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## 7.1 Introduction

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The planning system serves as a focus for geological and geomorphological conservation and is one of the most effective tools for the protection of RIGS.

All developments on land or changes in use are subject to the town and country planning system. There are, however, a number of specific exceptions which include developments associated with agriculture and forestry. Applications for a proposed development or a change in land use or operation (be it a porch or an open cast coal mining operation) are submitted to the local authority for consideration. The authority either grants or refuses permission. In keeping with Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act, the decision on whether to grant planning permission is made in accordance with the development plan, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development plans are based on planning policy guidance issued by central government - the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) in England, the Welsh Assembly, the Scottish Executive and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (DoE NI). However, ultimately the decision rests with those who have political control locally, ie the elected members (councillors) of the local authority (except in Northern Ireland where the DoE makes the decisions on planning applications). It is the responsibility of the 'technical' officers to interpret government guidance and advise the councillors. Councillors, however, are able to make decisions contrary to officers' recommendations. Applicants who are refused permission may appeal to the DETR/National Assembly for Wales/Scottish Executive or Planning Appeals Commission in Northern Ireland.

For RIGS groups to influence this process, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of how the planning system works and the different avenues that may be explored to ensure that geoconservation is given proper consideration.

## 7.2 Setting the scene

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### 7.2.1 The role of central government

In England, the DETR is the government department responsible for town and country planning, and is overseen by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. DETR's stated objectives include the protection and improvement of the environment and the creation of a fair and efficient land use planning system.

In March 2000 the Government introduced a Countryside and Rights of Way Bill into Parliament. The bill addresses the need for better protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest and local sites and is therefore of relevance to RIGS groups. It is currently passing through its various stages in Parliament.

Within DETR the Planning Directorate is responsible for town and country planning and prepares national planning policy guidance notes, comments on regional guidance and advises on specific significant planning cases. The Planning Directorate also advises ministers on improvements to the system of development plans and control, and other related issues. Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) are, in terms of central government policy, likely to be of most relevance to RIGS groups. There are currently 24 PPGs, and those of particular importance for RIGS are:



- ◆ PPG1 – General Policy and Principles. *This provides an overview and general statement of objectives of the planning system.*
- ◆ PPG7 – The Countryside: Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development. *Highlights the requirement for sustainable development in the countryside, ensuring both rural prosperity and the protection and enhancement of the character of the countryside.*
- ◆ PPG9 – Nature Conservation. *Provides guidance on how the Government's policies for the conservation of our natural heritage are to be reflected in land use planning. **Under review in spring to summer 2000.***
- ◆ PPG12 – Development Plans. *Provides an overview of the role and importance of development plans within the planning system, and outlines key issues on plan content and procedures.*

Also of relevance are Minerals Policy Guidance notes (MPGs), which currently total 15. The following are of particular importance for RIGS:



- ◆ MPG1 – General Considerations and the Development Plan System. *Sets out the Government's policies on minerals and planning issues and provides advice on the operation of the development plan and development control systems.*
- ◆ MPG2 – Applications, Permissions and Conditions. *Provides guidance on procedures for planning applications, permissions and conditions.*
- ◆ MPG7 – The Reclamation of Mineral Workings. *Deals with policies, consultations and conditions which are relevant to achieving effective reclamation of mineral workings.*

## 7.2.2 Central government in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

In May 1999 elections were held for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly. These political developments bring an added dimension to RIGS work which sits between local concerns and activities and national policies and strategies.

Almost all of the previous powers and duties of the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales are now devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly.

### National Assembly for Wales

Following the 1997 referendum Parliament passed the Government of Wales Act 1998, which established the National Assembly for Wales, and the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999, which enables the transfer of the devolved powers and responsibilities from the Secretary of State for Wales to the Assembly. Welsh guidance is contained within *Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy*, which is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs). The most relevant of the TANs to RIGS groups is:

- ◆ TAN5 – Nature Conservation and Planning. *Sets out the way in which nature conservation should be addressed by development plans and development control in Wales.*

It should be noted that many of the older Minerals Policy Guidance Notes (MPGs) were produced for England *and* Wales, and in the absence of new legislation still apply in Wales. This will, however, change in the foreseeable future as draft mineral planning guidance for Wales has been produced, and draft minerals technical advice notes are soon to be produced.

## Scottish Parliament

The referendum held in 1997 produced a clear majority for the creation of a Scottish Parliament, and the Scotland Act 1998 became law in November that year. The Scottish Executive, through its Development Department, is responsible for promoting the proper operation of the land use planning system in Scotland; for assisting planning authorities by contact and guidance; and for safeguarding those issues which it has identified as being of national importance. Policy guidance for planning in Scotland is contained within a series of National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs), and is supplemented by a series of Planning Advice Notes which provide advice on good planning practice in Scotland. Of particular relevance are the following:

- ◆ NPPG1 – The Planning System. Sets out the key elements of the planning system, including development plans and development control.
- ◆ NPPG14 – Natural Heritage. Explains how natural heritage should be addressed by the planning system including: policy context; enjoying and understanding natural heritage; wider natural heritage; and actions required in development plans, control and implementation.
- ◆ PAN50 – Controlling the Environmental Effects of Surface Mineral Workings. Outlines environmental issues arising from mineral working and planning conditions that can be used to address such problems.

## Northern Ireland

Within Northern Ireland there is potential for government devolution. At present the Planning Service, an agency within the DoE NI, has responsibility for the planning system. In the event of a Northern Ireland Parliament being established, regulatory planning functions would remain within the DoE, although strategic planning would move to a new Department of Economic and Regional Development.

Appendix 7.2 sets out useful policy references including legislation.

### 7.2.3 Regional planning

Regional planning is playing an increasingly important role in the planning system. In England, nine government offices for the regions serve ministers in the DETR, DTI and DfEE and are staffed from each of the three departments. On behalf of DETR the government offices handle most day-to-day dealings with local authorities in relation to town and country planning. They have been described as DETR's 'eyes and ears' in the regions. The following table shows the counties/unitary authorities served by each region:

## Government Offices for the regions of England

Region	Counties/unitary authorities
North East ☎ 0191 201 3300	Northumberland, Durham, Teesside, Tyne and Wear
North West ☎ 0151 224 6300	Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester
Yorkshire and Humber ☎ 0113 280 0600	North Yorks, South Yorks, West Yorks, The Humber
West Midlands ☎ 0121 212 5050	Metropolitan Districts of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton  Shropshire, Hereford and Worcester, Warwickshire, Staffordshire
East Midlands ☎ 0115 971 9971	Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Rutland
Eastern ☎ 01223 202000	Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex
South West ☎ 01752 635000	Unitary Authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Bournemouth, Poole and Swindon  Cornwall and Isles of Scilly, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire
South East ☎ 01483 882255	Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Isle of Wight, Berkshire
London ☎ 020 7217 3456	This region will be accountable to the elected Greater London Authority.

