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1.1 Welcome

Welcome to the RIGS Handbook. This handbook is designed to offer you a useful framework of information on resources, techniques and best practice. This information has often been requested by RIGS groups from across the British Isles. It does not assume detailed knowledge of RIGS systems, but is intended for use by RIGS groups and associated members rather than the general reader.

1.2 Background

The Royal Society for Nature Conservation, and previously The Wildlife Trusts' UK national office, receives hundreds of enquiries every year on the subject of RIGS. They come from RIGS groups, the geological community and the general public. The same questions arise time after time – funding, insurance, RIGS criteria, planning, field safety, interpretation. It became increasingly apparent there was a pressing need to provide an information resource that could be used as a starting point for many of these questions.

These questions were explored further at a RIGS development day held at Ketton RIGS in Leicestershire in 1996. The same needs and questions were voiced. This led to the RIGS development strategy, 1997, which identified the need to produce a RIGS Handbook as a resource for RIGS groups.

Research for the Handbook began in 1998 with a telephone survey, shortly followed by the outcome of two workshops held at the first UKRIGS conference in Worcester. A consultation paper sent to all RIGS groups brought all those comments together in one document; the responses revealed RIGS groups' priorities, needs and desires. These were prioritised and elements of the Handbook were commissioned from RIGS groups and other experienced people.

By April 1999, the Handbook had evolved to such an extent that it was well over 200 pages, divided into 12 sections, each at varying levels of completeness. This first rough draft was reviewed by a small group of Earth scientists who considered the content and general format. Following further compilation and editing, the revised Handbook was widely circulated to members of the UKRIGS Steering Group and other conservation professionals in the summer of 1999. Their subsequent comments and recommendations are incorporated here.

The whole process leading to the production of the chapters in this handbook has been one of consultation at every possible level. RIGS groups, individual members of RIGS groups, officers representing all the statutory conservation agencies, non-government bodies associated with Earth science and conservation, geological societies, the National Trust, local authorities, educational bodies and companies have been and continue to be involved.

1.2.1 The results of consultation

Listed below are some of the main suggestions that came out of the workshops at the 1998 UKRIGS Conference and the subsequent consultation. It was recommended that:

- the Handbook should not be prescriptive and that it should simply guide, suggest and advise

- it should not re-invent the wheel and should build on existing publications such as the Nature Conservancy Council's *Earth science Conservation in Britain – A strategy*, The Royal Society for Nature Conservation's *Starting RIGS* and The Wildlife Trusts' *Wildlife Sites Handbook*
- case studies detailing success and failure and good practices should be included
- the Handbook should assume no prior knowledge, go 'back to basics' and be fully inclusive
- the Handbook should be produced in the format of an A4 ring binder, with hard cover, so that updates or new sections could be easily inserted
- a 'blank' notes section should be included for groups to add their own information
- it should be black and white for easy reproduction
- it should include a glossary of acronyms and abbreviations as well as a 'Who's Who in Earth science' section
- the Handbook should offer guidelines and advice to enable the further standardisation of site recording and RIGS criteria
- the Handbook should incorporate advice on producing constitutions and forming new groups, funding and educational sites
- a summary document should be created for wider distribution
- it should be taken into account that access to the Handbook via the internet was a likely development for the near future

All these requests have been considered and incorporated into the Handbook.

This is an evolving document and its value is totally dependent on feedback from you, the user. We have included a feedback form in the inside sleeve of this folder. Please use this form to help us to continually improve the Handbook

1.3 Future development of the Handbook

The Handbook aims to strike a balance to suit the varying needs of RIGS groups at their differing stages of development. Whilst a well developed RIGS group may only require information to help them conserve and interpret sites, other groups may want outline guidance on all aspects of RIGS work. The RIGS movement is diverse, and meeting all the needs in a single publication at one time is not practicable.

