

UK RIGS in Scotland:
Local Geodiversity Workshop

Saturday 28 April 2007 at BGS (Murchison House), Edinburgh

Introduction:

Mike Browne (Chair of UK RIGS)

The emphasis of RIGS is *local*; even nationally important sites are mostly visited by local people. The non-statutory RIGS designation should link into local authorities' local plans containing policies on conservation. A RIGS designation should lead to consideration during proposals for development but also during emergency events. An emergency repair to a footpath in Dundee resulted in the partial destruction of a RIGS. There is a need for site management briefs to improve the condition of the site, as well as the need to raise awareness through education. There is a need in Scotland for geodiversity audits and action plans but the 2007 guidance on Local Nature Conservation Sites (LNCS) is not mandatory.

RIGS started in Scotland in 1992 and so far there are around 40 sites, mostly in the Lothian and Borders RIGS area. Research shows that development of RIGS across the UK is patchy with some areas unrepresented including Dumfries & Galloway and Aberdeenshire. Consideration needs to be given to whether RIGS should be re-branded as Local Geodiversity Sites.

National policies are not always supportive of geodiversity. The national waste strategy leads to pressure to fill in quarries, and the trunk road strategy can lead to rock outcrops being covered in peat. In contrast, the Scottish forestry strategy does mention geodiversity. In Fife, improvement is measured by the number of new RIGS and whilst this may be simplistic it does at least recognise the importance of geodiversity.

National Geodiversity Strategy:

John Gordon (Scottish Natural Heritage)

A meeting held in Chester in March 2007 to develop a UK-wide National Geodiversity Action Plan was attended by a wide range of organisations. The plan will aim to enhance and protect UK geodiversity but with wider links to biodiversity and archaeology. The working group, which includes John Gordon and Mike Browne, hopes to prepare a draft by the end of June and the finished document by the autumn.

In Scotland, SNH is looking at a National Geodiversity Strategy. There needs to be an evidence base to demonstrate why geodiversity matters by reference to landscapes, habitats, rural development (e.g. geoparks), and the contribution to quality of life. A scoping study will establish the vision, aims and policy objectives. There will be integration with national policies and instruments to demonstrate how geodiversity helps to deliver these.

The Scottish Executive need to be convinced that the drive for geodiversity is not just coming from the likes of SNH or BGS. RIGS groups therefore have a key role in raising awareness of geodiversity and pressing for change to persuade those in power that there is a groundswell of interest from local people. For this reason RIGS groups should always try to respond to consultations.

[During the question and answer session a delegate expressed surprise at the lack of any RIGS presence in northeast Scotland. However Judith Cox from Aberdeenshire Council pointed out that although there is no enthusiasm for creating RIGS groups in Aberdeenshire, local sites are recorded on the SINS database.]

Geodiversity audits and action plans:

Hugh Barron (British Geological Survey)

Nigel Trewin has said that Scotland's geodiversity is of international importance compared to its biodiversity, which is mediocre on the world stage. 'Geodiversity' can be defined as "The variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, landforms, sediments and soils together with the natural processes which form and alter them." Geodiversity audits should precede the development of an action plan. So far, BGS geodiversity audits have been concentrated in the north of England. West Lothian is the only one completed in Scotland although others are being planned for the Loch Lomond and Trossachs and Cairngorms national parks, Lochaber geopark, Northwest Highlands geopark, and the Isle of Harris although these are dependent on funding. Costs can vary

widely depending on the project outputs; for example, the Northumberland audit cost £275,000 and took two and a half years to complete whereas the West Lothian audit cost £69,000 and the Doncaster one cost £20,000. The Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund (and its Scottish equivalent) is the main source of funding. The purposes of audits tend to be related to planning and development, but also geotourism opportunities.

The partners involved in the audit and action planning process tend to be local authorities, Natural England / SNH, industry (quarries), schools, universities and conservation bodies. Geodiversity audits describe, explain and evaluate the diversity of the geology to promote understanding. They review the impact of the geodiversity on other fields such as natural heritage. Sites are plotted on GIS (Geographical Information Systems) for future reference, and audits contain recommendations for the action plan.

The West Lothian project was chosen due to a recognised need within the local authority and involved partners such as SNH and LaBRIGS. A desk study involving GIS was followed by a field audit and this resulted in the selection of 51 West Lothian Geodiversity Sites. The 2005 local plan will be updated to include them and the resulting action plan will be launched after the forthcoming elections. It is hoped that this will act as a model for other areas in Scotland and kick start the Local Geodiversity Action Plan (LGAP) process in Scotland which is not obligatory in contrast to England.

