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## 4.1 Introduction

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This chapter gives new RIGS groups advice on getting started and suggests ways for existing groups to develop. It provides basic advice on producing constitutions and operating as a charity. The last section looks at the importance of planning a group's activities. The appendix includes an audit, a strategy, a development plan and two model constitutions. Voluntary organisations are usually run as charities, particularly if their purpose benefits the community. The good news is, this includes RIGS groups. This means that with effective organisation, planning and development they have access to a host of funding opportunities.

## 4.2 Developing established groups

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Many RIGS groups, particularly in England and Wales, are now at a stage where they have identified the majority of their local Earth heritage sites and can begin to manage and appreciate specific sites. They will be planning to develop initiatives in order to meet their aims.

However, as most Earth scientists know, the recording stage is never over. Although Earth science can seem static, it is subject to change over time. Certain geomorphological features including rivers, coasts and slopes change very rapidly. New sites become available whilst old ones are lost or damaged. Although for established groups the biggest and most difficult part is over, the RIGS process is naturally dynamic and monitoring and review is likely to be ongoing.

Most of these more established groups will not need to refer to sections 4.3 to 4.6. However, this advice will be relevant to most areas of Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is hoped that it will continue to be useful as the RIGS movement grows and new groups are formed.

### 4.2.1 Group development check list

The following check list should help groups to consider how their work can progress.



*Ask yourself these questions:*

- ◆ Has all the geological and geomorphological survey work in your area been completed and is it all collated on a database? *For most groups, the answer will be 'no'*
- ◆ Would it be worthwhile to revisit some sites and search for new ones? *This will vary from region to region and within different types of exposures and features*
- ◆ Would it be appropriate to audit the local area on an ongoing basis? *Many groups are already constantly reviewing sites and their local area*
- ◆ Are the sites identified by your group the best and most representative in your area? *This will change depending on the condition of sites, advancements in scientific knowledge and the discovery of better sites*
- ◆ Have the risks and threats to the Earth heritage in your area been assessed? *Considering this question will help groups to evaluate the site and show a rationale for its protection*

## 4.3 Starting a new RIGS group

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In parts of Scotland and all of Northern Ireland there are areas that are not covered by RIGS groups. In England, there are areas where a RIGS group may either exist in name alone or includes only a part of its remit area. This section will be particularly useful to individuals or organisations wishing to start up a new group or regenerate an existing RIGS group.

### 4.3.1 Getting focused

This list identifies the fundamentals to consider when starting a new group. Planning in this way will help to focus effort in the right direction from the very start.



*Ask yourself these questions:*

- ◆ **Why?** *Be aware of the aim of the group. This will be to conserve and promote Earth heritage sites and interests*
- ◆ **What?** *Identify the project. This is to establish and develop a RIGS initiative*
- ◆ **Where?** *Identify the geographical area to be covered. Specify the district, county or urban area*
- ◆ **Who?** *How will others be involved? More on this in section 4.7*
- ◆ **How?** *Plan how the group will achieve its aims. Identify how the initiative will be managed and sustained*
- ◆ **When?** *When will the initiative be developed? It is useful to have timescales to work towards*

### 4.3.2 Deciding on aims

The RIGS initiative is based on involving local people in Earth science and providing educational, recreational and research opportunities for people in their local area. There are many reasons why people should become involved in Earth heritage conservation.

### 4.3.3 Why start a RIGS group?

Here are some of the more common reasons for starting a RIGS group:

- ◆ To conserve finite Earth science resources for the benefit of future generations
- ◆ To create a training resource for future Earth scientists
- ◆ To enable opportunities to further scientific knowledge in Earth science
- ◆ To promote an appreciation of the landscape and enjoyment of leisure and tourism activities. This could include the conservation of the landscape for rock climbing
- ◆ To provide an educational resource for all ages
- ◆ To raise awareness about Earth science and its importance and uses in modern society
- ◆ To work with the local community to improve and enhance the local environment
- ◆ To provide training and help volunteers to gain appropriate skills

- ◆ To promote better understanding of the natural environment
- ◆ To provide enjoyment for those who are enthusiastic about geology
- ◆ To link Earth sciences to our past through history, religion and culture
- ◆ To have a useful input into Local Agenda 21

### 4.3.4 Where to start

The ultimate objective of the RIGS initiative is to conserve Earth science sites in order to achieve a variety of different aims. In the beginning, many groups are uncertain what their Earth heritage resource actually is. In order to get started, it is a good idea for RIGS groups to undertake a full audit of their Earth heritage resource. This will help the group to form an outline plan for geo-conservation. Information on Earth heritage auditing can be found in section 4.14.

