



Consultation on High Ropes Activities within The Scout Association

Consultation Document:

**Outline proposals prior to submission for approval by
the Operations sub-Committee**

Comments are welcome to the UK Activities Team on all proposals contained within this document by **31 October 2010**.

To submit your comments please go to <http://q.scouts.org.uk/s/o9RLcPJtnyEjNAI>.

August 2010

Introduction

High ropes and associated activities such as crate stacking and zip wires have been around in Scouting for a while, but are getting ever more popular and common place. The governance of these has so far been based around the leader's ability to risk assess the activity and put in place relevant processes to manage any identified risks, but with their increase in popularity many members have been asking for further guidance and governance to support their running. As part of the rolling review of the governance of individual activities we are now looking at how we can provide this.

The aim of this review is to provide a framework to support leaders in the delivery of high ropes activities and to empower them to lead these activities in a safe manner. We don't wish to stop any activities that are currently taking place within Scouting in a safe and enjoyable manner. This is why we have put these proposals in this consultation document and made it available to all members of the movement, so those with current knowledge and experience of running high ropes activities can let us know whether these proposals will be useful to them or how they can be improved upon.

Any change to rules or guidelines of the Scout Association must undergo scrutiny by internal groups with decisions made by the properly constituted Committees. However, given the scope of this exercise, these proposals are being shared with any Member of the Movement who wishes to comment prior to being submitted for scrutiny and decision.

Although the proposals feature as separate items for ease of reading, they should be considered as a whole approach.

Background

In putting together this consultation document we have reviewed all thoughts sent to us by members of the movement so far. We have also received advice from professionals within the high ropes industry. This document is a combination of all these views and thoughts rather than being the brainchild of any one individual, to hopefully provide a system that will be a benefit to all.

Thought has been given to including high ropes activities within the activity permit scheme. However the different styles of high ropes structures and different skills and knowledge required for these, along with the course specific training required on individual structures mean that this would not be a practical route. Instead we've looked individually at the construction and operation of high ropes structures, and also differently at permanent and temporary structures.

Proposal 1:

High ropes is defined as:

'Any off ground activity on a constructed facility, not covered by the adventurous activity permit scheme, that uses a belay or similar safety system. This includes (but is not limited to):

- High ropes course or individual element
- Zip wire
- 3G swing
- Crate stacking
- Prussiking up a rope, when not part of a climbing activity
- Climbing a caving ladder, when not part of a caving activity
- Using Single Rope Technique (SRT) on a rope, when not part of a caving activity

This does not include:

- Climbing
- Abseiling
- Prussiking during climbing
- Using SRT, caving ladders or abseiling during caving
- Low ropes courses
- Bouldering
- Aerial runways
- Bungee jumping'

Proposal 2:

A temporary high ropes structure is defined as:

'A high ropes construction erected for a single event **or** no longer than a week'

A permanent high ropes structure is defined as:

'A high ropes construction not classed as temporary'

Proposal 3:

Permanent High Ropes Construction

Construction and maintenance of permanent high ropes structures must follow the guidelines in AAIAC – The UK Ropes Course Guide. This guidance is based on the European Ropes Course Standard EN:15567. The guidelines can be viewed at:

www.ccpr.org.uk/OneStopCMS/Core/CrawlerResourceServer.aspx?resource=E4A010B1-57EC-4E4D-BC75-8245E55677E9&mode=link&guid=2be0d16809fd4b7ebb514d03c9b1822d.

Notes:

1. EN:15567 Part 1 is the European Standard for the construction of ropes courses which builders of ropes courses should already be complying with.

Proposal 4:

Permanent High Ropes Operation

Permanent high ropes structures must have a written operating manual which needs to be approved by a Technical Adviser with a minimum qualification of Mountain Instructor Award (MIA). The operating manual will include details of:

- Operating procedures
- Equipment to be used
- Instructor training
- Who can carry out instructor training
- Instructor assessment / competence levels
- Who can carry out instructor assessments
- Limitations of the course / structure
- Record keeping for training, assessments, operation, equipment, inspection and maintenance

Notes:

1. Builders of high ropes courses should be providing much of the information in the operating manual.
2. MIA is the award recognised within the industry as having the knowledge to be able to act as a Technical Adviser for ropes courses.