The sections that have been completed will be particularly helpful to RIGS groups in an early stage of development. However, they will put the work of all groups firmly into context. These chapters will help all groups to see how their work is complementary to that of other statutory and non-statutory bodies.

This handbook will never answer all the questions that a RIGS group will wish to ask, but it is a starting point. Each site and feature of the landscape will require a slightly different

conservation approach to protect it for the future. The completed Handbook will give you guidance that will help you to take those slightly different approaches.

***Remember**: Please advise RSNC if your contact details change to enable us to effectively provide you with Handbook updates.*

1.4 How to use the RIGS Handbook

1.4.1 Inclusive chapters

Each chapter attempts to be a guide in its own right. There is some cross-referencing between chapters, but it is intended that you can take out any chapter and refer to it in isolation. For ease of use, you will find the contents list, references, specific contacts and appendices to each chapter contained within that section rather than at the end of the Handbook.

1.4.2 Page numbering

To enable easy updating, the Handbook is numbered by chapter and page number. This means that if one chapter is amended, it does not affect the numbering of the entire Handbook. Page numbering can be found in the bottom right-hand corner of each page.

1.4.3 Section numbering

Sections are numbered by chapter, section and sub-section. For example, Chapter 2, Section 4, sub-section 7 would be 2.4.7.

1.4.4 Key to symbols

Throughout the Handbook, you will see symbols used including a hammer and a magnifying glass. The key to these is given at the front of the Handbook in the Preface. These symbols are to help you to easily spot key pieces of information.

1.4.5 Updates

The RIGS Handbook will be frequently updated. You will regularly be sent new pages that will replace the previous ones.

1.4.6 Comments and feedback

This handbook is by no means static and its format allows for easy and regular updating when required. We welcome your constructive views and comments and have included a feedback form for this purpose. You will find it in the inside sleeve of the Handbook. Please use the form to help us to continually improve the Handbook. When you come across examples of good

practice and experiences you feel would be useful to the RIGS network as a whole, please let us know.

1.5 Acknowledgements

Many people have been involved in the production of this handbook and their time and effort is greatly appreciated. This achievement would not have been possible without them. Many have edited the text or written pieces in their own time. This is typical of the overall commitment found throughout the RIGS movement. Such dedication is the life-blood of RIGS groups and without it there would not be a RIGS movement.

As the Handbook is still being developed with new information being added all the time, the list of people who have contributed will continue to grow. A decision has been made to include an ongoing list of acknowledgements in Appendix 1.5 in this introductory chapter. It is quite clear where many of the examples and case studies are derived from and thanks go to those groups who have offered sample work and case studies. All those contributors are acknowledged in this introductory section, but we would like to pay a particular tribute to the many unsung workers who continue to give of their time to RIGS groups. Thank you for your generosity and dedication in helping to protect sites and landscape for future generations to enjoy.

Finally, the exceptional work and commitment of Vicky Mason must be acknowledged. She began this process in August 1998 and has worked tirelessly to see it through to production. Many, many weekends have been spent writing original text or re-drafting after others have dissected it. This was achieved with tact, patience and diplomacy. Vicky you have our sincere thanks.

Mick Stanley
Earth Science Manager, RSNC

1.6 An introduction to RIGS

This section defines RIGS and considers a rationale for RIGS in a wider Earth heritage conservation context. It also looks at the history and outlines who is involved within the RIGS system.

1.6.1 Earth heritage conservation

'Earth heritage conservation' is the broad term used in this document which refers to all aspects of the conservation, protection, management, interpretation and education relating to geological, geomorphological, landscape and soil sites. Earth science is the broad term used to identify the scientific study of geological, geomorphological, landscape and soil sites.