## 4.4 Useful skills for RIGS groups

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As we all know, the first resource a project needs is people. Some new groups are lucky and can easily form a willing party of experts, volunteers and enthusiasts. However, most need to actively recruit them (see section 4.7 and sub section 4.4.1). There are certain people who could potentially be interested in the group. To ensure the best chance of success, it is best to consider the kind of skills the groups needs:

- ◆ Fieldwork expertise
- ◆ An ability to assess sites and provide a recommendation to the local authority
- ◆ An ability to undertake a variety of projects on different sites. For example, an educational trail or interpretation board
- ◆ The enthusiasm to motivate the group and the impetus to keep the initiative on track
- ◆ The knowledge and skills to defend sites against development
- ◆ A knowledge of organisation skills such as finance, publicity and membership recruitment

### 4.4.1 Where to look for members

This is by no means a definitive list but a handy starting point. Involving a range of people from different backgrounds can give the group increased influence and effectiveness. Some of the people you may wish to involve include:

- ◆ amateur Earth scientists
- ◆ professional Earth scientists. Look for those with commercial experience. They might be found in consultancies or at the British Geological Survey
- ◆ the local geological society
- ◆ the local Wildlife Trust

- ◆ the local records centre or National Scheme for Geological Site Documentation centre
- ◆ the local museum
- ◆ the local authority conservation/recreation officers or equivalent
- ◆ local authority planners, particularly minerals officers, local plans officers and development control officers
- ◆ landowners and developers
- ◆ local university, college and school and other teaching representatives
- ◆ minerals industry
- ◆ local statutory agency offices (e.g. English Nature, CCW, SNH, Environment and Heritage Service for Northern Ireland, Environment Agency, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, English Heritage)
- ◆ other interested groups such as the Country Landowners Association/Scottish Landowners Federation, the National Farmers Union/National Farmers Union (Scotland), National Crofters Union National Park Authority, the National Trust/National Trust for Scotland and the Countryside Agency
- ◆ local businesses and industry
- ◆ youth groups and schools
- ◆ residents and tenants associations
- ◆ volunteer agencies
- ◆ local archaeology/history groups

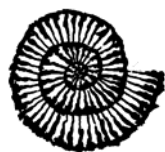
## 4.5 How to form a RIGS group

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There are three ways that a RIGS group may get started:

- 1 An individual or group takes the initiative on a voluntary basis. They recruit friends, colleagues and other interested organisations to begin RIGS work. Whilst the group may initially struggle for resources, enthusiasm is likely to be in ample supply
- 2 An existing group or organisation, such as a geological society or Wildlife Trust, decides to expand its activities to include RIGS. Groups like this have a ready made structure with a good communications network. They are likely to have some existing financial support. Most English RIGS Groups have developed in this way with support from another organisation such as a Wildlife Trust, local museum or university. The Welsh groups have developed through the support, time, expertise and finance of CCW
- 3 A project is established that has funding and a project worker can be employed to undertake the development of RIGS. This does not necessarily mean that there would be no existing RIGS group in the area. However, this approach can rapidly progress the development of RIGS work. Similar projects have occurred with two RIGS Groups to date; Herefordshire and Worcestershire RIGS Group and Gloucestershire RIGS Group. Both projects are hosted by a support organisation with a mutual interest in RIGS; University College

Worcester and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. It is likely that there will be more projects of this sort in the future.



*Government and the statutory conservation agencies are increasingly keen on 'partnership projects' and so this approach can make it easier to get funding. It can also add to the group's credibility*

### 4.5.1 The first meeting

Before approaching potential new group members (see section 4.7), it is advisable to consider what their motivations for joining might be. Having considered this, it is easier to convince them that their contribution would be relevant and valuable. For example, it could be suggested to the Countryside Officer at Borssetshire County Council that being involved in the RIGS initiative is one way that the local authority can help meet its obligations to Local Agenda 21.

Getting many people in the same place at the same time can be a challenge. This can be overcome this by giving invitees a range of meeting dates, times and venues and see which is most appropriate for the majority. When searching for a suitable venue, consider that one of the organisations involved with the group may be willing to host the meeting on their premises. This might be the local museum, the Wildlife Trust, local authority or university.

The organiser can help to ensure that people are aware of the importance of attending by establishing a clear purpose for calling the first meeting. This could be; *'To formally set up a RIGS Group in Borssetshire'*. It will also help to draw up an agenda for the meeting and distribute it in advance. Ensure that all potential invitees have the organiser's contact details.

### 4.5.2 Planning the first meeting

Here is a suggested format for the first meeting:

<i>Agenda</i>		
1	<i>Introduction</i>	The organiser introduces themselves and says why the meeting has been called. Everyone is invited to introduce themselves and explain their interest
2	<i>Aims &amp; objectives</i>	The organiser runs through suggested aims and objectives for the RIGS group and invites discussion on the subject
3	<i>Declaration</i>	It is established whether there is general agreement to set up a RIGS group and, if so, it is formally declared to be in existence
4	<i>Location</i>	The geographical area of remit is established. Identify the county, district and/or town
5	<i>AOB</i>	Any other business is discussed
6	<i>Date &amp; time of next meeting</i>	A mutually convenient date, time and place is set for the next meeting

The organiser will probably find it helpful to arrange for someone to take minutes of the meeting – it is difficult to chair a meeting and keep notes. It may save confusion in the future if a rota for minute taking is agreed. At the beginning of the meeting it is a good idea to pass around a sheet of paper and ask everyone to record their most appropriate contact details.

