensuring good bolt placements but also to remove bolts that in the opinion of the local consensus have been inappropriately placed.

Afterword

There is, in man, an essential paradox. On the one hand he seeks all ways and means to make his life more comfortable, safe and certain while, on the other, he knows intuitively that only by taking risks and facing up to uncertainty is he going to stretch himself, go beyond himself, arrive at a moment of truth when he sees into more of the unknown around him.

Instincts for adventure, so deeply rooted over the past millennia as man evolved in the unpredictable, natural environment, now lie largely dormant. They are only given expression by chance or by design in an artificial way. The rock face is such a medium where the climber concentrates his attention, creates for himself heightened sensibilities and an awareness verging on the extraordinary, summoning up areas of his being which are normally hidden.

These are times when a little light is let into our lives and we remember those climbs so illuminated. So profound are these moments, even if they last only for a few seconds, they are savoured with reverence. This is why every committed climber prefers to lead rather than follow. These experiences are the essence of traditional adventure climbing around the world.

Contributors

In particular, Anne Arran (Youth Commission, Member Traditional Values Working Group [TVWG and Phil Wickens (Mountaineering Commission, Secretary TVWG) regularly offered advice during the writing of this revised policy statement.

Others that contributed to this project are: Clare Bond (Access Commission), Jean-Paul Bouquier (FFCAM), Claude Eckhardt (CAF), Peter Farkas, (Executive Board), Pierre

Humblet (President Mountaineering Commission), Steve Long (Training Standards Panel), John Arran, Nick Colton, Steve Goodwin, Ed Douglas, Kirsten Schutz, Pat Littlejohn, Roger Payne and Ken Wilson.

I would also like to thank Chris Bonington, Alex Huber, Voytek Kurtyka, Pat Littlejohn, Reinhold Messner, Robert Renzler, Roger Schali, Martin Scheel and Daniel Silbernagel for their enthusiastic endorsement of our document.

Doug Scott

Management Committee, Chairman Traditional Values Working Group
August 2012

APPENDIX

These are edited comments and opinions from concerned climbers and pressure groups.

Sir Chris Bonington

“The fundamental difference between adventure climbing and sport climbing, quite apart from the removal of risk which is the very essence of the game we play, is that in the former we accept the crag as it is, use our skill and judgment to find a way up it placing our protection in the cracks and crannies that are there and leave the crag almost in the state that we found it, apart from a few chalk marks and the loss of a bit of grass or lichen. The climber is attuned to the environment, working with it.

“The sport climber, on the other hand, is imposing his will on the environment, picking his line of choice, drilling the holes for the bolts, choosing just where they go and of course leaving a permanent man-made fixture.

“As has already been expressed, practically all of us have indulged in both forms of activity and there are arguments in favour of both. **The challenge is to find a way for both styles to co-exist** in a way that enables us all to continue to share the joy of climbing. We desperately need agreement between sport and adventure climbers as to which crags should be left in their pristine state – bolt free. It is alarming how many crags, particularly on the continent, have already been completely bolted up.

“In many ways, **it is a metaphor for what mankind is doing throughout our planet**, and whether it’s the survival of a way of climbing or of mankind itself, we have to find a reasonable balance between all these issues. This is why I strongly endorse this report.”

Reinhold Messner

My opinion – expressed in my recent books – is that climbing is becoming more and more a sport. Adventure climbing on natural rock will remain as an elite activity, based on the activity’s traditions and the intelligence to respect mountains as ancient wild places, where only those who are properly prepared should go. Preserving our approach to the mountains is a way of saving the heritage of wild mountains – and anarchy in the wilderness. The mass-membership clubs, like the DAV with its million members, are pushing for mountains to be “prepared for everybody”.

Alex Huber

“Climbing and mountaineering are more and more popular and have important human values involving nature, adventure and exploration. But due to growing commercialism these values are in danger. Tourism and industry try to create a ‘safe’ sport out there in wild nature and with this the respect for wild nature in the mountains and the rock itself is getting lost.