## Regional Development Agencies

On 1 April 1999 eight Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) came into being in England. A ninth body, the Development Agency for London, was established in April 2000.

The aim of the RDAs is to coordinate regional economic development and regeneration, enable the English regions to improve relative competitiveness and reduce regional imbalances. One of their statutory purposes is to contribute to sustainable development.

For RIGS groups' members this purpose is the most important from the point of view of designating, protecting, managing and interpreting RIGS sites. It is useful to identify and contact key figures associated with the RDAs, the boards and chambers in order to inform their debates and keep them aware of relevant issues.



Sustainable Development – Devolved and Regional Dimensions *published by the UK Round Table on Sustainable Development in February 1999, provides much useful information on the new set-up. It makes a number of recommendations on how the RDAs, as well as the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly, can meet their obligations towards sustainable development.*

*Available free from The UK Round Table on Sustainable Development, Zone 4/D10, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6DE. ☎ 020 7890 4964, fax 020 7890 4959, ✉ 106174.2501@compuserve.com.*

## 7.3 Local government structures

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### 7.3.1 Local authorities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

The current structure of local authorities in England and Wales reflects the Local Government Act, 1992 (for England) and the Local Government (Wales) Act, 1994, which aimed to streamline local government. This has resulted in three types of local authority:

<b>county councils</b>	<i>responsible for strategic planning including Structure Plans, Minerals and Waste Local Plans</i>
<b>district/borough councils</b>	<i>responsible for the development control function and Local Plan production</i>
<b>unitary authorities</b>	<i>undertake roles of both county and district/borough councils. Generally produce a composite plan known as a Unitary Development Plan (UDP).</i>

Throughout England, local authorities can either operate a two-tier system (involving county and district/borough), or a single-tier system ('unitary') or a combination.

In Wales the Local Government Act 1992 abolished the counties in Wales and all the districts within. In their place 22 unitary councils were created.

In Scotland, based on the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994, unitary authorities replaced the Scottish regional councils and the district councils were reorganised. There are now 32 unitary councils, all of which are planning authorities.

In Northern Ireland there are 26 local district authorities, but these are fundamentally different to those in the rest of the UK, as they effectively only have a consultative role. The Planning Service, an agency within the DoE NI, has responsibility for preparing and implementing planning legislation, producing plans and determining planning applications. It is possible that in the future a review of the role of local government functions may return planning to district authorities.



*Minerals and waste planning is usually carried out by the county council or by the unitary authority. They are responsible for the production of a Local Plan as well as being the authority responsible for controlling development/changes in use in relation to minerals and waste.*

## 7.4 The role of planning within local authorities

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There is no set manner in which each local authority is organised. They all consist of a number of 'directorates' or 'departments', each responsible for delivering specific services. Planning may sit in its own directorate, coupled with economic development and/or countryside services. In some authorities, planning may be one function of a 'super-department', also comprising highways, engineering and building control in addition to the services above.



*Find out if there is a central point of reference which may deal with RIGS issues. Ask for:*

- ◆ the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) or environment coordinator
- ◆ the 'conservation' section. This may deal solely with listed building/archaeology, but may include an ecologist
- ◆ the countryside service. Ask them who deals with ecological/conservation issues for the district/county

*For RIGS issues in the planning context. Ask for:*

- ◆ the structure plan or local plan section, if a policy issue
- ◆ the development control section

*More often than not, in a two-tier system, only the county will have a dedicated ecologist/conservation officer, whose remit will include designated site protection.*

In addition, each local authority has a chief executive's department, which may be in charge of overall policy matters in the council, such as LA21 or sustainability which should incorporate conservation issues.

Get to know your local authority! You may have to go to different departments to get different issues raised – for example Highways to protect a RIGS from a new road cutting, the Countryside Service to include RIGS in their activity programme or Planning Policy/Development Control to ensure they know about sensitive sites that may be subject to development.

Your local museum may also be able to help you get to the right people in your local authority as many museums are local government funded and operated.



*Check out [www.socitm.gov.uk/soclants.htm](http://www.socitm.gov.uk/soclants.htm) for links to all local authorities with web sites, LABVIE (Local Authority Best Value Internet Exhibition 98) on [www.labvie98.co.uk/mapeua.html](http://www.labvie98.co.uk/mapeua.html), and the Local Government Association site on [www.lga.gov.uk/lga/21galocalgovt.htm](http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/21galocalgovt.htm).*

*Alternatively, any library or local authority office should have a copy of the Municipal Yearbook (published by Newman Books and updated each year). This details all local authorities, providing telephone numbers, addresses and members/key officers for each directorate. Scotland's Year Book is published by Culross Coupar Angus and is updated each year.*

## 7.5 The mechanics of the planning system

Planning is a core service which local authorities are obliged to deliver, in order to regulate the development and use of land in the public interest, and is set out as such in relevant legislation.

There are two main ways in which the development process can be guided and controlled:

- ◆ the development plan
- ◆ development control

## 7.5.1 The development plan

Development plans provide guidance on the long-term provision of land for such uses as housing, employment, open spaces and community facilities. They enable the safeguard and protection of areas which may be environmentally sensitive by virtue of landscape, nature conservation or green belt designation, for example. They also set out policies against which planning applications will be considered.

The process of producing the development plan is important as there is wide public consultation at various key stages. It is explained in the diagram in appendix 7.3. If an objection to the plan is lodged then a Public Inquiry/Examination in Public will normally take place, at which the views of any objector can be put forward either in person or in writing, and will be taken into account by the person presiding over the inquiry.

Because the development plan process is a key factor in the local authority's consideration of a planning application, it is essential that RIGS groups understand and contribute to it appropriately. This will ensure that RIGS sites receive sufficient policy protection in any development plan.

In putting together the development plan, local authorities are expected to take into account guidance produced by the DETR/Welsh Assembly/Scottish Parliament/DoE NI.

The 'development plan' refers to all adopted plans that apply within a particular local authority area. The various components of the development plan, and the bodies responsible for them, are as follows:

- ◆ **Structure plans.** Produced by the county council and address strategic rather than local planning issues.
- ◆ **District local plans.** Produced by the district/borough council and set out detailed proposals and policies for that district/borough. Must be in conformity with the relevant structure plan.
- ◆ **Minerals/waste local plans.** Produced by the county council (the minerals and waste planning authority). Contain detailed policies on the level of provision required and for assessing individual applications, and often identify preferred sites for mineral extraction/waste management facilities.
- ◆ **Unitary development plans.** Produced by unitary authorities and split into two parts. In essence, Part 1 addresses the broader strategic issues and corresponds to the structure plan, while Part 2 provides the detail and is equivalent to the local plan.

Given the complexities of local government there are occasionally exceptions to the above. For example, where there is a county council with several district/borough councils and a unitary council, all within one county area, the county council and unitary authority will generally work together to create a structure plan and each district, as well as the unitary authority, will create a local plan.