## 4.6 The next steps

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After the group is formed, the next priority is to develop your aims and objectives (see sub section 4.3.2) and set up a group structure to encourage stability. This can then be reflected in your constitution.

There are various possible structures that could be chosen. The group could be a membership organisation with a committee and elected officers. Alternatively, it may be decided that a less formal group would be more appropriate. A formal constitution will help the group to deal with money; many funding bodies will only give grants to groups which are properly constituted.



*Once the structure of the group has been established, there are a number of other key areas to be tackled early on:*

- ◆ **Developing opportunities and activities** – Organising enjoyable activities that the groups will enjoy can help sustain membership and maintain interest. All members can be encouraged to participate in some way
- ◆ **Raising awareness of the group** – Communicating with both the outside world and other group members is essential for the growth and success of the group (see appendix 4.2 for Derbyshire RIGS Group's awareness leaflet)
- ◆ **Networking and building partnerships** – Networking can be invaluable in helping to provide resources. It can help the group to recruit new volunteers, develop partnerships for funding and publicise events. In return, the group could provide other resources and skills or just raise awareness of the other group. A list of relevant groups is in sub section 4.4.1

## 4.7 Working with volunteers

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### 4.7.1 Recruiting volunteers

Any good guide to volunteering will tell you that the bulk of new volunteers are recruited through personal contact. Organisers may find it fruitful to suggest that members of their group encourage all their relevant contacts to come along to group events or meetings. A useful list of where to look for members is also given in sub section 4.4.1

It is more of a challenge to start from scratch in recruiting volunteers from the public at large but it is certainly worth trying. Here are a few ideas on how to go about it.

- ◆ Put up **posters and membership leaflets** in local libraries
- ◆ **Contact the local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)**. Having a particular volunteer job to do, which you can advertise, will help (see appendix 4.3). Remember, if a treasurer or publicity officer is needed, they do not need to be an Earth scientist, just interested enough to use their skills to help RIGS
- ◆ **Run events** such as guided walks, grand openings or declaration ceremonies for important RIGS sites. Send out a good press release to capture the interest of the local media. Remember to have membership leaflets and information on how to become a volunteer easily available at the event

- ◆ If the group is based in, or works closely with another organisation such as the local museum or Wildlife Trust, see if their **display space** at events can be shared
- ◆ **Get enthusiastic members of the group interviewed** on local radio about interesting features of their local geology and publicise RIGS suitable for visits by the public
- ◆ If a newsletter is produced, **distribute copies to local community centres, libraries, CVS, local press, etc.** An arrangement could be made where each member of the group adopts a list of establishments where they will distribute information
- ◆ **Publicise the group** at local colleges and universities that have geology courses. However, bear in mind, many students are likely to move away from the area when they finish their courses
- ◆ **Get stories about the group and its achievements into the geological press** (such as Geoscientist, Earth Heritage, The GA circular, Down to Earth). People living locally with an interest in geology may find out about the group through this route rather than the local press
- ◆ **Get articles and regular information into other organisations' newsletters** eg. the local Wildlife Trust or record centre newsletter

When the group does manage to get new people to join, it is vital that they are made to feel welcome. This may seem obvious but, if everyone else in the group already knows each other, it is very easy to put the newcomer off by making them feel excluded.

There is no magic answer to recruiting new members. However, a combination of effort and effective communication should have the desired result. Potential members may need to hear about the group several times before they feel brave enough to join and so continued awareness raising is the key.



*If volunteers are needed to complete a practical task, it could be worth contacting the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) who may have a local group able to help. They may even be organising a major project or working holiday in your area. There will be a cost implication but this could potentially be included in any grant application. Their national office number is ☎ (01491) 839766*

## 4.7.2 Volunteers and the law

Volunteers are affected by a very complex area of the law. Much is unclear as volunteers are classed as employees in some ways but not in others. This will also differ depending on the particular situation such as whether the group is purely voluntary or if it is supported by a staffed organisation.

These are the most important areas to consider:

- ◆ **health and safety**, including risk assessments, implications of working with vulnerable people etc (see chapter 5)
- ◆ **insurance cover** (see chapter 5). If an activity is organised and a volunteer damages someone else's property or causes injury, the group could be liable. Museums and Wildlife Trusts may already have appropriate cover. If this does not apply the group should get insured for both Personal Accident and Public Liability
- ◆ **employment law**. If the group is totally voluntary there should be no problems in this area. However, staffed organisations need to ensure they are not creating employment rights for

volunteers which could result in having to pay the minimum wage. Ensure also that genuine reimbursement of expenses is paid, rather than providing an allowance (see sub section 4.7.3) and ensure that any role descriptions for the volunteers' work avoids words such as *contract, wage and right or benefit*.

### 4.7.3 Working with volunteers

This section is designed to help groups with the practical aspects of working with volunteers.