“Basically, alpinism and climbing is a sport with a long tradition, strong ethics and high ideals. People went out there to explore the wild nature in the high mountains of the Alps which are one of the last refuges of pure nature. **But the radical *plaisir*-bolting of the last two decades has put this long tradition in danger.** Today, in the most popular destinations, climbing has become a bolted highway, which is of the same safety standard you find on indoor walls.

Pat Littlejohn, ex-vice president, British Mountaineering Council

“I was very heartened last year when climbers at a BMC meeting in the southwest voted by an overwhelming majority that Cornish sea cliffs should be free of fixed equipment. It may be that the majority of climbers and mountaineers around the world hold similar opinions, but they have been cowed into silence by a rapacious and rather aggressive bolting fraternity who tell them that their views are outdated and reactionary.

“My position is that minimum impact climbing should be the norm and that bolting should be limited to certain areas and cliffs. **The climbing fraternity simply doesn’t have the right to impact on the natural rock environment in this way.** Makes one ashamed to be part of it. A sports crag to me is about as sterile as a golf course, and about as natural.

“**The crucial question is whether rock climbing should continue to be an adventure sport or not.** If not, then it loses its link to mountaineering and to its great heritage. Adventurous young people will turn to other outdoor sports like canoeing, surfing, diving, even mountain walking – all of which are more adventurous than sport climbing and a lot more careful not to impact on the environment.

“When I learnt to scuba dive in the late 1970s, every diver carried a knife for prizing things off the seabed, collecting samples. Nowadays knives have been virtually outlawed and even diving gloves are discouraged, so that people are discouraged from touching any marine life or corals. Caving is another outdoor sport that has cleaned up its act. I did quite a bit in the 60s when we used smoky carbide lamps, dumped spent carbide everywhere and went anywhere we liked in the cave.

“Even in the late 1970s there were people blasting underground to extend caves and trampling wherever they fancied. Nowadays cavers have a ‘minimum impact’ ethic where nothing is damaged, nothing is left behind and people follow specific routes through large chambers to minimise disturbance to the cave floor.

“Climbing seems to have moved in the opposite direction and this is something that no climber can be proud of. From the ‘clean climbing’ movement in the 1970s, when we realised the damage pitons did to the rock and made a big effort in most parts of the world to climb leaving no fixed equipment, **we have moved to a situation where we drill and bolt cliffs and mountain faces on an industrial scale.** Climbers leave vast amounts metalwork in the outdoors while comparable outdoor sports leave nothing.

“The sad story of Poi, Kenya’s premier bush crag, is a good illustration of the problem with. The Kenyan climbing ethic, (established by people like Ian Howell, Iain Allen and Andrew Wielochowski, who did the first ascent of Poi, was ground-up adventure climbing. Andrew established his classic route on the east face of Poi in this style and attempted at least two other lines including a second one on the east face.

“Inspired by Andrew’s route Steve Sudstad, John Barry and I got half way up a new route on the north face, again climbing ground up with natural gear. We retreated due to John having an accident but completed it the following year: *Dark Safari*, E6, possibly still the hardest adventure climb in Africa.

“Between these visits the late Todd Skinner and company got sponsorship from *National Geographic* magazine and flew into Poi equipped with a Maestri-style petrol-driven compressor. They hired about 40 porters to lug all their kit to the top and over two weeks bolted a 20-pitch route left of Andrew’s, completely ignoring the local ethics. This face was going to be my next ground-up objective. Andrew had got 500ft up it with no bolts, so I was a bit sickened by these tactics.