1.6.2 RIGS

'Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites' (RIGS) are currently considered the most important places for Earth science outside statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). RIGS are identified by locally developed criteria. They are important as an educational, historical and recreational resource. The designation of RIGS is one way of recognising and thereby protecting important Earth science and landscape features for the future

1.6.3 Site terminology

The term 'Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site' has been adopted to describe locally and regionally important Earth science sites. The term 'RIGS' is receiving wider recognition and is now the most commonly used. Other terms which are used to describe locally important geological/geomorphological sites include County Geological Site, Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Throughout this handbook, the term RIGS is used to describe all sites identified for the purposes described in the Earth science Conservation in Great Britain Strategy 1990, irrespective of the terminology used locally.

1.6.4 A RIGS system

A RIGS system should describe the processes involved in selecting and assessing locally and regionally important sites, protecting them through the planning process and monitoring both the sites and the effectiveness of the system.

A RIGS system should include processes for:

- identifying sites, through detailed survey and assessment
- effective documentation of sites
- maintaining value of sites by working with landowners and managers
- protecting sites through the planning system
- assessment of the effectiveness of the system monitoring site integrity
- the provision of an education and information resource for the wider appreciation of Earth heritage at all levels
- considering it in conjunction with other designations, initiatives and plans. See chapter 3

1.6.5 The uses of RIGS

Information about RIGS should be a shared resource. RIGS are the key areas for Earth science, outside the statutory network. They can and should be used by a wide range of conservation and land management organisations as an efficient way of targeting and directing their activities. One of the primary reasons for the establishment of a RIGS system is to provide a range of sites that are available for education and research and to have sites that can be used by the local community. RIGS are also often important to local people for amenity and recreational purposes. Access to and accessibility of RIGS should be one of the main considerations.

1.7 RIGS in a national context

1.7.1 Earth heritage conservation and RIGS

RIGS are a vital part of Earth heritage conservation throughout the British Isles. Together with the SSSI network and GCR sites (explored in more detail in chapter 3), RIGS are of great importance and complement statutorily protected sites.

"The only record of the history of our planet lies in its landscape and in the rocks beneath our feet. Here, and only here, can we trace the cycles of change and renewal that have shaped the Earth in the past, and that will continue to do so in the future. The record is unique and much of it is surprisingly fragile. It must be conserved so that future generations can enjoy it and seek a greater understanding of it for the benefit of the planet and humanity" (Malvern International Task Force, 1993)

This paragraph was taken from the introduction to a booklet entitled, *Earth Heritage Conservation*. This was produced following the Malvern Conference in July 1993 and was aimed at both specialists with an interest in Earth science and non-specialists in government, industry and commerce. The document outlined the justifications for conserving Earth science sites. Those same justifications underpin the criteria for selecting RIGS sites:

- To preserve our heritage for the future
- To train Earth scientists
- To provide an essential teaching facility for lifelong learning
- So they may act as a focus for leisure and tourism activities
- To allow research for the advancement of science
- They have aesthetic, amenity, historical and cultural value

1.7.2 The relevance of RIGS

Earth science sites are worthy of conservation in their own right. They hold within them crucial information about the history of the British Isles and the Earth. However, the conservation of sites for their Earth science interest can sometimes seem to be removed from the main thrust of species and habitat conservation. This is surprising given that there is no justification for this separation in British law: the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) affords equal protection to habitats, species and Earth science features.

The importance of Earth sciences in determining the nature and location of habitats, and therefore indirectly helping to determine species number and distribution is becoming increasingly well understood. Logically then, an understanding of the importance of the role of Earth sciences ought to be recognised through conservation management and should be fostered by local authorities under existing commitments. This might be done through the local Biodiversity Action Plan process (see sub-section 3.9.2). Earth science is therefore fundamental to many wider conservation goals and the Earth science resource has exerted a strong influence, in physical, social and economic terms, on 'the way Britain looks today'.

As RIGS are selected for a wider range of criteria than SSSIs, they can be seen to be very relevant to local priorities and issues, such as the provision of agreed access to the countryside.