In Scotland structure plans are produced either by single councils or, more commonly, by groups of councils working together. In Northern Ireland area plans are produced for each district.

In addition, Supplementary Planning Guidance is produced by many local authorities to supplement the development plan. It generally provides guidance on a particular topic or implementing specific policies in the plan. Supplementary Planning Guidance may often provide an ideal opportunity for more detailed assessment on the protection of RIGS sites.

Appendix 4.9, the Peterborough Geology Audit, is a good example of Supplementary Planning Guidance that addresses the issue of RIGS.

## Policies

Policies are the key features of any development plan. While the paragraphs providing the ‘reasoned justification’ for a plan give background information, and are also part of the adopted text in a local plan, decisions are based on the policies themselves.

### Typical policy issues in different development plans

Two-tier authorities	Unitary authorities	Examples of policy content
County structure plan	UDP, Part 1	Environment, housing, minerals and waste, transport, employment, tourism, leisure and recreation
Local Plan	UDP, Part 2	Housing allocation and design, town centre and retail development, industry and employment, conservation of built environment, biodiversity, landscape and nature conservation, detailed proposals
Minerals/waste local plans	UDP, Part 2	Environmental safeguard, landbanks and supply issues, transport, restoration and aftercare, identification of areas of search/sites

### Inclusion of RIGS within the development plan

A major objective of any RIGS group must be to ensure that the plans that make up the development plan give adequate protection to RIGSs. While policies will offer greatest protection, it is also important that the accompanying text provides the context for RIGSs in that area and sufficient explanation of what a RIGS site is and why it should be protected. The following paragraphs explain how to influence and contribute to the plan process.

Appendix 7.4 provides examples of the way in which RIGSs have been addressed by a structure plan, local plan, waste local plan and minerals local plan.

### How to influence the structure plan process

In order to influence the structure plan process it is necessary to determine which stage the plan is at and take appropriate action. During the early stages of plan production it is useful to approach the planning authority and make informal contributions, through discussions and meetings at which you can promote an awareness and understanding of RIGS.

The formal stage of the process is referred to as the ‘deposit of the plan’ and generally culminates in an Examination in Public (EIP). Any objections made to the plan will be considered by the EIP Panel Chairman. Attendance at the relevant topic discussion group at the EIP is, however, by invitation from the Panel Chairman. You can request that you are included in the Panel discussion, and can indicate that you would be willing to attend on your objection form, but may not always be invited. (Refer to the structure plan policy in appendix 7.4).

### How to influence the local plan and unitary development plan process

In order to influence the local plan process you need to find out what stage of the process the plan is at. During the early stages it would again be appropriate to approach the planning authority for discussions.

The formal stage of the process is again the deposit of the plan which will generally culminate in a public inquiry. A formal objection to the deposit plan entitles you to either attend the inquiry in person to put forward your case or to submit written representations. Both carry equal weight. This applies to district, minerals and waste local plans. (Again, refer to appendix 7.4).

The process for a Unitary Development Plan is essentially the same as that outlined above for a Local Plan.



*Copies of development plans (at all stages of preparation) are kept at local libraries and are available to purchase. However, if you request a copy as a RIGS group, you may be sent this free of charge.*

## **7.5.2 Planning control**

### **Development control**

When the local authority receives an application for planning permission, the officer dealing with the application will be aware of a range of legislation and guidance relating to the type of development concerned. The application will be assessed on whether or not the development is in accordance with the development plan. Officers will also be aware of any local constraints (such as landscape and conservation designations or potential areas for minerals development), which are usually reflected by the development plan or supplementary planning guidance covering the area. Because they will have undergone extensive consultation and scrutiny by public inquiry or examination in public they should (in theory) form robust ‘manuals’, identifying what development or changes of land use may take place and where.

Officers also consult with other bodies, some statutory, and some non-statutory. A statutory body may be, for example, the Environment Agency, particularly when dealing with waste and minerals sites. Non-statutory bodies would include RIGS groups.

Applications for planning permission may be refused, approved or approved with conditions or subject to Section 106 legal agreements. The use of conditions or a Section 106 agreement allows development proposals which may otherwise be unacceptable to be made acceptable. If appropriate they could be used to protect a RIGS site from potential harm.

If a planning application is turned down, the applicant may decide to appeal. This may be either through written representations, an informal hearing or a public inquiry, depending on the type of development, scale of the development and number of people objecting.

### **Consultation for planning applications**

RIGS groups should ensure that they are consulted by the planning authority concerning every planning application which may have an impact on a RIGS. The ease of doing this will depend upon the planning authority’s involvement in the local RIGS group. It may be necessary to arrange for a list of applications to be sent to the relevant representatives or to visit planning offices on a regular basis to acquire a copy of the list.

Responding to planning applications depends upon efficient consultation. It is essential, therefore, that there is a good working relationship with planning authorities. More information on who to contact is in section 7.7.1.

## Objecting to a planning application

When an application is submitted which may have an impact on a RIGS an objection, if appropriate, should be lodged at the earliest opportunity. You will usually have four weeks in which to object. An objection made outside this period may not always be taken into account.

Before objecting, examine the plans at the planning department of the local authority. Take a note of the application number, the exact area affected and the details of the proposal. Look for valid reasons why the site should not be developed or conditions/mitigating measures should be required. 'Mitigating measures' are things the developer can do to prevent the development from damaging the feature of interest, or provide some additional benefit if such damage is unavoidable. Remember that the planning officer has to decide whether a proposed development would be in the public interest and would enhance and improve the environment. It may be helpful to refer to the summary of typical operations and potential for damage in appendix 7.5.

Factors to take into consideration may include:

- ◆ Earth heritage value (of local, regional, national or even international importance)
- ◆ Landscape value
- ◆ Value to the local community
- ◆ Historical value (eg industrial archaeology or history of science)
- ◆ Other reasons you feel strengthen your case such as wildlife value, pollution, traffic impact etc

If the land is designated in the development plan as a RIGS site then this will add strength to your objection.

In some instances the main reason for refusing a planning application may be another issue such as inadequate highway access. In such cases geological interest may add weight to these reasons. It should also be noted that in some cases the most acceptable way forward may be to exclude part of an allocated site from the development.

All partners (and wherever appropriate other interested parties) should be consulted before any objections are lodged. This enables resolution of any conflicts in private. It would be most unsatisfactory for partners to take a different stance over the status of an individual RIGS when objecting to an application. This can call the whole system into question.

In addition to having a coordinated approach, the more people who know the better. You could:

- ◆ Start a petition
- ◆ Leaflet your own area and other interested groups – encourage them to write and put forward their own comments
- ◆ Contact the media – this may encourage more local people to get involved
- ◆ Consider asking your MP or local councillor for support

When assembling your objection make your arguments in a clear and short letter and if necessary attach a statement of Earth science interest. Ensure that it is accessible and easy to understand by people who are not Earth scientists. Make sure that you quote the planning application number.