In Scotland the planning system does not directly recognise geodiversity although there are oblique references to it. There is an opportunity to rectify this situation in the revision of 'SPP14' guidance on natural heritage. Scotland lags behind England where planning policy (PPS9) obliges planning authorities to ensure that geodiversity is "conserved and enhanced".

Regrettably the application to fund a geodiversity audit in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs national park was rejected for aggregate levy funding, possibly because of competition from another bid. There are limitations on access to aggregate levy funding as some is reserved for community projects and this is especially evident in Scotland.

There is sometimes landowner resistance to the 'conserve and protect' aspects of geodiversity and the Lochaber geopark has downplayed that aspect.

In England RIGS groups have received funding to carry out geodiversity audits. This can be a sensitive area because local authorities will want some assurances about the quality of the work to be carried out and BGS has the in-built advantage of credibility. Developers may challenge RIGS designations in court or in a public enquiry even though it is a non-statutory designation. The process must therefore be robust.

What came first – biodiversity or geodiversity?

Graeme Wilson (Midlothian Biodiversity Projects Officer)

The simple answer is 'biodiversity' because that word was first used in 1985 whereas geodiversity is a relatively recent addition to the language!

Seriously though, geodiversity and biodiversity influence each other. Geodiversity influences landscape, soil, drainage, and microclimates (and therefore all habitats and species). In turn, biodiversity influences geodiversity due to changing ecosystems and changes in soil chemistry; decaying plants affect erosion rates; climate change affects conifer plantations and peat bogs. In short, today's biodiversity is tomorrow's geodiversity and vice versa.

Has this link been properly acknowledged? English Nature's publication 'Geology and biodiversity - making the links' demonstrates that the arguments have been accepted. Other examples include the Scottish Biodiversity Group's sector guidance note 1 and the LNCS guidance which mentions both local biodiversity sites and local geodiversity sites.

What about the future? RIGS groups need to work more closely with LBAP partnerships and there is a clear need for LGAPs in all local authority areas. The LNCS guidance can be used to integrate them further with partnership working being the way forward.

[In response to questions from the delegates Graeme explained that the reason for the wide range of confusing names and acronyms is because the LNCS guidance is not compulsory. RIGS can also be called Local Geodiversity Sites or SINS (Sites of Importance to Natural Science). Some concerns were expressed about

whether the word 'geodiversity' was meaningful compared to the traditional 'geology'. However the word 'biodiversity' has become generally accepted, including in schools, and therefore use of the word 'geodiversity' should help raise awareness of geology and its links to biodiversity.]

Gie's the Dosh!
Graeme Wilson (Midlothian Biodiversity Projects Officer)

Handouts were circulated giving a useful list of funding tips, a funding glossary of terms and a list of websites which give further information about funding. In brief, the tips are as follows:

1. Find out about the funder. Do they fund your type of projects? Do they fund 100%?
2. Take your time. A badly constructed application will fail however good the project itself is.
3. Use the same language as the funder uses. Answer the questions that is asked. Keep it simple!
4. Think laterally. Consider the by-products of the project: this may make it more attractive to the funders. For example, a drystone dyke received funding as a 'linear habitat and wildlife corridor'!
5. Meet the deadlines.
6. Don't apply for funding which is not wholly appropriate just because it is available. With persistence you should find what you are looking for eventually.
7. Discuss your proposal with the funder, for example on the phone. Establish dialogue.
8. There can be match funding difficulties when you try to use funding from a variety of sources due to EU rules.
9. Where possible, match fund with in-kind contributions as well as money. Volunteers' time can be charged at different rates depending on their level of skill.
10. Seek assistance, for example local authorities have grants and lottery officers, or try your CVS (Council for the Voluntary Sector) as listed on SCVO's website.
11. Split up the work between partners. This is especially useful where some partners have access to funding denied to others.
12. Think of a name for your project – keep it simple and catchy.

Guidance on business planning is available in 'Mapping the Future'.

