

D R A F T
2nd SCOTTISH RIGS WORKSHOP
PERTH, 4 OCTOBER 2008

1 Present

The workshop was attended by all the Geodiversity groups in Scotland. (See attached)

2 Welcome

Mark Simmons, chair of Tayside Geodiversity and Curator of Natural History welcomed everyone to the Perth Museum.

3. Geoconservation in Scotland

Mike Brown, Chair of UKRIGS then gave the background to geoconservation in Scotland.

Original concept was site based

- i) National and International site designation – NNR, SSSI etc
- ii) National and International site acclaim – eg European Geoparks
- iii) Regional and local site designation – SINC, RIGS etc.)

The Local site designations are non-statutory and need to be supported by Local Authority Planning Policies to give value under normal circumstances

Status of UKRIGS member 'groups' in Scotland

Active	geoHeritage Fife Lothian and Borders RIGS Sitrling & Clackmannan RIGS Strathclyde RIGS Tayside Geodiversity Lochaber Geopark
Dormant	Highland RIGS
New	Argyll, Geodiversity Dumfries & Galloway ? NW Highlands Geopark

Current work of RIGS Groups includes, site visits/surveys, site assessment (for criteria see RIGS Handbook), site designation & notification to Local Authorities (LAs), developing flagship sites for promotion, site management briefs, interpretation leaflets etc.

4 Current opportunities for RIGS in Scotland

Government & Local Government geodiversity involvement to date

- ~ Nature Conservation Bill Scotland > bio than geo
- ~ Strategic Environmental Appraisal Bill > bio than geo
- ~ Sustainable Seas for All consultation NO geo
- ~ Scottish Soil Framework consultation includes geo
- ~ Local Sites Systems Review in Scotland includes geo

NB SPP13 Natural Heritage

When this comes out for consultation all RIGS Groups should comment. Geo may or may not be included.

Existing policies include

- Scottish Biodiversity Forum – Sector Guidance note on Geodiversity
- SWT – Geodiversity policy
- NT – developing a policy

Scottish Earth Science Education Forum (SESEF) - developing education curricula materials (supported by Geological Societies of Edinburgh & Glasgow, UKRIGS. SNH can't give funding)

RIGS in Scotland needs to cover the whole country to ensure a National Strategy for development of geodiversity and set up Good Practice Guidance for Planning and

Development. This has started in Edinburgh and Lothians and should be extended to Glasgow. **But a Planning Advice note for Geodiversity is much needed.**

5 Funding sources for RIGS work

- ~ Aggregate levy CLOSED (only available for community-based work)
- ~ Scottish Government Sustainability grants UNLIKELY for site audits & LGAPS
- ~ SNH cannot part-fund a RIGS Development Officer post until at least 2009 (see **Issues**)
- ~ SNH Local grants are scarce (see **issues**)
- ~ Heritage Lottery worth a try
- ~ Esmee Fairbairn is national rather than local
- ~ LEADER (?) Rural Development Programme. Tayside has used this for interpretation
- ~ Single Outcome Agreements. Try to persuade LAs to make geodiversity one of these Agreements. However they are unique 'contracts' to deliver a national priority and geodiversity is not on the National agenda.

6 The Way Forward

Mike then made suggestions for the Way Forward for RIGS in Scotland including -

- i) talk about management of geodiversity NOT conservation
- ii) integrate with biodiversity (rocks, subsoils, landforms, landscape)
- iii) take a wider view and not limit to site boundaries
- iv) use quarries – plan for and create interpretation sections.
- v) work towards achieving same planning and development conditions as archaeology

7. Earth Science on Site

Rick Ramsdale of UKRIGS gave a presentation of the work of ESoS which has used defunct aggregate sites (now RIGS) to help teachers of Earth Science to interpret the curriculum (Primary & secondary). As he pointed out "normal people don't see things in rocks" and this programme provides data collection opportunities which give children on the spot evidence of Earth history. The ESoS group are now preparing a field workshop for teachers.

The material is all freely available on the web (www.) the only condition being that it is not sold on. It can be adapted to local sites in Scotland or be given as a link from, say, a geopark or Geol Soc site.