#### Expenses

These are mentioned above briefly in relation to employment law. Paying expenses to volunteers is considered the fairest way to operate. However, whether the group is a staffed organisation or not it is important that volunteers know where they stand in relation to expenses. Uncertainty relating to money can easily build up resentment. Volunteers need to know what they can claim for, when they should claim and how long it is likely to take to be reimbursed.

#### Training

There is a danger in thinking that a RIGS group without staff support is not able to get involved in training. However, although there may not be a budget for this, there may well be skilled individuals within the group who can provide informal training to other members. The key is to be aware of the skills within the group. Many groups carry out a skills audit amongst their members or interview volunteers before they join. When information is available on technical skills, such as particular geological specialisms, periods of interest or planning law, groups can then work out how to share them. The same would apply to transferable skills such as communication techniques and negotiation. Special training events may be appropriate or part of the committee meeting time can be set aside.

#### Contacts

This section has provided a very brief outline of some important issues relating to volunteering. There is plenty of advice available from other sources. The local CVS will have information and some Wildlife Trusts have officers with expertise in recruiting and supporting volunteers. The local BTCV office may be able to provide advice. There are many books available on volunteers and volunteering from local libraries. The National Centre for Volunteering runs many courses and produces several useful publications.



*The National Centre for Volunteering can provide a wealth of information on aspects regarding volunteering. Contact NCV, Regents Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, ☎ (0171) 520 8900*

## 4.8 Sustaining your group

Many say that the most difficult aspect of running a group is not recruiting volunteers in the first place, but keeping them once they are involved. A core few, or even one enthusiastic RIGS Group member can maintain the success of the group. However, if those key enthusiasts move on or lose interest, the group can fall apart.

Being aware of why volunteers leave or remain involved is a useful starting point. Here is a list of the most common reasons, compiled from past experiences.

Reasons why volunteers leave...	Reasons why volunteers stay...
◆ They are unsure about their role and what other volunteers and/or staff expect of them	◆ They are sure of their role and what is expected of them. Many organisations prepare a role description
◆ They feel their work makes no difference	◆ They feel their work makes a difference. If they feel they are achieving something people will come back again and again
◆ They are not consulted or included in the decision making process	◆ They are consulted or included in the decision making process of the group. Volunteers will feel valued. Their opinion will count and the group will be their organisation
◆ The work is too routine, there is no variety and there are no rewards or satisfaction	◆ Their work is varied and not monotonous
◆ No one says thank you	◆ Their work is appreciated and recognised by others. Remember to say thank you
◆ There is no chance of personal growth/skills development	◆ There are opportunities to develop skills
◆ There are tensions in personal relationships among the volunteers or volunteers and staff.	◆ The group gets on well together.

In summary they stay when they feel their time spent volunteering is worthwhile and rewarding.

One important element not mentioned in the above list is developing a social atmosphere within the group. For example, if the group is doing practical work on a RIGS site it could be combined with a barbecue or committee meetings could incorporate beer tasting. This general approach was summarised by Carolyn Holmes of the Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service as:

### **Biscuits + Beer = Happy volunteers**

Those RIGS groups based in staffed organisations have sometimes experienced some problems between staff and volunteers. These areas of conflict can be minimised by helping staff to understand the value and motivation of volunteers.



*Staff Guidance on Working with Volunteers is available, free to RIGS groups from Leicestershire County Council Museums, Arts and Records Service. To receive a copy, send an A4 SAE with two first class stamps to: Carolyn Holmes, Leicestershire County Council Museums Arts and Records Service, Holly Hayes Environmental Resources Centre, 216 Birstall Rd, Leicester, LE4 4DG*

Here is some more detailed guidance on running a successful RIGS group.

- 1 **Delegation.** Giving other members a key role in the decision making process could help engage their ideas and enthusiasm. Be open to suggestions as well as to criticism. Good leadership is about trusting others in the group to take on their responsibilities.
- 2 **Share the responsibilities.** No one should feel over burdened and sharing the workload will make the most of the groups' energy, time and skills. Share all the tasks between all the group members and ensure the leaders do not always take the most rewarding ones.
- 3 **Good leadership.** Recruiting new members and passing on the key responsibilities is an important task. The best leaders are dynamic, enthusiastic and open to changes and ideas.
- 4 **Partnerships.** A RIGS group that is well supported by a host organisation such as the local authority, university or local Wildlife Trust is less likely to collapse. The host organisation has a stake in the group and will help ensure its survival.
- 5 **Training.** New ideas and skills open up new channels and opportunities for the RIGS group as a whole. A host organisation may be able to help with some training as they may undertake a similar programme for their own volunteers. Organisations such as BTCV can offer training in health and safety, leadership and conservation work. As RIGS work often requires specialist knowledge, training in recording and documenting sites is important.
- 6 **Funding** will help sustain the group and is recognised as one of the limiting factors in the rapid development of RIGS groups. Local authorities have certain obligations to meet with regard to sustaining and conserving their natural resources under Local Agenda 21 and so support may be available. Local businesses and mineral companies can gain goodwill and positive publicity from supporting environmental projects. It is worth taking the time to develop relationships with these organisations.
- 7 Produce **management plans** and **development plans**. Site management plans or project plans can attract specific funding and support. Development plans for the group can help show the way forward and remind a group of its aims and objectives. The latter is covered in this chapter (see section 4.13). Agreements with site owners and land managers are vital for the successful management and development of sites.
- 8 **Celebrations and events.** Anniversaries, rock and fossil roadshows, celebrations, geological walks and excursions can all help sustain a RIGS group. The group could have a party as a break from the more serious work. It can be used to celebrate achievements. Such events can attract useful publicity. Celebrating the local environment is a good way to keep a variety of people interested, even those who would not see themselves as RIGS volunteers.
- 9 It is vital to say **thank you** to everyone that has been involved. This may range from the volunteer that spent their weekend clearing vegetation from a RIGS to the landowners that gave you access to their site. Even a small gesture will make people feel valued and maintain their enthusiasm and interest.
- 10 **Affiliation** to another organisation can help maintain a mutual feeling of support. Affiliation to a national body can help enhance public profile and gives credibility when dealing with funders, landowners and other organisations. There are also benefits such as access to networking opportunities and information and training opportunities. All RIGS groups can become members of the Association of UK RIGS Groups (see section 2.6).