Discussion groups on funding issues:
Graeme Wilson (Midlothian Biodiversity Projects Officer)

In groups, the delegates were asked to think about some of the important issues to consider when applying for funding. The main issues raised were as follows:

- Capital funding is usually easier to find than revenue funding.
- Sustainability – Funders often want reassurance about what will happen to the project when the funding runs out.
- The cost of maintaining and repairing information panels should be included in application where appropriate.
- Funding to reprint existing leaflets is often hard to get as it is no longer 'new'.
- 'Funderfinder' information available from local authorities and CVS.
- Need to prove financial competence – applicant requires formal structure to establish credibility.
- Beware of minimum and maximum funding limits – discuss with funder at early stage.
- Be aware of timescales for completion of funded projects. Money may need to be spent quickly.
- Lottery distributors increasingly focussed on Olympics which will limit availability of funds for other projects.
- Volunteers' expenses can be refunded so records should be kept.
- You can't start project till you get the green light. An early start may invalidate the bid.

Local Geodiversity / RIGS Development Officer post:
Ness Kirkbride (SNH)

Ness circulated two handouts describing the proposed new development officer post.

One handout listed the steps required to secure funding:

1. This would be a national grant so there needs to be a recognised body to host the post (eg. NMS) as part of a partnership (incl. BGS, SNH). There also needs to be a steering group formed to oversee the post, devise a work programme, and be involved in regular meetings with the postholder. Should RIGS groups be represented on this steering group by UKRIGS or by a new Scottish RIGS association? A decision would need to be made about whether a Scottish body would be independent of UKRIGS (as is the case in Wales) or subsidiary to it.
2. Completing the grant application form including deciding the roles and responsibilities of the post– who will be involved in producing this?
3. Timescale - Ness Kirkbride will be leaving in July so but as she will need three weeks to process the grant the actual deadline is June. SNH will make a decision in September.

It was stressed that the post is not just about RIGS but about wider geodiversity issues including the geoparks and community groups such as the Friends of Glasgow Necropolis for example.

Mike Browne explained that SNH will only fund part of the cost and he outlined the difficulties in finding match funding. Some sources have been approached but they are unlikely to fund geodiversity projects or may only commit to one year.

The second handout outlined the proposed aims and objectives of the new post. The vision for the post encompasses the twin RIGS objectives of raising awareness and involvement in conservation. The detailed objectives of the post were listed under four proposed aims which are:

1. To support the role of the Scottish RIGS representative body,
2. To establish a useful and supportive network that will assist the work and development of existing and future Scottish RIGS groups,
3. To provide advice and support to RIGS groups in developing raising awareness issues, and
4. To identify and develop links with local authorities and others who can support the network of RIGS groups in Scotland in the identification and protection of RIGS sites as part of the Local Nature Conservation Sites network.

Workshops

In the afternoon the delegates were given the opportunity to attend two out of a possible three workshops to discuss issues in more detail in smaller groups. The feedback was as follows:

Workshop 1

Local Geodiversity in Scotland

Facilitators: Richard Batchelor (first session) and Mike Browne (second session):

There are four stages to setting up a RIGS site:

1. Identification: Based on local 'folk knowledge', literature, excursion guides, professional knowledge, Geological Conservation Review. Aberdeenshire relied on university knowledge due to absence of RIGS group.
2. Selection: Ease of access, toilet facilities, attitude of landowner etc. How objective is the identification and selection? Good access not enough if geological value is limited. Health & safety concerns may mean a site is designated but not publicised.
3. Assessment: Criteria and weighting (incl. accessibility, health & safety, geological interest etc.). RIGS manual has four criteria; Strathclyde RIGS criteria based on them. Needs to be legally watertight in event of litigation. Keep all information safe which is used to assess the site, not just the information passed to the local authority.
4. Report to local authority: Richard Batchelor emphasised that the main job is to list the site; publicity is a secondary role. Write up the report and send with maps to local authority planning dept. Don't need landowner's permission to list a site but it can be important when publicising and funding leaflets. Experience shows great range of response and ease / difficulty of achieving acceptance of proposals. Some groups make details of site freely available on web, others see them as an asset and charge for them.