SESEF can access the programme for sites which are not necessarily RIGS.

8 RIGS Groups' presentations

Each of the Groups then gave a short presentation of their structure, achievements, current activities, future plans and issues. The issues, which were then discussed in the afternoon, are summarised below –

FIFE GEOHERITAGE

Structure

Has own constitution and charitable status. Members (mainly amateur) pay subscription (~30 x £10).

Funding

Other funding not regular – includes donation and Fife Community council Grant (not SNH)

LOTHIAN & BORDERS RIGS GROUP

Structure

Set up 1990 as sub-committee of Edinburgh Geological Society (EGS). Membership from LAs, SNH, BGS (representing their organisations) who deal with designation etc & meet 4 times a year. Volunteer group meets monthly and carries out assessment, manning stalls at fairs etc.

Funding

Has charitable status via EGS. Currently receives annual admin grant from SNH (local office). Did obtain 50% for leaflets – no longer available.

RIGS & Local Planning

Meeting with E Lothian, then Edinburgh Councils on possible Single Action Agreements for geodiversity.

STIRLING RIGS GROUP

Structure

Is another sub-committee of EGS

Publicity & promotion

Neil suggested that www.scottishgeology.com could host pdf down-loadable leaflets.

STRATHCLYDE RIGS

Structure

Majority of the 15 members are amateurs – professionals (such as SNH, LAs) do not represent their organisation. Is a sub-committee of the Geological Society of Glasgow (GSG) using its Constitution and charitable status.

Funding

To date running costs provided through GSG. SNH local office may consider once GSG contribution ends. So far leaflets funded by SNH with balancing funds from GSG but grant conditions have to be met.

Production of promotional material

This is difficult through volunteer effort. (but useful advice given by LaBRIGS during the Workshop)

Need for Scottish RIGS approach to Local Planning

Strathclyde are involved with East Dunbartonshire on their LNCS Review, the first in Scotland (but see Dumfries). ED is only one of the potential 12 LAs surrounding Glasgow.

Retention, digitisation and ownership of site data

Also storage!

TAYSIDE GEODIVERSITY

Structure

Membership (32) mainly professional geologists, teachers, LA planners, Museum and Countryside Rangers Service (CRS) (who represent their organisations) plus some enthusiastic amateurs, but this structure may not be sustainable. Has own constitution.

Funding

Has produced leaflets for future funding uncertain

Local Planning

What is the value of site protection if designation carried out by a volunteer group?

Interpretation & promotion

Is the effectiveness of this work being evaluated?

UKRIGS

The web site and handbook are not easy to use.

LOCHABER GEOPARK

Relationship with RIGS

Geopark remit overlaps with RIGS but it has to concentrate on supporting sustainable economic development through tourism, not necessarily geoconservation.

Structure

This is fragile – only a handful of enthusiasts and one paid Project Officer. The area has a population of 20,000. The Management Plan is on the website.

Funding

Follow-on funding a problem. Meanwhile leaflet charges help to re-coup re-printing costs.

Maintenance of existing SSSIs

NORTH-WEST GEOPARK

Relationship with RIGS

Though there is an overlap, Geopark status is not an environmental classification or concerned with geoconservation. It is an AWARD for interpretation of the rocks and community development. ie more about people. The population of the area is only 2,400.

Funding

A warning has been given that Geopark status could be withdrawn if there is no further funding eg from Scottish Government or Highland Council.

ARGYLL RIGS

Setting up new Group

The Group was only set up in April and more active members are being sought. It will hard to cover the geodiversity of the area so a start will be made round Oban.

Application has been made to GSG for affiliation for constitution and charitable status.

GEODIVERSITY DUMFRIES

Setting up new Group

GeoD very recently set up with 11 volunteers. Constitution drawn up and backers from organisations such as UKRIGS, SNH, Museums, Dumfries Council etc and many local businesses. But more members needed to sustain this work.

Funding

From SNH local office.