“Todd commented that he saw no need to pay any regard to the ethics of ‘a bunch of ex-colonials’. After this precedent another route was established by bolting from the top down. I climbed with one of this team in Wales a couple of years later and he told me he regretted doing the route in this style, but the damage has been done and Kenya’s ultimate adventure crag, which had the potential for some of the world’s most challenging adventure climbs, is now considered fair game for bolting, due to the actions of climbers with corporate sponsorship acting with no regard and even contempt for the established ethic and the crag’s history.

“Respect for the rock is being lost. Rock has become just a commodity to be exploited for the creation of sport-climbing venues or, even worse bolted climbs in wild mountain terrain. We had a sport with high ideals, unlimited adventure, and, at its best, harmony with the natural environment. Now **rock climbing is in real danger of becoming a tame sport, which relies on an artificially modified environment, free of risk and adventure** – and pretty much indistinguishable from climbing on an artificial wall.”

keepwild! climbs

“The keepwild! climbs campaign from Mountain Wilderness Switzerland started in 2001 and was initiated by concerned mountaineers and lovers of the mountain environment because of the growing importance of outdoor sports in the Alps. Initially, the Swiss foundation Save the Mountains supported the keepwild! campaign, which currently campaigns on clean climbing.

“keepwild! climbs (www.keepwildclimbs.ch) is a sub-project which focuses on promoting clean climbing and preserving the integrity of rock. The main goals are keeping a balance

between *plaisir* and adventure climbing in Switzerland and raising awareness among climbers and mountaineers about the consequences of drilling and its impact on finite rock resources.

“We fully support the great efforts of the UIAA and appreciate the remarkable work Doug Scott has put into the preparation of this document. To date, **one of the main problems in the Alps is ongoing commercialisation, overdevelopment and the growth tourism** – all of them are first world problems which are accompanied by prosperity, convenience and growing safety requirements.

“For countries that are just developing various kinds of mountain tourism – e.g. climbing – this publication could help to prevent indiscriminate drilling and the exploitation of unique mountain areas. However, one basic prerequisite for the acceptance and the transfer within the climbing community is to generate a big and powerful, well-organized adventure-climbing lobby including well-known alpinists, alpine associations and regional climbing clubs all over the world.

“Best practice examples of balanced *plaisir* and adventure-climbing areas should be communicated and a handbook with guidelines for first ascensionists published. Ideally, this handbook would be signed by well known alpinists and first ascensionists so it will be taken seriously. Those involved in keepwild! climbs are highly motivated and will do their best to promote this UIAA-publication and the following supporting activities. “

Martin Scheel

Scheel climbed the milestone route Supertramp in 1980, which he restored in 2009 to its original state after it was retrobolted without consensus in 2004 and 2005.

“Aid climbing is a cool thing. And for the alpine world today, it would be impossible to imagine free climbing without bolts. However, it is actually quite simple: let the mountain have a chance. Either aid climbing without bolts or free with bolts only for the belays! Those who use bolts to progress don’t give the rock a chance and deprive the next generations of their possibilities. It is an ideological cul-de-sac that has already been tried decades ago. Back then it was called *superdirettissima*, today it is called *plaisir*.

Daniel Silbernagel, mountain guide, author and publisher of the Swiss keepwild! climbs guidebook series

“In the discussion as to how rock and alpine routes are equipped and maintained, or if routes should be left in their original state, important considerations don’t just include safety, but also preservation of the character of the route. This balancing act often calls for a sophisticated discussion of the context.

“Today we have more possibilities to protect a route well, by ourselves and also safely, in comparison to the days of hemp ropes and wood chocks. Several ‘witnesses to history’, such

as, for example, the fixed ropes on the Matterhorn or the Eiger-Mitteleggrat are to be left in their current condition although if old fixed ropes are left, no new fixed ropes should be added. Just as, for example, the Cassin route on the Piz Badile, today has hardly any new bolts.

“Generally, sport-climbing areas should be well-protected, because in these areas, beginners can safely learn how to climb. Multi-pitch climbs should retain their character. *Plaisir* climbs do have their place alongside the keepwild! climbs, but later generations should also be able to discover both types in the future. In the high mountains, climbs should be equipped with the utmost restraint.