They can provide an historical and cultural link between the development of built-up areas and the Earth through quarries or mining sites, and they can be an important educational resource. At a school and university level, fieldwork can help in the development of a number of key skills such as literacy, numeracy, comprehension of complex ideas and group working. The provision of interesting and safe sites for schools and universities is also an important way of initiating and supporting an interest in Earth science.

One of the key aims of the RIGS initiative is "*to conserve a series of locally important geological sites*". Many geological localities are threatened by irreversible damage. The following table illustrates some examples:

Threat	Method
Development	The value of Earth science sites is often not known and sites are simply lost when land is developed for uses such as industry, agriculture, forestry and housing.
Demand-led minerals plans	Many minerals plans are determined by the demand for a resource and ignore the sustainability of a resource in a particular area. Many resources such as Quaternary deposits and geomorphological features are finite.
Landfill	The infill of disused mineral workings is a constant threat to our geological resource. There is an assumption from planning authorities that all holes in the ground are undesirable and must be filled in. Landfill is often the best economic option.
Reclamation schemes	Most mineral planning permissions granted now carry conditions specifying that the operator cannot simply abandon a site after exploiting the resource. Those sites that did not carry these conditions are currently being reviewed under the 1995 Environment Act. Many sites are restored to their previous use such as agricultural land, other sites are developed as nature reserves or leisure sites. Landscaping, top soil introduction, infill, return to agriculture and flooding can all ultimately destroy geological exposures.
Loss of soils	Rare and ancient soils are being lost. Modern farming techniques, forestry, industry, recreation and urbanisation are a constant threat to soils.
Land stability	The stabilising of land, such as cliffs and slopes is often unsympathetic with Earth science features. The natural processes that have resulted in the perceived need for stabilisation are often desirable.
Coastal defence	The need to protect valuable farming land and property on the coast often outweighs the need to allow natural coastal processes. These processes, however, are often preferable as they can allow geo-features to be maintained or exposed.
Loss of road and rail cuttings	Earth science is not normally considered alongside archaeology, landscape and wildlife during Environmental Impact Assessment. Consequently, geological features are often not retained and important fossil finds lost. Most new road and rail cuttings are graded, covered in topsoil and planted. Exposures that do remain are commonly overgrown and degraded.
Neglect	Many sites often become overgrown and deteriorate, thus masking the underlying geology.
Temporary exposures	The Earth sciences are not given as much consideration in the planning process as areas such as archaeology, nature conservation and landscape features. Consequently, sometimes when development occurs, valuable geo-information is lost.

1.7.3 The need to designate RIGS

The importance of RIGS should be clear from the preceding sections. However, many Earth science sites are under threat from a whole host of sources. Natural degradation is inevitable but it is still possible to minimise even that process by the judicious use of physical protection from the elements.

Rare sites protected from the elements: *The Fossil Grove in Glasgow and the Rifle Butts SSSI near Market Weighton, East Yorkshire are the only two Earth science sites in Britain today that are protected from naturally degrading elements. The Fossil Grove has been enclosed in a protective building since 1887. The Rifle Butts was covered by a protective roof in 1994*

Both sites described in the box above, are also examples of Integrity Sites (see appendix 1.2), one side of a two-part classification of Earth science conservation. Their scientific and educational value lies in the fact that they contain finite and limited deposits. These are landforms or fossils that are irreplaceable if destroyed. Other examples are caves, karst (limestone pavements etc), active and static geomorphological sites, mineral dumps or mineral and fossil sites.

'Exposure sites' are those whose scientific or educational value lies in providing exposures of a deposit which are extensive or plentiful underground. Most quarries, cuttings, cliffs, mines and outcrops fall into this category (see appendix 1.2).

The conservation of sites in these two categories are different. Active erosion or quarrying can create exposure sites where none existed previously. Integrity sites require preservation or, at least, human intervention should be restricted.

The table in sub-section 1.7.2 outlines the major threats to Earth science sites. The designation of a RIGS can help to protect both categories of site but Integrity Sites will often be protected as SSSIs.