Local Planning

From 200 potential RIGS, 19 are being included in Dumfries LGAP, the first in Scotland

9. DISCUSSION OF ISSUES and possible actions

Setting up RIGS Groups

a) If independent, need to advertise for members locally (eg in Earth Heritage as Argyll has done), identify Chair, Secretary & Treasurer. Draw up simple constitution (see Tayside) and keep records of meetings including AGM. Help can be available from organisations represented in the Group (eg SNH) The Local voluntary Action could give advice. Some existing groups (eg Strathclyde) have drawn up a draft Action Plan.

b) if affiliated to Edinburgh Geological Society, officers are submitted to Council, Chair is a member and accounts audited by Society. Leaflets and promotion are the public face of the Society for charitable status (NB UKRIGS is NOT a charity). Activities covered by the Society's insurance.

The Geological Society of Glasgow will be drawing up ground rules for RIGS sub-committees to include accountability and reporting/representation on Council.

It was noted that affiliation to a Society (could also be Aberdeen or Highland) improves sustainability if RIGS Group membership falls.

The area between the two Geoparks could possibly be a new Highland RIGS.

Sustainability of RIGS Groups (professional v amateur)

~ fully professional groups have a difficulty with sustaining commitment. Also, as with Geological Trusts in England, could be compromised by working for outside bodies.

(However RIGS Groups, not Trusts, have been employed in Wales)

~ A good proportion of enthusiastic volunteers is probably better for attracting outside funding. In rural areas could approach local natural history and historical societies.

~ BUT how to reach more? Committee-type work is usually a turn-off but has to be done.

Membership fees work with Fife, but in other groups volunteers could perhaps be encouraged by paying subsistence via time charged in grant claims.

Publications/publicity/promotion

~ it was eventually agreed that the future is down-loadable leaflets. Perhaps one print run, then on the web site as a printer-friendly version. Have therefore to ensure that preparation is for both formats.

But, still left with the problem of catching the eye of the casual visitor (eg at Balmaha)

~ There are a few places left on the SNH Interpretation workshop in Fort William on 20 November. It is designed for those "who want to promote Scotland's landscapes and help people enjoy and understand them" It covers "good practice in deciding who we are writing for, what we want to say and how to make our messages interesting and revealing". A further Workshop will probably be organised.

PS Could this be specifically for RIGS?

Funding

It was confirmed that SNH funding for geodiversity has been massively cut (the emphasis is now on health eg Breathing Spaces). Response to grant applications for admin and projects is locally variable. However, It was noted that volunteer efforts get a better response.

Consideration may be given to part-funding of a RIGS Development officer in 2009 if the Scottish RIGS Groups could put in a grant application as an organisation. And put together a package of support funding (some in-kind). The Scottish Rural Development programme was suggested. SNH will probably require the post to meet their employment conditions and rate of pay. This will be confirmed.

Heritage Lottery fund should be tried. 50% can be work in kind.

Local Planning

Lothian & Borders will report on their meetings on Single Action Agreements with E Lothian & then Edinburgh. SNH have no national view of SAGs.

Strathclyde will report on their involvement with the tender to carry out a geodiversity LNCS review in East Dunbartonshire. Such an audit is the first step towards a LGAP

The Dumfries LGAP is in preparation.

The UKGAP is also in preparation but if there is to be no Scottish GAP, other LAs in Scotland will not want to commit – this is seen as an expensive exercise. There is no support from SNH.

Despite the difficulties it was agreed that statutory embedding of geodiversity in Scotland is very necessary. Perhaps we need to look at different ways of 'selling' this. Such as using defunct sites such as Spieslack open-cast mine, not necessarily designating as RIGS or SSSI. Avoiding the word geoconservation and bringing the community more into focus.

Data retention

It is important to retain site data – it could have earning potential for RIGS Groups. The data provided for Designation is at index-level with maps and a description but more detailed information backs this up. LWIC (Lothian Wild-life information Centre) holds freely-available information on biodiversity but this is not necessarily the format in other areas.

The issue of how RIGS Groups store the data still to be addressed.

10 Next Scottish RIGS Meeting

Mike Browne thanked all for attending and Mark for accommodation and hospitality. It was agreed that the Scottish RIGS Groups would meet again in 6 months time to review progress. *(And discuss possible re-naming ? Eg Local Geodiversity Sites (LGS)?*