“If fixed equipment is necessary, it should only be placed where the glacial recession can lead to dangerous conditions that can’t be protected otherwise. Not every route must be accessible for everyone. One’s personal responsibility, knowledge and competence should be the basis of the decision about the safety of a climb and not how a route is equipped.”

Roger Schäli

“The Alps have a magnificent climbing history, created by magnificent figures such as Anderl Heckmair on the Eiger’s North Face. Both the past as well as the future should be treated with the utmost care. The Heckmair route on the Eiger North Face deserves the highest respect.

“The first ascent of this route was achieved, as in former times, completely without bolts, and should be retained in its original state. **The route is a piece of art and art is generally left unaltered.** Such routes can be better protected with current equipment than in former times, but the severity remains.

“In mountaineering and rock climbing, perfect safety, expected by many, doesn’t exist. The partner or the opponent is the mountain or the rock, and in case of failure, there is no culprit. Not only personal competence and a realistic self-assessment determine success: chance, luck or misfortune also have their say in the discussion.

“For the future, my wish is for a change in the rating of climbing and mountaineering routes. Not only the grade of difficulty should determine if my performance is outstanding, rather the severity of a route- exactly how it is in Great Britain. **In the Alps, we have grossly neglected the severity rating of climbing.**

“What is the point of communicating the grade of difficulty where often, the greatest severity actually lies within the cumulative attempt. From the beginning on, young climbers, beginners and climbers who establish routes should understand the concept of what it means to climb the same degree of difficulty in different grades of severity. In addition to this, they should realize that a tremendous performance is not only illustrated by the grade of difficulty, but also through the ascent of committing, clean and adventurous climbing routes. We should establish a culture among young climbers for the E-rating. Climbing

guide authors, clubs, large associations and prominent climbing figures, for this your help is needed”

Robert Renzler, architect of the UIAA’s 1998 document ‘To bolt or not to be’.

“Adventure and sport climbing can get along well as long as borders are respected, and differences are recognized and taken into account. The freedom of mountaineering and climbing starts with the choice of a route and ends with the demand that everything must be possible for everybody. We must select our goals according to our abilities and not adapt the mountains to our insufficiencies.

“There is enough room for both forms of activity, but **we should never forget that climbing is an intrinsically fulfilling mental and physical interaction with nature.** Respect for nature and the preservation of it might become the most important value in our sport. The recommendations and guidelines laid down in the document are a good compromise for the future coexistence of adventure and sport climbing. I highly appreciate the work of Doug and the UIAA to achieve a sustainable bolt-policy. If in doubt, don’t bolt.

‘To bolt or not to be’ is still a very relevant policy statement and is available at Visit http://www.theuiaa.org/upload_area/files/1/to_bolt_or_not_to_bolt.pdf

Voytek Kurtyka

“I welcome this UIAA document that attempts to check the brutal assault on natural rock progressing without restraint. Sport climbing is developing with scary intensity. It is invading and changing two precious spheres of which we are traditionally a part. Both spheres are most essential for the survival of the climbing community. The first one, possibly more sensitive to me personally, is natural rock. The second is the tradition and value of adventure climbing.

The destruction of rock

“Sport climbing offers the best fun of my life. I do it twice a week, but each time my exhilaration is marred because I can feel an essential part of my body – the rock – is being raped. There is a deeply rooted conviction among climbers that we are special. **We believe we practise a noble art. Absurdly, we are proud of our love of nature.** But whenever I feel this essential part of me being damaged I wonder if we are not barbarians.

“Hardly anybody seems to notice the scale of destruction. We take it for granted that natural rock is our property and we can drill it, chip it, crush it, rape it in any way we wish. Rock climbers treat their playground in the most invasive and abusive way.

But still I do it twice a week! It’s just gorgeous. It is a good escape from stressful life.