The protection of RIGS is achieved most effectively through the planning system through local experts recommending sites to the appropriate planning authority. Most local planning authorities regard RIGS as equivalent to non-statutory wildlife sites and thus list them in their local plan.

Case study extract *– Peterborough Local Plan, Policy L22 b) The City Council will not grant planning permission for any development, whether on-site or off-site, which could adversely affect the flora or fauna or geological features of any local nature reserve, county wildlife site or regionally important geological/geomorphological site*

Although effective conservation and management of sites will often depend upon agreements and cooperation with landowners and site operators, protection is only possible if local authorities are aware of these important Earth science sites; it also depends on their ability to restrict development there.

1.8 A brief history of the development of RIGS

Earth heritage conservation has traditionally been the responsibility of English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Environment and Heritage Service for Northern Ireland and the Countryside Council for Wales (formerly the Nature Conservancy Council). This was carried out by identifying, designating and managing of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), recognised for their national and international importance.

In the late 1980s, the extent of local Earth heritage conservation was very patchy across the UK and there was a need to provide a national focus and identity for regionally and locally important Earth science sites. English Nature's paper for the first UK RIGS Conference 1998 highlights much of the background and development of the RIGS network.

1.8.1 Why RIGS was born

The RIGS initiative was created because a need was identified to:

- conserve local geological and geomorphological sites for educational purposes
- involve people in Earth heritage conservation
- build on existing resources and good practice
- build a network of locally important sites to underpin the SSSI network and protect locally important sites identified in the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation (NSGSD)
- facilitate consultation between existing local groups already involved in local Earth heritage conservation

1.8.2 The conception of the RIGS initiative

The concept of RIGS was first initiated by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) publication *Earth science conservation in Great Britain – A Strategy (1990)*. The principles for RIGS outlined in this strategy remain the basis of local Earth heritage conservation in Britain today.

"RIGS are sites within a county (or, in Scotland, a region) that are considered worthy of protection for their Earth science importance but are not protected as SSSIs" (Earth Science Conservation in Great Britain – A Strategy)

The RIGS initiative has three main aims:

1 To conserve a series of locally important sites for educational reasons

2 To involve local people in Earth heritage conservation

3 To raise public awareness and appreciation of Earth heritage

The NCC strategy identified a rationale for the RIGS initiative. RIGS are essentially equivalent to non-statutory Wildlife Sites and are sometimes referred to locally by the same name. The range of sites that could be selected included undesignated sites such as educational sites and denotified SSSIs but also Wildlife Trust reserves, local nature reserves and other relevant sites. RIGS should not be seen as second-tier SSSIs, but as sites of regional or local importance in their own right. One of the main aims of RIGS is to identify sites for educational purposes. Records from the NSGSD (usually based with museums or local record centres) should act as the starting point of the RIGS selection process.

1.8.3 Guidelines for selecting RIGS

These guidelines are taken from the NCC strategy. The main selection criteria are based on four main themes. All RIGS systems should incorporate these principles.

Sites are selected according to their value for:

1 *Educational fieldwork in primary and secondary schools, at undergraduate level and in adult education courses*

2 *Study by both professional and amateur Earth scientists. Such sites demonstrate, alone or as part of a network, the geology or geomorphology of an area*

3 *Historical significance in terms of important advances in Earth science knowledge*

4 *Aesthetic qualities in the landscape, particularly in relation to promoting public awareness and appreciation of Earth sciences*

1.8.4 Some milestones in RIGS development

1990 The RIGS initiative was introduced in *Earth science Conservation in Great Britain – A Strategy*, which defined national RIGS criteria.

1991 The first practical guidance leaflet, *Regionally Important Geological/ geomorphological Sites*, suggested how to set up a RIGS group.

1993 *Starting RIGS*, a publication by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation, outlined further practical advice to RIGS groups on how to get started.

1994 The Welsh RIGS groups formed an Association of Welsh RIGS groups (AWRG) to steer the way forward for RIGS groups in Wales. AWRG has held five RIGS forums to date with widely varying themes.