Proposal 5:

Temporary High Ropes Construction

Construction of temporary high ropes courses must follow the following guidelines:

- Uses a setup, and is constructed by a person competent at putting together belay systems, all as agreed by a County Climbing Assessor or Mountain Instructor Award (MIA) holder.
- Uses a site that means those constructing, participating in and watching the activity can do so safely.
- Where natural features such as trees are used they must be checked that:
 - They can bear the load that will be placed on them
 - They are healthy with a substantial enough root
 - The attachment limb / trunk must have a diameter of at least 300mm
 - Where the attachment is to the limb rather than the trunk there must be a backup system linked to the trunk.
- Where existing structures such as buildings are used they must be checked that they can bear the load that will be placed on them.
- All equipment used, both in the structure and belay / safety system, is designed for the purpose it is being used and follows the manufacturer's guidelines.
- Includes an appropriate belay / safety system for the structure.

Notes:

1. Further detail and guidance to support the construction of temporary high ropes structures will be provided in a factsheet.

Proposal 6:

Temporary High Ropes Operation

Temporary high ropes structures must have a written operating manual which needs to be approved by a County Climbing Assessor or Mountain Instructor Award (MIA) holder. The operating manual will include details of:

- Operating procedures
- Equipment to be used
- Instructor assessment / competence levels
- Who can carry out instructor assessments
- Who can instruct

Notes:

1. Operating manuals for temporary courses are likely to be a lot less involved than for permanent structures, but still need to cover the information required.
2. Where the same structure / setup / operation is used for multiple events over time (such as a Prussiking rope set up behind the Scout hut a number of times over the summer), the same operating manual can be used. It will need updating where there are changes to any of this though, and any updates will need to be agreed by a County Climbing Assessor or Mountain Instructor Award (MIA) holder.

Questions and Answers

1. Why are you not introducing a high ropes permit?

The different element of high ropes activities (zip wires, crate stacking etc) and different high ropes courses available mean that different skills and knowledge are needed for each structure. Even if you have been trained and assessed in using one high ropes course you are still likely to need course specific training before being able to use a different course. This means a permit scheme wouldn't work as a permit would need to be able to assess you for the skills and knowledge to run all high ropes courses, not just individual ones.

2. Does this mean I now need to provide lots of needless paperwork?

No. The builder of your high ropes course should provide you with most of the information you need. You just need to record your operations and everything you do with your high ropes course. This is an industry norm and the least that would be expected of any operator of structures such as high ropes courses.

3. How am I supposed to find an MIA to approve my high ropes course?

Many activity centres will already have an MIA as a Technical Adviser and a number of Counties or Regions also have an MIA that they work with. If you don't already work with one then they are easy to get hold of through the Association of Mountain Instructors (AMI), and many are very friendly to Scouting having got their first taste of the outdoors through Scouting! Technical Advisers are not required to be at centres full time, so you will only need the odd day of the MIAs time.

4. Why is crate stacking included within this?

Crate stacking is an individual element of high ropes, as are activities like zip wires, 3G swings etc, and is recognised as so within the European Standards on high ropes structures.

5. Why are County Climbing Assessors involved when this isn't climbing?

Any person checking the setup and operation of ropes systems needs to be qualified in setting up rope and belay systems, which holding the SPA (the qualification required to be a County Climbing Assessor) shows. Additionally they need to be skilled in assessing others and their safety systems rather than just doing it for themselves, which SPA doesn't cover but all County Climbing Assessors will have covered.

6. Does this mean I can't put up a crate stacking activity on my summer camp anymore?

Not at all. It just means that someone qualified in setting up rope safety systems for activities (a County Climbing Assessor or MIA) needs to check that what you are planning is sensible and safe. As long as you plan it all properly beforehand there is no need for this person to actually attend the camp at any point. And if you use the same setup and operation each time then the agreement can be used for multiple events.

7. Do I need to go through this if I'm suspending a rope off a tree for young people to prussik up?

Yes prussiking would be classed as a high ropes activity in this scenario. The only time it wouldn't would be if it were taking place as part of a climbing activity on a rock face or artificial climbing wall and was therefore covered by a climbing permit.

8. Do I need to get County Climbing Assessor or MIA to attend every time I put a rope up behind my hut for prussiking up?

No. As long as you plan this activity properly beforehand so that the County Climbing Assessor can sign off your operation of the activity then there is no need for them to attend the actual event.

9. Who would class as a 'competent person' to set up a temporary high rope activity such as crate stacking?

This would depend on the requirements of the setup and would be decided by the County Climbing Assessor. This may take the form of certain named people who have shown they have the skills and knowledge of the specific set up, it may be those who have shown they have certain skills through holding other qualifications like climbing permits or it may be through a system where certain nominated people can assess the skills of others to be able to do this safely.