## 4.9 Involving the local community

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The success and survival of many specific projects will often depend on the involvement of the local community.

It is worth finding out which community groups may be affected by what the group is planning; for example, surveys may involve local schools or recreational users of a site. The local community is usually keen to be involved. However, the group will need to establish also whether there are any opposing interests, such as a landowner denying access. Considering the community involvement aspect may change the shape of the project, but the chances of its survival and success will be much greater. Think about who could benefit from the group's work as they may be prepared to provide labour or funding.

It is advisable to involve local people where possible. It can even be beneficial to encourage locals to police sites - if they feel ownership of it, they are more likely to protect it.

## 4.10 Writing a constitution

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### 4.10.1 Introduction

Here are some commonly asked questions and answers on how to develop a group constitution.

- ◆ **What is a constitution?** – a constitution is a document that governs the way you run your group (see appendices 4.6 and 4.7).
- ◆ **Why do you need one?** – to enable the group to open a bank account, gain charitable status, qualify for grants and to provide a point of reference for the running of the group. Primarily a constitution will create a set of rules to enable the group to function smoothly and without conflict.
- ◆ **How detailed should it be?** – as simple or as complicated, as necessary. It depends on the complexity of the group, how formally or informally it is to be run, how many members there are and a range of other elements. It can also be changed in the light of new experience and requirements.

The benefits of gaining charitable status are explained in section 4.11. Below are set out the main elements of a charity constitution, according to the Charity Commission. These recommendations are for groups considering registering as charities but they can also be taken as good practice for drawing up any constitution. If charity status is being considered, it is advisable to consult the Charity Commission office for the local area at the earliest opportunity (see appendix 4.1). Contact the Charity Commission's General Enquiries on ☎ (0870) 333 0123.

### 4.10.2 What to put in a constitution

A constitution normally consists of the following:

- 1 **The group name and the power to change the name** – The name of the group as set out in the governing document eg *Borsetshire RIGS Group*.

- 2 **Objects** – What the group is set up to do. It should be worded as clearly and unambiguously as possible. A group may have more than one object, but all objects must be charitable if the group wishes to be a charity. If the group is thinking of becoming a charity then the Charity Commission can advise on this.
- 3 **Powers** – Powers are needed to carry out the objects of the group. Powers enable control over assets. They could include raising money to enhance public awareness and purchasing equipment. Advance thinking on this section will benefit the group in the long term. ‘Powers’ should not be mixed up with ‘objects’.
- 4 **Trustees** – The constitution should provide for the election of officers (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer – see appendix 4.4) and a number of trustees. As a guide, between three and nine trustees should be elected. It is also advisable for the document to state how long trustees hold their posts and how to make provision for reappointment. Not all committee members have to be trustees.
- 5 **Meetings and proceedings of trustees** – The constitution should provide a framework for running the group. The Charity Commission recommends it should cover:
  - ◆ a minimum number of general meetings the trustees should have per year in addition to the AGM (at least two meetings a year are recommended)
  - ◆ how emergency or special meetings are to be called to discuss a particular matter
  - ◆ how a chair is to be appointed
  - ◆ the chair’s right to a casting vote



***How often to meet:***

*As a rule, a medium-sized group should hold meetings about once a month. However, for some groups, quarterly meetings may be more appropriate. This is not a hard and fast rule. More meetings may be needed in the summer, perhaps, when the group is more active in visiting sites. Alternatively, summer may be a bad time as people are away on holiday. The winter period can present an excellent opportunity to work on developing the group and planning strategies for the rest of the year*

- 6 **Bank accounts and accounting** – The constitution should provide for the setting up of a bank or building society account(s) as necessary and make provision for control of the accounts including authority for signing cheques.