## Determination of an application and use of planning conditions/Section 106 agreements

Weighing up the 'value' of the site against the proposed development, the officer and/or committee will take into account the various statutory and non-statutory guidance listed above. The decision could be to completely refuse the development or to override the RIGS designation and permit the development to proceed as if there was no geological interest present. Chances are, however, that the decision will rest somewhere between these two extremes, permitting development but ensuring that the features of interest are safeguarded and that the impact on the feature is mitigated against. There are two main ways in which this can be achieved:

- ◆ condition, and/or
- ◆ Section 106 agreement/section 75 agreement in Scotland

A planning condition is used when, with all other factors considered, a site is considered suitable for development but subject to some concerns that are easily resolved. For example, a common condition used in permissions given for housing development is to undertake a landscaping scheme to the satisfaction of the local authority. So if, for example, an application was granted for landfill within an old quarry, a condition could require that the face with the important exposure is retained and material shall not be tipped within 10m of that face. However, Circular 11/95 makes it clear that conditions must be fair, reasonable and practicable and only imposed where they are both necessary and reasonable, as well as enforceable, precise and relevant.

Where a requirement involves permitting access, it may be that a Section 106 (Town and Country Planning Act, 1990)/Section 75 agreement, Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997) is a more appropriate tool. This is a legal agreement made unilaterally or in conjunction with several parties to undertake a specific task, provide access or make contributions, during or after development. So in the above example, if during negotiations the developer agreed to provide access to the face at all times, make a £1,000 payment to the RIGS group for conservation work and provide an interpretation board, this may be best achieved through the signing of a Section 106/Section 75 agreement.



*Both conditions and Section 106/75 agreements are important tools to safeguard RIGS interest if a site is to be developed. They must meet the guidance given in Circular 11/95 regarding reasonableness and fairness. In addition, it is critical that they are clearly worded and unambiguous since they will be referred to in checking if they are being complied with. Also, make sure that the authority is willing and able to take appropriate action if there is failure to comply with either a condition or Section 106/75 agreement.*

Figure 1 illustrates the procedures followed from receipt of a planning application to the granting or refusing of permission.

### Contributing to a public inquiry

If an application is refused and the applicant appeals, a public inquiry may be held. It will be held at a venue convenient for the site in question and will normally occur within up to one year of the application being refused. An inspector will be appointed to listen to all the views and make a final decision. As an objector you will be told when and where it is to take place. The RIGS group should:

- ◆ Inform the inspector that they would like to speak at the inquiry.

- ◆ Write a detailed objection and present this as evidence to the inquiry – this could include photographs and reasons why you value the site.
- ◆ Choose good and confident speakers.
- ◆ Organise a new petition to present at the inquiry.
- ◆ Encourage local people and organisations to speak at the inquiry – local residents' views are highly regarded.

It is worth bearing in mind the benefits of collaboration with other organisations opposing the development. It can be useful for RIGS groups to team up with their local Wildlife Trust who have trained professionals who are used to contributing at planning inquiries. Appendix 7.6 provides an example of a planning inquiry attended by the Merseyside RIGS Group.

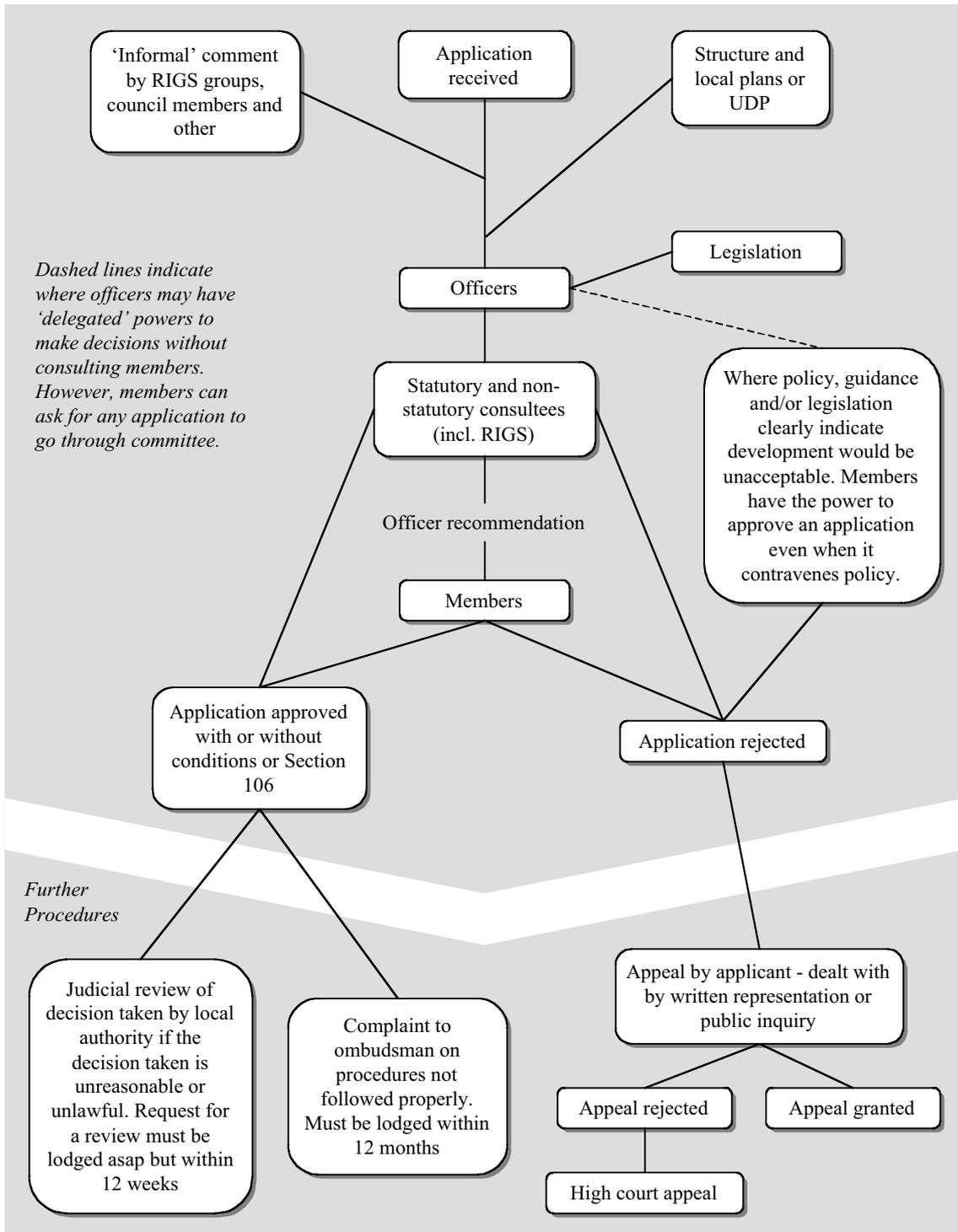
## **Environmental Impact Assessment**

If development is of a particular scale it may fall under the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations. The 1999 EIA Regulations (England and Wales) list those types of development where an EIA must be undertaken (Schedule 1 development) and those where an EIA may be required (Schedule 2 development) depending on the likely significance of environmental effects.