1997 *The RIGS Development Strategy* was produced by The Wildlife Trusts' UK national office. The strategy identified some priorities and objectives for RIGS work following a development day at Ketton RIGS Site, Leicestershire and a discussion day at English Nature in Peterborough.

1998 The First UK RIGS Conference was held at University College Worcester. This was organised by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire RIGS Group in September 1998. The conference reviewed the development and achievements of RIGS. A new UK RIGS Steering Group came out of the conference which was formally set up in December 1998.

1999 The Association of UK RIGS Groups (UK RIGS) was formed. This is an independent body charged with progressing the development of RIGS across the British Isles. The RIGS Steering Group met four times and proposed the formation of the Association of UK RIGS Groups (UK RIGS) with a constitution that met the Terms of Reference (see appendix 1.3) set out for the steering group at the Worcester conference. At the fourth meeting of the UK RIGS Steering Group in June 1999 the constitution was agreed and the signatories became the

interim committee of the Association of UK RIGS Groups (see appendix 1.4). A new force in the RIGS movement was born.

1.9 The people and organisations behind RIGS

RIGS systems have evolved in different ways, and rarely is a mechanism for running a system replicated exactly between different counties or regions. The mechanisms for co-ordinating the RIGS scheme nationally are in the process of change. Some of the main partners that have been involved in the RIGS system are listed below. Further details on each are given in the remainder of this section:

- The Association of UK RIGS Groups (UK RIGS)
- Local volunteers (RIGS groups)
- Local geological societies and related groups (OUGS, Russell Society)
- Statutory Conservation Agencies
- The Royal Society for Nature Conservation
- Wildlife Trusts
- Local authorities
- Museums
- Local/environmental Record Centres
- Universities and other educational establishments
- British Geological Survey
- The Geologists' Association

1.9.1 The Association of UK RIGS Groups (UKRIGS)

UKRIGS is made up of the membership of RIGS groups across the British Isles and exists to promote RIGS for education and public benefit. UKRIGS works towards a British Isles perspective. It also focuses on common purposes and issues of interest to local RIGS groups. It fulfils the need for RIGS groups to work together in partnership to create a strong 'British Isles' approach to seeking funds and standardising techniques, such as recording systems.

The UKRIGS mission statement: *"The Association will encourage the appreciation, conservation and promotion of Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites for education and the public benefit"*

1.9.2 Local volunteers

The RIGS initiative primarily exists thanks to the hard work, commitment and enthusiasm of volunteers interested in protecting our Earth heritage. Whilst the RIGS initiative is open to anyone, it does rely on the particular expertise of Earth scientists.

1.9.3 Geological societies and related groups

For many years, local geological societies undertook the recording and assessment of geological and geomorphological sites (such as the Black Country Geological Society). The RIGS system provides a national focus and recognised identity for regionally important Earth science sites. Collected data was given to their local records centre or local authority and practical conservation and interpretation work on sites was undertaken. It is natural for these geological societies to continue this valuable role as part of the RIGS system.

1.9.4 Statutory conservation agencies

The Nature Conservancy Council and English Nature were instrumental in establishing the RIGS system in the early 1990s. They offered small financial incentives for the establishment of RIGS. English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) are currently involved in the national organisation of RIGS. CCW offers support to RIGS in Wales at a national level through the employment of a RIGS officer. Information and advice is available to RIGS groups and others interested in local geological conservation on a variety of issues. CCW also supports RIGS in Wales through access to services such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and the provision of training and events, such as supporting the annual Welsh RIGS Forum.

1.9.5 The Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC)

RSNC currently supports RIGS in England and Scotland at a national level. Support is available, including the provision of an enquiry service, advice on a variety of issues (see below). RSNC also provides a range of resources including this handbook, information leaflets, a regular newsletter and, soon, information on the web. RSNC can advise on planning issues, health and safety, insurance, volunteers, funding applications, press and publicity, organising events and training.