If the group is intending to become a charity, trustees must comply with the accounting regulations of the Charities Act 1993 (as amended). These include:

- ◆ maintenance of accounting records
- ◆ preparation of charity accounts and annual reports
- ◆ audit or independent examination of accounts
- ◆ submission of accounts, annual reports and annual returns to the Charity Commission
- ◆ making accounts available to the public
- ◆ it is also recommended that charities follow the statement of recommended practice (SORP) accounting by charities

**7 Membership** – The constitution should set out who can be a member, whether any subscription is payable, whether members will have voting rights and how membership can be terminated. This section can also cover the calling of general and special meetings of the membership.

**8 Power of amendment** – All groups should have the power to amend their governing document. This may be happen for two reasons:

- ◆ the aims of the group change
- ◆ it is required by the Charity Commission upon initial registration as a charity

Such changes will generally need to be accepted by the membership of the group.

**9 Power of dissolution** – Should the group cease to exist or not be able to continue operating, the means of winding up or dissolving the group should be covered. The constitution should state what happens to any remaining assets. These should be applied to charitable purposes consistent with the aims of the group. For example, remaining funds could be donated to another RIGS group.

## 4.11 Charities

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It is not necessary for RIGS Groups to become charities - there are some benefits and some drawbacks. For example, Herefordshire and Worcestershire RIGS Group is not a charity but has a full constitution (see appendix 4.6).

### 4.11.1 The definition of a charity

A charity is an organisation that has a legal existence, is governed by charity law and is established for exclusively charitable purposes. It is subject to the jurisdiction of the High Court in England and Wales, the Scottish Charities Office and Lord Advocate in Scotland and the Department of Health and Social Security in Northern Ireland.

A charity is an organisation run for charitable purposes. These include the relief of financial hardship, the advancement of education, advancement of religion and purposes for the benefit of the community. Primarily, a charity must be run for public benefit. If an organisation is set up for illegal purposes, to benefit its trustees or a private individual or is formed for political reasons, it cannot be a charity.

### 4.11.2 Charities in England and Wales

A voluntary group in England and Wales is required by law to be registered as a charity if:

- ◆ the organisation has permanent endowment. That is, some or all of its assets are required to be held permanently as capital and can never be spent as though they were income
- ◆ the objectives of the organisation are charitable (see sub section 4.10.2.)
- ◆ the organisation has total income from all sources exceeding £1,000 per year
- ◆ the organisation has the rateable use or occupation of any land including buildings. That is the organisation owns or occupies land with or without buildings and is responsible for

paying rates to the local authority for that land, even if the local authority has agreed to charge at a reduced rate on the property or not to charge any rate at all

## Registering a group as a charity in England

In the first instance, the Charity Commission should be contacted. They will then send a registration Information Pack. This will include advice leaflets on the requirements of registration. The application form should be returned along with two copies of the group's governing documents and copies of financial accounts for the last three years. Trustees will be asked to sign a separate declaration.



*If the group is affiliated to an organisation which is already registered as a charity, they may be able to benefit from its charitable purposes. In order to do this, the group must be closely affiliated to the charity, must ensure it fulfils the charity's objects and that it meets the requirements of the charity's board of trustees*

## Advantages and disadvantages of registering as a charity

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ They would be exempt from certain taxes on most income and gains that are applied for charitable purposes. A charity can also appeal for donation using deeds of covenant, payroll giving or Gift Aid. Also, many grant schemes only apply to charitable bodies</li> <li>◆ They are able to raise funds more easily than non-charities</li> <li>◆ They can seek advice from Charity Commission and receive relevant publications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A charity is limited to the sort of work it can do by its objects and aims, which must be purely charitable</li> <li>◆ A charity cannot undertake permanent trading, except where this would be directly further the charity's objects</li> <li>◆ A charity is limited to the extent to which it can be involved with politics.</li> <li>◆ A charity cannot award benefits to its own trustees, such as salaries</li> </ul>

## After the organisation is registered

After registration, the group will be entered on the charity database to which the public has access. There are a number of ongoing duties, including:

- ◆ submitting annual returns and accounts
- ◆ reporting changes to the group's governing document
- ◆ reporting any changes which will affect the group's entry on the Charities database
- ◆ reporting if the charity ceases to exist or operate.

### 4.11.3 Charities in Scotland

There are many differences to the rules governing charities in Scotland. Here are the answers to frequently asked questions.

- ◆ ***What is a charity in Scotland?*** – There is no legal definition of a charity in Scottish law. However, the courts have decided that English charity law should apply in Scotland to decide if an organisation is a charity for tax purposes.