The regulations set out how the need for an EIA is determined, and the role the local planning authority will play in this, how to determine the scope of an EIA and lists those matters that must be covered by an EIA.

The presence of a RIGS site would be likely to require assessment, where an EIA is required, and may in some instances trigger the requirement for an EIA.

**Figure 1: Planning application procedures from receipt to granting or refusing permission**





*Find out when work on the next structure/local plan/UDP is to commence and promote awareness of RIGS, informally through meetings/presentations/seminars with relevant officers.*

*You can make representations to a plan placed on deposit, and if there are objections, these will be formal objections to the plan that must be taken into account by the EIP Panel Chairman/Inquiry Inspector. You are entitled to attend a Local Plan Inquiry or to expand upon your local plan objection through written representations. You may be invited to attend an EIP.*

*The development plan is the main consideration in determining planning applications. It is therefore important that it offers RIGS adequate protection. The development control process will also allow officers to refer to information you have provided, in advance or during consultation, in determining an application.*

## **7.6 Site safeguard**

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### **7.6.1 Constraints and policies**

The principal purpose of a RIGS designation is to raise awareness that a site has Earth science interest, not necessarily to prevent any development. However, for this to be implemented formally:

- ◆ the sites have to be marked on ‘proposals’ maps/geographical information systems (GIS) as RIGS
- ◆ policies in development plans have to refer to RIGS

The two approaches have to be taken together: it is of little use having robust policies for RIGS if there is no way in which they can be identified. Conversely, if RIGS are marked on constraint maps, but there is no policy that refers to them, then officers are unlikely to recommend any condition on development or refusal since it would be difficult to defend it at an appeal.

Approaches to designation of non-statutory sites vary between planning departments. Some may require that each site is evaluated internally. However, it is likely that any site formally submitted by a RIGS group will be held by the local authority as a constraint, but scrutinised only if there is a proposed development.

Appendix 7.7 includes examples of letters used by RIGS groups to introduce and notify local authorities of RIGS in general and of identified sites.

### **7.6.2 RIGS for all....?**

As far as development plans go, RIGS would not be individually identified in a Structure Plan or Part 1 of a UDP. Local plans or Part 2 of a UDP may identify RIGS as a list and/or on a map (this is encouraged in PPG9, Para. 25 and NPPG 14, Para. 62 in Scotland). Appendix 7.8 describes how the Merseyside RIGS Group contributed to designation of RIGS sites in development plans for the districts covered by the group.

Irrespective of whether individual sites are put forward during the consultation of a local plan or submitted to a planning committee as a separate item, in both cases, the documents would be in

the public domain. This may be of concern to landowners since, on gaining permission to survey a site, it is stressed to owners that a RIGS designation will not result in hordes of people trespassing on their land (see chapter 3).

In theory, any schedule of RIGS submitted to the local authority is accessible to the general public, but by presenting sites to a committee, the information is given more prominence than is perhaps desirable. A better idea may be to submit the criteria used in selecting RIGS for committee approval, and in a local plan/UDP, identify all the RIGSs as dots on a small-scale map of the area.

### 7.6.3 Submitting site details

Planners like lines on maps! The most critical part of any site notification is a large-scale plan clearly marking the site boundary. This not only enables planners to accurately identify the boundaries to the site, but assists the drafting technicians to transfer the details to constraint maps.

#### Boundaries

In many cases, the boundaries to a site may be quite clear. Elsewhere, particularly in the case of geomorphological features, the boundaries may be more difficult to define. It may be possible to apply a 'zoned' approach when designating a site where the peripheral part of the feature may be able to accommodate limited and sensitive development, while the core would be unlikely to do so without destroying the feature of interest. This may, however, add an unnecessary complicating factor in the eyes of the planner – a site is either a constraint or it is not.

How close a boundary is drawn is largely for each individual group to decide, using pre-determined criteria. From the perspective of the planning system, though, it may be better to draw boundaries wider rather than closer. If there is some interest in an area and it is excluded from the site notification, then the local authority would have little power to safeguard the feature of interest. If, on the other hand, it is included, it alerts both planner and developer that there is interest present and action may be taken accordingly. Under such circumstances, the RIGS group would be consulted and would be able to advise on mitigating the impact of the proposed development.



*A note of caution needs to be expressed concerning GIS. Most GIS systems require data to be digitised at a scale of 1:2500 or even 1:1250. If constraints are placed on GIS and the information you give is on a 1:10,000 plan, it may be difficult to incorporate this within the GIS, and at best, there may be some loss of accuracy. If you establish that the local authority will be using GIS, find out which program they run, and then try to obtain large scale plans from them on which to draw site boundaries.*

*Copyright on such plans is strict, and local authorities are not at liberty to provide plans free to any external organisation. However, if you are acting on behalf of the local authority, in that you are providing data that assists in their duty to comply with Section 11 of the Countryside Act, 1968 or Sections 11 or 30 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, or the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, then they should be able to provide you with the relevant plans. If GIS is not being used, then use plans at a scale of no less than 1:10,000 or the scale of the maps that accompany the local plan.*

Accompanying information to provide to a planning authority

- ◆ site name
- ◆ site reference number
- ◆ grid reference (preferably eight figure)
- ◆ brief description of the reason for RIGS designation, including:
  - whether the site is of historical, aesthetic and/or educational value in addition to the scientific value
  - an indication of the geological age
  - main area of interest (palaeontology, structural, geomorphology, lithology and/or stratigraphy)
  - other designations (SSSI, WS, scheduled monument etc)
- ◆ potential threat (if any)

The written information should be brief and not exceed one side of A4. If the local authority requires further details, these can be supplied.

A letter formally submitting the details to the local authority should accompany the information. For advice on informing landowners, see chapter 5. It may be that the letter sent to local authorities states that the landowners have been informed (see appendix 7.7).

## **7.7 Putting it into practice**

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### **7.7.1 Who to talk to...?**

#### **Officers**

It is important to establish a rapport with any officer who might have (or might develop) the enthusiasm and direction for supporting RIGS, either because they are personally responsive to the idea or because they understand it to be an important element of their work (see below). Build up good communications with the officers as the director will act on their advice.

The point of contact will depend on what the objective of the RIGS group is. If the group would like the principle of protecting RIGS sites to be included in structure plan policies, or if there are issues concerning minerals and waste sites, then the county council or unitary authority would be the appropriate body. If the group would like a RIGS to be designated in a local plan or to have specific policies which will protect sites, then approach the district/borough council or unitary authority, which will also deal with planning applications. In addition, the councils may have specialist conservation officers or archaeologists who could play a valuable role in assisting with geoconservation (see below).