“We are turning the most attractive part of nature into a steel, pock-marked plague. Within the last three decades rock in popular areas has become polished, like public toilets. I’m puzzled why it is not yet spreading AIDS. What will remain of this rock in a hundred years?

I have no doubt that sooner or later the public's attention will be drawn to the massacre rendered by us and we'll simply get banned from natural rock forever.

"I assure you my feeling of loss is not an illusion, so the rising of a like-minded dictator, experiencing a similar sort of ache, is just a matter of time. The perverse idea of establishing a foundation to forbid access to natural rock is looming in my mind. Well, not exactly in my head, rather in my heart, because in my head I'm plotting eagerly to abuse my rock even three times a week. I can't help it, this is really a delightful romp.

The tradition of adventure

"Sport climbing pushed climbing standards by several grades. We are proud of it. Sport climbers worship grades. In Poland they call it *digit*. The *digit* is God, the *digit* is everything. But I believe that climbing reduced to just a grade is degrading. The real art starts where it expresses inexpressibility. The *digit* is a castrated dummy that expresses merely the resistance of matter. The climbers addicted to the *digit* don't realise the noble art of ascent works not in matter resistance, but in inner pain. There remains no trace of real danger and fear; not a shade of the suffering that cleanses our minds and no frustration of creative indecision in the face of the unknown, that opens the gate to either hell or heaven.

"But what the hell, I'm plotting how to do it three times a week. And I confess humbly that this romping pretty regularly overcomes the more difficult challenges of adventure. Sport climbers claim their climbing is more human because it is safer, but I believe it is less human because it is deprived of danger. What is the sense of ascent if it is not an ascent above oneself? When real fear is replaced by mock fear, climbing gets reduced to romping."

The solution? Spire gardens

"I appreciate the goodwill of a balanced UIAA document that seeks co-existence of sport and adventure climbing. It wouldn't be thoughtful in these stressful times to ban all those sport climbers from natural rock. But again, I ask, what will happen in the fullness of time? Sport climbing is such a good thing that I would not be surprised if sooner or later it becomes a mass sport. Number one around the globe. And then what?

"I'm really scared. Within the last five years in Poland the number of sport climbers has probably tripled. Sooner or later public opinion will cease to play the role of a benevolent bystander in the face of all this destruction. It is also terribly sad to see adventure climbing in retreat.

"Probably the time will come to revise the rules on further development of sport climbing. I wonder how many sport climbers in fact need natural rock? A proportion of them may actually prefer to do their regular training in an artificial indoor playground, rather than on natural rock.

"Here a tempting solution comes into mind. The success, practicality and utility of indoor playgrounds suggest an alternative. We need to extend artificial indoor playgrounds outdoors. Just imagine lofty, concrete spires rising above cities! Imagine these spires

designed by a talented artist, planted within city gardens, matched with artistic harmony by boulders, ponds and trees. Just imagine an exquisite, gigantic Japanese rock garden.

“Artistic cascades of roofs, overhangs and dièdres would suit the most demanding geometrical and technical requirements of sport climbing better than natural rock. The spire gardens would also appeal to the most sophisticated aesthetic tastes – and all this within city boundaries.

“The question is money. But in an age of thousands of concrete highways and fly-overs it should not seem out of reach. I hope grants from environmental protection funds would make a major contribution. After all, the spire gardens would create a new age in modern landscaping. Flower gardens, water gardens and rock gardens already exist so why not create a new chapter in landscape styling: spire gardens!

“They would, like stadiums, become landmarks boosting the pride of cities and communities. I wouldn’t be surprised if spire gardens would become, like other sports’ stadiums, the focus point of the public show for sport climbing, putting the obsolete natural rock into oblivion. I really wouldn’t mind!

“Such is the cunning reasoning of a confused person who has a problem differentiating between his guilt and his dreams. “

More information can be found at www.theuiaa.org.