- ◆ ***How do I register a charity in Scotland?*** – There is no official registration system, as in England and Wales. A group can apply for recognition as a charity for tax purposes. It is preferable to apply for recognition before the body is set up and to submit a draft-governing document. It is best to consult a solicitor before drafting a governing document or possibly contact the SCVO.
- ◆ ***What happens after the organisation is recognised?*** – The group will be issued with a Scottish Charity number and information on the arrangements for supervision. The name and address of the new charity will then be included in the Index of Scottish Charities, which is available for inspection by the public. No other information about the charity will be disclosed.
- ◆ ***What are the advantages of being recognised?*** – The tax benefits are the same as England and Wales.
- ◆ ***What are the obligations?*** – Groups must keep accounting records for at least six years. If income is more than £25,000, accounts must include a balance sheet, an income and expenditure account and a report on the activities of the charity. Where the income is under £25,000, charities may present a simpler version of the accounts including a statement of balances as at the end of the year, a receipts and payments report and a report on the activities of the charity. Accounts must also be either professionally audited or examined and certified by a capable independent examiner.

#### 4.11.4 Charities in Northern Ireland

- ◆ ***What is a charity?*** – A charity is an organisation run for charitable purposes. These include the relief of financial hardship, the advancement of education, advancement of religion and purposes for the benefit of the community. Primarily, a charity must be run for public benefit. If an organisation is set up for illegal purposes, to benefit its trustees or a private individual or is formed for political reasons, it can not be a charity.
- ◆ ***How do I register a charity?*** – As in Scotland, it is not possible to register a charity. The only formality necessary is to apply to the Inland Revenue for charitable status for tax purposes. Misuse of the phrase ‘registered charity’ by an organisation can lead to confusion and may lead to prosecution, if used on publicity material.
- ◆ ***What are the advantages of being registered?*** – The tax benefits are the same as England and Wales.
- ◆ ***What are the obligations and restrictions?*** – The trustees are governed by the Trustee Act (Northern Ireland) 1958. Under section 27 of the Charities Act (NI) 1964, charities are required to keep proper books of accounts, prepare statements of account and preserve accounts for at least seven years. These requirements are less stringent than those in the rest of the UK.
- ◆ ***What happens after the organisation is registered for tax purposes?*** – The organisation will receive a reference number from the Inland Revenue. This is proof of its tax status.

## 4.12 The role of trustees

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As explained in detail above, in order to be a charity, an organisation must have trustees. Here are some useful guidelines on working with trustees.

### 4.12.1 General guidance

When choosing trustees, there are certain restrictions to be aware of. Trustees cannot be:

- ◆ under the age of 18
- ◆ anyone convicted of an offence involving deception or dishonesty, unless the conviction is spent
- ◆ anyone who is an undischarged bankrupt
- ◆ anyone who has previously been removed from trusteeship of a charity by the Courts of Commissioners

### 4.12.2 Choosing trustees



*Key qualities to look for when choosing trustees include:*

- ◆ an interest in and support for the group and its aims
- ◆ a willingness and an ability to give up time for the group
- ◆ relevant experience and skills
- ◆ a readiness to take an active role in the group

Other points to consider are:

- ◆ The length of appointment of a trustee can be governed by the constitution
- ◆ Trustees are not allowed to be paid for their contribution, other “*than reasonable and necessary out of pocket expenses which can be met from the charity’s income*” (Charity Commission Guide No. 3 CC3)
- ◆ They cannot benefit personally from the charity by, for example, borrowing the charity’s money or making contracts to do business with the charity. This is a legal rule and breaking it can constitute a breach of trust. A trustee may then be liable to make good any loss, or pay back any profits.

Naturally, trustees are required to act reasonably and prudently at all times and they cannot let their personal views affect their conduct as trustees. They are ultimately responsible for the solvency and continuing effectiveness of the group and exercise control over its financial affairs.

### 4.12.3 Trustee liability

If trustees act prudently, lawfully and in accordance with their governing document then any liabilities they incur can be met out of the charity’s resources. If they act otherwise, they may

be in breach of trust and personally liable to make good any loss or meet any claim on the charity's property. Since trustees act jointly in administering a charity, they are jointly responsible to meet any liabilities. This may have implications on the members of a RIGS group should any public liability claims be made.

It is possible for trustees to insure themselves against personal liability arising from acts undertaken in the running of the group or acts resulting in breach of trust through an honest mistake. It is allowable for this to be met out of the funds of the charity. The governing document must allow this and it is in the interests of the charity to do so. Trustees will need to consider the nature of the charity's activities, the degree of risk to which trustees are exposed, the number of trustees, the value of indemnity required and the cost to the charity of paying premiums.

## 4.13 Running projects and development plans

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### 4.13.1 Introduction

Whether it is the management of a group's event, the management of a site conservation project, undertaking a geological audit or managing the group itself, it is important to carefully plan activities. This section outlines some useful tools to aid planning.

#### Development planning

Development planning can be used for a variety of purposes. It may help the RIGS group itself to look at ways of finding resources and can highlight the group's aims and objectives. Producing a development plan for a specific project can also be very useful. Appendix 4.8 also includes a more detailed framework for a development plan.

#### Project planning

Producing development plans for smaller projects can help attract funding and publicity. The plan can clearly set aside specific aims of that project even if they are encompassed within the development plan of the whole RIGS group. It is sometimes useful to set up a smaller working group to take a project forward or even a steering group. See appendix 4.9 for a good example of a project outline.