#### **Councillors**

It is also important to have contact with local authority councillors. They are ultimately responsible for any decision made. Councillors will vary in technical understanding, diplomacy, degree of environmental concern and appreciation of issues that go wider than their own wards. They will have most sway in the committees on which they sit.



*Your local authority will have a list of the contact details of all local councillors and which committees they serve.*

*Most committee meetings are open to the public. Your local library or council offices will have a copy of the agenda for a relevant committee (such as planning) and note the environmental issues. Attend the committee meeting and note which councillor(s) may have a positive attitude to environmental matters.*

*Attempt to distinguish what may be a broad environmental concern from one that is simply on 'their' patch! Also be aware that party politics and peer pressure are important issues in the council chamber – align yourself to a councillor who commands a degree of respect from the rest of the committee.*

A good starting point may be your own ward councillor. Remember to find out their stance on environmental matters before you meet. Your approach will be different where a councillor has a strong commitment on environmental issues or, for example, is aligned to the RSPB or local Wildlife Trust.

## **Landowner/developers/operators**

As well as getting in touch with the local planning authority, it may be worth contacting the local landowner, who may already have agreed to the site being designated a RIGS. Appendix 7.9 contains an extract from the Norfolk RIGS Guidance Note on the implications of the RIGS designation for site owners.

Alternatively it may be worthwhile contacting the developer or operator direct, with regard to a specific development proposal. This may allow for mitigation measures to be introduced early in the process. (Refer to chapter 5 which addresses landowner liaison.)

## **Local community groups**

It may be beneficial to contact local community groups or schools, which may find the site of particular value. These may offer support to your case. (See chapter 4 which looks at volunteering.)

### **7.7.2 Identifying RIGS issues for local authority officers**

In the absence of specialist officers (for example LA21/environment officer, ecologist, minerals planner), or when dealing with a particular site, you may end up talking to a policy or development control officer. These officers have to take into account a whole range of issues, of which built and natural heritage is only one aspect. Consequently, there is considerable variation in the level of understanding of conservation issues, and the way an initial meeting is approached should reflect this. However, all officers need to adhere to guidance and advice, so it is always worthwhile reiterating the information provided in appendix 7.2.



*When referring to RIGS in an informal situation, bite the bullet and state that it stands for Regionally Important Geological Sites. Refer to 'geomorphological' when you are discussing a geomorphological site specifically.*

The key topics that you are likely to want to discuss with the local authority are:

- ◆ individual RIGS site safeguard
- ◆ overall policy objectives
- ◆ education, interpretation and site management.

## **Individual RIGS site safeguard**

Key personnel: development plan officer, development control officer, minerals and waste officers, ecologist.

An ecologist may be in a position to liaise with or advise officers involved in development control (either within a unitary authority or in the districts/boroughs) on the conservation importance of a particular site. They are likely to take on board any information regarding geological interest present and use this in any assessment of the overall conservation value.

Wildlife Sites and RIGS frequently coincide. It is strongly recommended that RIGS groups work closely with the appropriate local Wildlife Trust to resolve any conflicts of interest and to present a united front to the local authority.

When dealing with a planning application or when sites are put forward for inclusion in the development plan, the planning officer will be considering, among other issues:

- ◆ if it is a designated site in the local plan
- ◆ impact on 'amenity' (including nature conservation interests) as a consequence of development, and
- ◆ restoration and after-use of the site (if a minerals/waste site)

RIGS can inform all these aspects. It should be noted that frequently, areas most greatly desired for mineral extraction are those with the greatest conservation interest. Liaison with minerals officers can ensure they are aware of those features at a site, in particular 'integrity' features which are, by definition, irreplaceable (see appendix 1.2) and those 'exposure' features where the value may be enhanced by some extraction activity. Likewise, recognition of features may influence the restoration proposals, particularly for integrity sites. Minerals officers may also be able to advise those involved in RIGS about additional sites.

Following the Environment Act 1995, minerals officers have reviewed and are in the process of reviewing pre-1982 permissions. With many sites, there is a requirement to put forward a restoration scheme. Seeking to enhance the geological value of a minerals/waste site may be a mutually desirable objective from both the officer's point of view and that of the operator.

These actions and principles can be adopted for any site, not just a minerals site.

## **Overall policy objectives**

Key personnel: development plan officers, LA21/environment officer, ecologist.

All local authorities are working to apply the principles of sustainable development. Although not a statutory requirement, central government has dictated that all local authorities should have produced their Local Agenda 21 strategies by the year 2000. RIGS fits neatly into Local Agenda 21/ sustainability programmes by identifying an element of the environment that contributes to our natural heritage. In addition, the principle that sites have a function in raising

awareness/education fits well with the principle of community involvement and enabling people to regain their sense of place.

A key role for many local government ecologists will be to advise those involved in policy, of matters that relate to nature conservation within the county. Government guidance throughout the UK stresses the role of non-statutory conservation sites and specifically mentions RIGS. Local authorities have a duty to “keep under review the matters which may be expected to affect the development of their area” for development planning (Town & Country Planning Act 1990, Sections 11 & 30) and “in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside” (Countryside Act 1968, section 11). The role of non-statutory conservation sites is outlined in the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, section 4. Identifying the geological conservation interest of a county is an integral part of this process. In addition, the relevance of geoconservation to biodiversity planning should be emphasised, stressing the importance of key habitats (for example limestone pavements, peatlands, rivers and streams and coastal dune systems) and the value of dynamic physical process that many key habitats depend upon.

## Education, interpretation and site management

Key personnel: countryside officer, LA21/environment officer, ecologist.

There are other contacts apart from the planning department which may be of some assistance. Countryside officers may be responsible for maintenance of specific sites (eg local authority-managed ‘parks’ or local nature reserves) and may also have a key role in delivering awareness and understanding of conservation in the wider urban and rural environment. Identifying geological interest in publicly managed space adds a further string to the bow in terms of the interest of such areas. Also a network of sites throughout a local authority area provides interpretative material for delivery of conservation awareness programmes.

In many cases, the countryside officer and/or ecologist will liaise with statutory conservation organisations (such as Countryside Agency, English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage, Environment & Heritage Service in Northern Ireland and Countryside Council for Wales) in the targeting of various grant schemes which may assist in enhancing individual sites.



*Some local authorities may administer their own conservation grant scheme. Seek details to see if practical work on RIGS sites is eligible.*

### 7.7.3 The first steps in liaising with the local authority

Contact the local museum or records centre and see who they talk to regarding geological and biological records. They may have experience dealing with biological and archaeological sites in a similar context. Similarly it may be sensible to contact your local Wildlife Trust to gain information, and to ensure consistency of approach on specific sites.