Workshop 2

Promoting Geodiversity in Scotland

Facilitators: Mike Browne (first session) and Richard Batchelor (second session)

- Issues include education and interpretation, marketing, events such as meetings, guided walks, websites, CD-ROMs, Scottish Geology Festival. Some involvement by visitors has the most lasting value. Get local people to test readability of leaflets; this gives them 'ownership' of it.
- Information panels are costly and last only five years, much less in areas prone to vandalism. There can be high wastage. Consider carved stones. Panels may not be favoured for aesthetic reasons in undeveloped localities; ideal is self-guided leaflet plus marker posts. Guided walks should be led by enthusiastic people. Links to tourist organisations, bed and breakfasts, museums, walking festivals.
- Who are we trying to target – Families? Walkers with a latent interest? Casual passers-by?
- Use catchy terminology to attract interest, e.g. Rock Detective, Landscape Detective.
- Many people don't care so how do we get their interest? Write leaflets in 'Sun' or 'Daily Record' language.
- Should we charge for leaflets to help pay for reprints? Impractical for slim leaflets, easier for packs or CD-ROMs. But can you charge if the leaflet has been grant-funded? Could charge for downloading PDF files from a website.
- Geotourism - useful for getting support from Local Authorities, Visit Scotland and local Enterprise boards

Workshop 3

Funding Geodiversity in Scotland

Facilitator: Graeme Wilson (both sessions)

- Funding of group costs incl. volunteers' travel expenses
- Different funding levels for skilled and unskilled work.
- Beware of estimating too low; aim high.
- Be realistic about project timescales.
- Could apply for funding for columns in local newspaper.
- Geo-projects in schools.
- Easier to fund revisions to leaflets than simple reprints.
- Awards for All programme.
- Include general admin costs for letters, phone calls etc. (5-10%)
- Volunteer time as in-kind contributions not accepted by all funders.
- Read small print in application documents!
- Talk to other groups about their sources of funding, and their experiences.
- Devise a workplan to apply for funding from many different organisations.
- Ask for reasons for rejection; this will help in future applications.
- Demonstrate capability to the funding body.

Closing Remarks:

Mike Browne

The application for funding for the development officer post is critical. Four delegates agreed to work with Ness Kirkbride to help check the application before it is submitted to SNH (Iain Allison, Richard Batchelor, Bill Pullar, Angus Macpherson).

It was agreed that as UKRIGS is a long-established body it should represent RIGS groups on the steering group but the postholder could have a role in helping create a Scottish body. The job description will be written by the steering group once funding has been secured.

Regarding the match funding, National Museums of Scotland may be able to revise their in-kind contribution. The funding gap is around £17,-19,000pa. Ness Kirkbride expressed confidence that an application can be submitted. A meeting will be arranged by Ness Kirkbride in May and Edinburgh Geological Society, Geological Society of Glasgow, geoHeritageFife, BGS all agreed to attend.

Mike Browne has issued two 'UKRIGS in Scotland' newsletters but he needs help to produce more. Funding may be available from Scottish Coal.

Another Scottish RIGS workshop will be arranged in six to twelve months.

Mike thanked various bodies and people for their help in organising the event including BGS for the facilities, Strathclyde RIGS for organising it, Edinburgh Geological Society for the catering and lunch, SNH, Midlothian Biodiversity partnership.

It was agreed to publicise the event and the outcomes in various suitable magazines and websites.

List of Delegates

Beth Addis	Tees Valley RIGS
Hugh Barron	BGS
Alan McBride	East Dunbartonshire Ranger Service - Mugdock Park
Brian Johnston*	Friends of Glasgow Necropolis
Ruth Johnston*	Friends of Glasgow Necropolis
Richard Batchelor	geoHeritageFife
Rosalind Garton	geoHeritageFife
Bill Pullar	geoHeritageFife
Lesley Scott	Greenspace, East Dunbartonshire Council
Michael Dempster	HSO-Earth Science Belfast
Archie Miller	LaBRIGS
Keith Hoole	Lochaber Geopark
Graeme Wilson	Midlothian Biodiversity
Stuart L. Rivers	Oatridge College
Philip Rayson	Planning & Development Manager Scottish Resources Group
John Gordon	SNH
Ness Kirkbride	SNH
Iain Allison	Geological Society Of Glasgow
Margaret Greene	Strathclyde RIGS
David Hamilton	Strathclyde RIGS
Seonaid Leishman	Strathclyde RIGS
David McCulloch	Strathclyde RIGS
Stuart Fairley	Strathclyde RIGS and The Open University Geological Society
Mike Browne	UKRIGS [Chair]
Angus Macpherson	LaBRIGS and The Open University Geological Society
David McAdam	LaBRIGS
Tom Kerr	Stirling RIGS
Claire Britton	Scottish Earth Science Education Forum
Cliff Porteous	LaBRIGS
Judith Cox	Aberdeenshire Council Planning
Andrew McMillan	BGS / LaBRIGS

*Attended part of event only