1.9.6 Local Wildlife Trusts

Many local Wildlife Trusts are in some way involved with and supportive of the RIGS system. The work of The Wildlife Trusts is linked to their National Conservation Plan, a costed development plan which directs activity in eight key areas. The Conservation Plan is led by targets laid out by the Government in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Some of the Plan's featured habitats are directly linked to Earth science issues. These include:

- peatland
- limestone pavement
- chalk stream
- calcareous grassland
- coast

Partnerships between The Wildlife Trusts and RIGS groups help to integrate biological and geological conservation.

1.9.7 Local authorities

Local authority involvement is often initially through museums which act as local record centres. More recently, planning departments have tended to take the lead. Frequently, ecologists or 'conservation advisers' within local authorities are part of the planning department and it is often these departments which have directed funds to the running of RIGS schemes. However, the involvement of local authorities (with a few notable exceptions) rarely goes beyond the use of RIGS as a mechanism for planning and development control. Planning guidance does recommend that local authorities should take 'nature conservation' into account in development plans. However, no guidance is given on the actual RIGS systems to be used. Local authorities are often prepared to protect local sites and will frequently include RIGS within development or area plans.

1.9.8 Museums

Some museums have been and remain centres for biological and geological recording, where both site records and specimens are kept. Museums today are often run by the local authority. The role of museums in RIGS development was further established on a local basis through the National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation (NSGSD) which strongly promoted museums as local geological recording centres. Some museums continue to have this role and museum staff are often closely linked with RIGS work. In some circumstances, this is part of the geological or natural science curator's role.

1.9.9 Local Record Centres (LRCs)

LRCs provide a local focus for holding, managing and assessing local records. Most centres' primary focus is biological records but some also handle geological data. LRCs vary considerably throughout the UK. Some are well-developed small organisations providing services to a range of statutory and non-statutory organisations, others are entirely voluntary.

1.9.10 Universities and other educational establishments

A key aim of RIGS is to facilitate the conservation of geological sites for educational purposes. Educational establishments are among the main users of such sites and much geological expertise can be found within Earth science and environmental departments. Many universities are involved with RIGS for educational and research reasons. For example the Herefordshire and Worcestershire RIGS Group has established a geological records centre for the two counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire at University College Worcester.

1.9.11 British Geological Survey (BGS)

The BGS supports the aims of UK RIGS and will provide assistance and guidance to the local RIGS groups whenever possible. The BGS will co-operate with UK RIGS and help with the development of good practice in site recording and databasing. Requests for information by RIGS groups will be treated with the same priority as those from academics and researchers and RIGS groups will have access to the National Geological Records Centre on that basis.

1.9.12 The Geologists' Association (GA)

The GA is an active supporter of the RIGS initiative recommending that all of its affiliated groups contribute and participate in RIGS (see appendix 4.5). In addition the GA supports groups financially through its small grants scheme, the Curry Fund.

1.10 How RIGS groups operate

The RIGS movement is locally driven and operates mainly at county, regional or unitary level. There are exceptions, with some RIGS groups operating at district or metropolitan council level. Many of them are now affiliated to the Association of UK RIGS Groups which aims to give RIGS a national voice, direct policy decisions for RIGS and seek sources of funding for RIGS groups locally.

1.10.1 England and Scotland

RIGS in England and Scotland are also supported by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) where there is one full-time development officer (England) and one part-time development officer (Scotland). The majority of funding comes through landfill tax (The Hanson Environment Fund and Shell UK), English Nature and Scottish Natural Heritage.

1.10.2 Wales

The Welsh RIGS groups are also supported by the Association of Welsh RIGS Groups (AWRG) a national steering group which is representative of each RIGS region in Wales. The Steering Group facilitates cooperation between the regions. The Countryside Council for Wales presently provides financial support for RIGS in Wales.