#### Using a steering group

It may be found that there is already the basis of a steering group within the RIGS group. A steering group should be small so that it can efficiently undertake work but large enough to encompass all the interests of the 'project'. The every day business of a RIGS group may not involve such parties as the local residents group or the local quarry manager. However, a specific project relating to them might need to. There should be a representative selection of interests on a steering group and it is often important to invite funders to attend meetings and participate.

Whatever the group is trying to achieve, preparing a development plan may be very useful and the principles are the same irrespective of the scale of the project.

### 4.13.2 The definition of a development plan

A development plan is complementary to the group's constitution. The constitution explains the fundamental nature of an organisation, stating the basic aims and which honorary officers will run the organisation. A development plan puts in place the mechanism to turn ideas into practice. If the constitution states that the group's aims are to promote Earth heritage in the local area and increase awareness of Earth heritage, the development plan will complement this by saying how the group will do it. For example, by producing literature, visiting schools or working with local people and landowners.

A development plan should give timescales for work. Examples might be:

- ◆ to increase membership by three in the next six months
- ◆ to produce a basic information leaflet in time for the new school year

In short it will show how the group will achieve their aims and objectives.

### 4.13.3 Why development plans are needed

A development plan provides a focus for the group. It is a working brief that can be referred to as and when needed. It can help facilitate funding and show the group to be credible and serious.

### 4.13.4 What to include in the plan

Initially, the plan should build on the basics in the constitution to create a foundation for work. In time, it will cover all aspects of the work the group does, including fundraising, recruitment and guidelines for dealing with other groups.

Every group or association starts out with an aim in mind, a goal to work towards. This applies across the board from the voluntary RIGS group to international businesses. However, turning an aim into action takes planning and consideration.



*A development plan has many uses:*

- ◆ to set targets
- ◆ to establish where the group is going
- ◆ to set a timetable for achievement
- ◆ to identify long term plans
- ◆ to act as a focus during times of change
- ◆ to provide a statement to the outside world of where the group is going
- ◆ to provide an introduction for the group
- ◆ to provide a context for funding and applications

The plan need not be immensely detailed. Simply considering the initial inspiration behind the group and some plans for the future can help later in the group's life. A plan can and should be revised regularly to reflect the inevitable changes in a group and show how far it has developed.

### 4.13.5 Who the plan is for

The plan is useful for many people associated with the local RIGS group including:

- ◆ group members
- ◆ potential and new members and the wider community
- ◆ funders/sponsors
- ◆ any relevant authorities
- ◆ partners

When your group is first established, it may be appropriate to produce a simple information leaflet for the general public (see appendix 4.2). In time, it could be used to produce press packs, brochures and books about the work of the group.

## 4.14 Specific RIGS projects: Earth science audits and strategies

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### 4.14.1 The definition of an Earth science audit



*An Earth science-audit is a method of 'reviewing' or 'auditing' which considers the local Earth science resource of a specified area. This could be a site, a district, a county or any given area that is manageable by the RIGS group*

### 4.14.2 What it involves

The bulk of work involved in a and Earth science audit will be undertaken by RIGS Groups on a regular basis as a matter of course. It is effectively site recording, assessment and recommending Earth science sites of importance to the local planning authority. Results can be recorded in a report document with suggestions for future development. A written document should include the components of any development plan but will be specific to Earth science. This is often described as a Earth science strategy, for example, a typical Earth science-strategy might include:

- ◆ introduction and acknowledgements
- ◆ a rationale for undertaking the project. This might include threats and losses, the relative importance of Earth heritage in that area, the need for geology in the context of education, research, soils, wildlife, minerals etc.
- ◆ some idea of the national context of the remit area
- ◆ a summary of the local resource – a potted summary of the areas Earth history
- ◆ details of the aims. For example, to promote and conserve Earth heritage in Borsetshire
- ◆ the objectives
- ◆ the methods employed including site surveys and the groups involved. This will help establish credibility

- ◆ how the project is to be taken forward including general and site specific action plans, stating who is going to do them and by when
- ◆ links to other initiatives and plans – such as the local authorities development plans, PPG 9, NPPG 14, Local Agenda 21 etc
- ◆ conclusions, references and appendices

### 4.14.3 The value of an Earth science audit and strategy

There are many advantages to producing an Earth science-audit:

- ◆ It can be seen by funders as a defined ‘project’. This will make it more attractive to funders as there is tangible output at the end. This is particularly relevant if the audit is produced for the local authority
- ◆ It may be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) to the area’s local plan or unitary development plan if produced in consultation with the local authority. (see Peterborough Geology Audit case study, appendix 4.9 and The Hertfordshire Geological Strategy case study, appendix 4.10). This effectively means that the local planning authority must take into account the geological interests within their area when development is planned and can help protect listed sites
- ◆ It is a clear statement of the Earth science interest of an area
- ◆ It can be a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the local RIGS group and may establish them as a key interest group to notify when an areas geological interest is threatened
- ◆ It can help bring further funds and publicity to the RIGS group.