If you have had no previous contact with the local authority, approach them by letter, requesting a meeting. Address the letter to the director of the relevant department concerned with planning. If you know the name of the officer most likely to deal with it, mark it for their attention. The letter should briefly outline the significance of RIGS, placing it in the context of documents the officers will have handled (eg government guidance and their own development plans). Where possible, refer to other documents with statutory or ‘pseudo-statutory’ weighting

(see appendix 7.2). Keep the letter simple, avoid jargon and typed it. Above all, it must stress the benefit of RIGS to the overall local community and heritage (see appendix 7.7).



*If you develop a rapport with a local councillor(s), but are not getting very far with officers, when you write to an officer, copy it to the councillor. This will make it less likely to be buried in the in-tray!*

If you have not received a response to your letter within two weeks, telephone to ensure the correspondence has reached the most appropriate officer. Face-to-face contact is always preferable for getting issues across. If you can arrange a meeting, it will give you and the officer a chance to discuss ways in which RIGS can support the local authority and benefit local communities.

If you meet on-site to discuss RIGS generally, do not get bogged down on the scientific merit of the site where you happen to be. Keep it general, stressing the importance of a coherent RIGS network for the council area, suggesting that you make a presentation to other officers on RIGS. For example, you may be speaking to an environment coordinator with a limited understanding of geoconservation. They may be very keen for you to explain the system and how it relates to the authority's statutory functions, to development control and/or policy officers.



*The majority of planners will be Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) or RTPI Scotland members. The RTPI is committed to a rolling programme of Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Officers may be 'enticed' to an hour's presentation since it is likely to contribute to their CPD!*

## 7.8 Summing up

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The planning system is a powerful tool in the conservation of RIGS. However, to realise its potential as such, it is important to:

- R**ealise how RIGS fits into and assists delivery of local authority objectives
- I**nput into both the policy preparation work (development plan) as well as site notification (for development control) to secure maximum protection for sites
- G**ain understanding of the system – how the departments are organised and which councillors and officers could give most support
- S**trive to keep the language and concepts simple

## Appendix 7.1 – Useful reading

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- Barlow, C. 1977. Finding That Elusive RIGS Information. *Earth Heritage*, **no.8**, p4.
- Benton, M.J. and Wimbledon, W.A. 1985. The Conservation and Use of Fossil Vertebrate Sites: British Fossil Reptile Sites, *Proceedings of the Geologists' Association*, **vol.99**, pp1-6
- Black, G.P. 1988. Geological Conservation: A Review of Past Problems and Future Promise. The Use and Conservation of Palaeontological Sites. *Special Papers in Palaeontology*, **40**, pp 105-111.
- CPRE. 1992. *A Campaigners' Guide to Local Plans*
- CPRE. 1992. *A Campaigners' Guide to Using EC Environmental Law*
- CPRE. 1998. *A Campaign Briefing: Departure Applications and Call-ins*
- CPRE. 1996. *Campaigners' Guide to Minerals*
- CPRE. 1995. *Index of Planning Policy Guidance Notes*
- CPRE. 1997. *Public Inquiries and Planning Appeals: A Campaigners' Guide*
- CPRE. 1998. *Responding to Planning Applications: A CPRE Guide*
- Cullingworth, J. B. and Nadin, V. 1994. *Town and Country Planning in Britain*
- Department of the Environment. Circular 27/87 *Nature Conservation*
- Ellis, N.V., Bowen, D.Q., Campbell, S., Knill, J.L., McKirdy, A.P., Prosser, C.D., Vincent, M.A., Wilson, R.C.L. 1992. *An Introduction to the Geological Conservation Review*. Geological Conservation Series, **no. 1**.
- English Nature. 1993. *Natural Areas*
- Evans, D. 1993. *A History Of Nature Conservation In Britain*. p274
- Hooke, J. 1994. Geomorphology and Conservation. *Rigs Exposure*, **no. 4**, p3
- Nature Conservancy Council. 1990. *Earth Science Conservation in Great Britain – A Strategy*
- Oliver, P.G. 1998. *Proceedings of the First UK RIGS Conference*
- Larwood, J.G. and Markham, D. 1995 *Roads and Geological Conservation – A Discussion Document*. p28

## Appendix 7.2 – Relevant legislation

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Riddall, J. and Trevelyan, J. 1992. *Rights Of Way: A Guide to Law And Practice*

Available from:

### **HMSO Publications**

PO Box 276  
London SW8 5DT  
Enquiries ☎ 0207 873 0011  
Orders ☎ 0207 873 9090

Firearms Act 1968  
Theft Act 1968  
Health and Safety at Work Act 1974  
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979  
Highways Act 1980 (as amended)  
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)  
Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984  
Public Order Act 1986  
Environmental Protection Act 1990  
Rights Of Way Act 1990 (Amended The Highways Act 1980)  
Dangerous Dogs Act 1991  
Public Rights Of Way DOE Circular 2/93  
Recovery of Costs of Public Path and Rail Crossing Orders, DOE Circular 3/93

Available from:

### **Countryside Agency**

Postal Sales  
PO Box 124  
Walgrave,  
Northampton NN6 9TL  
☎ 01604 781848

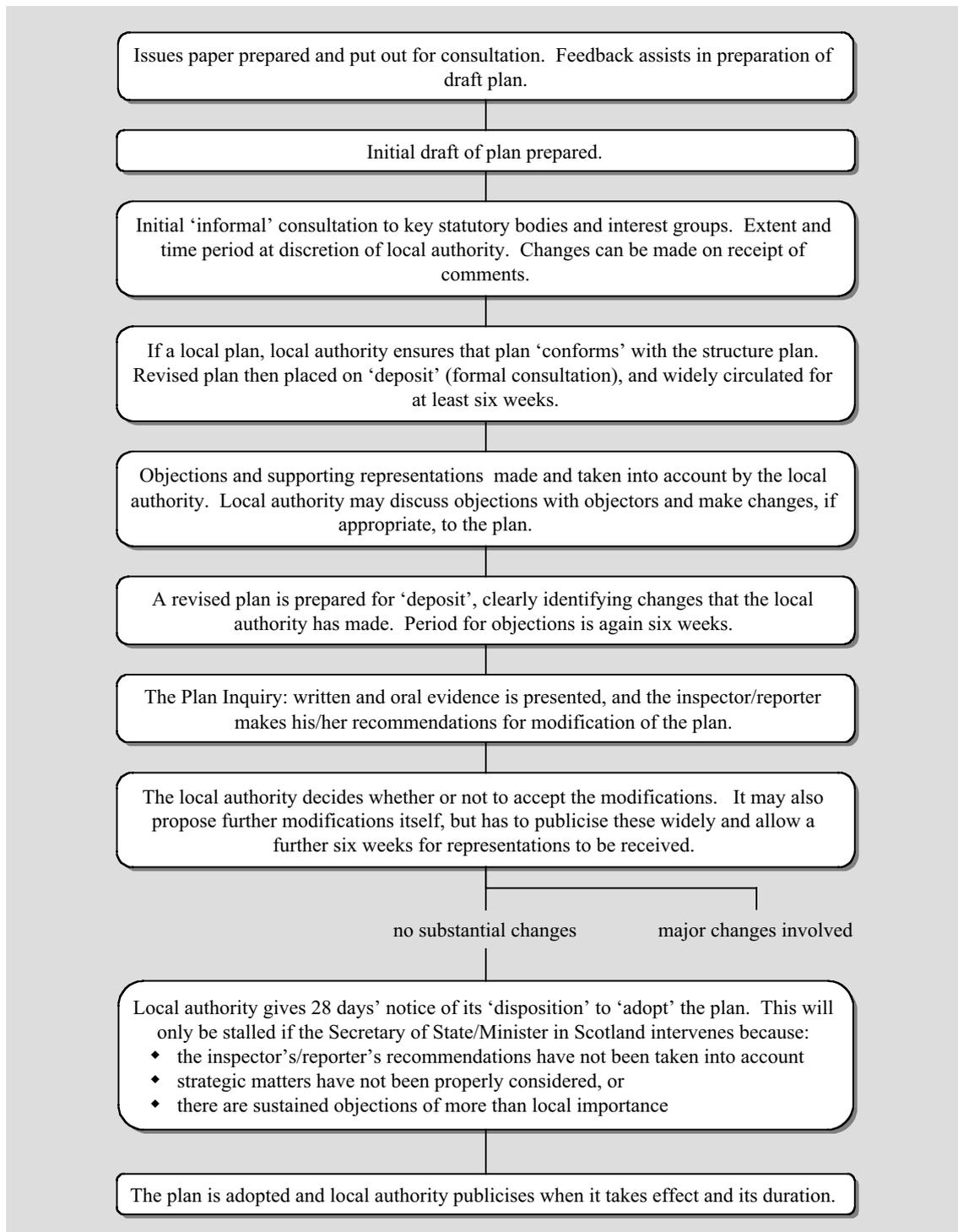
Countryside Stewardship: Handbook and Application Pack (Ccp 453), Revised 1994  
A Guide To Procedures For Public Path Orders (Ccp 449), 1994  
A Guide To Definitive Map Procedures (Ccp 285), Revised 1992  
Waymarking Public Rights Of Way (Ccp 246), Revised 1992  
Out In The Country: Where You Can Go and What You Can Do (Ccp 186), Revised 1992  
The Rights Of Way Act 1990: Guidance Notes For Farmers (Ccp 299), 1990  
Horses in the Countryside (Ccp 261), Revised 1993  
Informal Countryside Recreation for Disabled People: a Practical Guide for Countryside Managers (Ccp 439), 1994  
Available from: MAFF Publications, London SE99 7TP (☎ 0208 694 8862)  
A Farmer's Guide to the Planning System, 1992 (Available free from Department of the Environment, PO Box 151, London, E15 2HF.)

Document/Legislation	Date	Comments/ Relevant paragraphs
Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5 (Wales only)	1996	“Non-statutory sites of local nature conservation importance (often known collectively as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)) should be both selected and designated according to clear and strict criteria which ensures the sites are of substantive nature conservation value. Regionally important geological/geomorphological sites (RIGS) should also be selected and designated according to clear and strict criteria.” (Para 29)
The Countryside (Scotland) Act	1967	Strengthened powers conferred under the 1949 Act and imposed on every public body a duty to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural heritage of Scotland in the exercise of their functions relating to land.
The Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act	1991	Established Scottish Natural Heritage and charged it with the responsibility for protecting, enhancing and facilitating the enjoyment of Scotland’s natural heritage.
The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act	1997	Consolidated the statutory framework for the control of development. It requires that development plans include measures for the conservation of natural beauty and amenity and the improvement of the physical environment.
National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) 14 Natural Heritage (Scotland only)	1999	“Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) are being identified by conservation organisations with the involvement in some cases of local authorities. Such sites can be valuable educationally and supplement sites notified as geological SSSIs.”
Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 9 (England only)	1994	<p>“Regionally important geological/geomorphological sites are being identified by local conservation groups with the involvement in many cases of local authorities. These sites provide valuable educational facilities, and supplement sites notified as SSSIs as a result of the Geological Conservation Review.” (Para 17)</p> <p>“Many sites of local nature conservation importance are given designations by local authorities and by local conservation organisations. These sites are important to local communities, often affording people the only opportunity of direct contact with nature, especially in urban areas. Statutory and non-statutory sites, together with countryside features which provide wildlife corridors, links or stepping stones from one habitat to another, all help to form a network necessary to ensure the maintenance of the current range and diversity of our flora, fauna, geological and land-form features and the survival of important species.” (Para 15)</p>
EC Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC)	1992	<p>“Member States shall endeavour ... in their development policies ... to encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora.” (Article 10)</p> <p>A number of habitats are of geological importance.</p>
Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations (the ‘Habitats Regulations’)	1994	<p>Implements the Directive in the UK</p> <p>Development plans “to include policies encouraging the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna” (Regulation 37).</p>
National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act	1949	Gives local authorities the discretionary power “to provide or secure the provision of (local) nature reserves” (Section 21).
Countryside Act	1968	Local authorities “in the exercise of their functions to have regard to the desirability of conserving the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside” (Section 11).

Town & Country Planning Act	1990	Local authorities have a duty to “keep under review the matters which may be expected to affect the development of their area” for development planning (Sections 11 & 30).
Environment Act	1995	Review of mineral permissions (see MPG 14, below).
Biodiversity: The UK Action Plan (Cm 2428)	1994	Paras 3.5 – 3.7 outline the influence of geology and geomorphology on habitats and species.
Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy (Cm 2426)	1994	Paras. 13.3 & 18.5
UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report	1995	Para. 5.2 Influence of geology on wildlife.
Government Response to the UK Steering Group Report on Biodiversity (Cm 3260)	1996	Provides formal endorsement to the UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report.
Minerals Planning Guidance (MPG) 6: Guidelines for aggregates provision in England (England only)	1994	“It is recognised that there are many cases where mineral workings have been beneficial in the establishment of new wildlife habitats and in the exposure of important geological features. MPAs and the industry should bear in mind opportunities for habitat creation and enhancement even where nature conservation may not be the primary end use of a site.” (Para 74)
MPG 7: The Reclamation of Mineral Workings (England only)	1996	“Wherever possible and safe to do so, the natural gradients and rock features of the surrounding landscape should be imitated when forming new screening banks, soil storage bunds and final faces. Some reclamation schemes may give opportunities to provide new and attractive landscape and landform features.” (Para 44)
NPPG 4: Land for Mineral Working	1994	Sets out the policy context, guideline principles, locational and operational issues for mineral working.
NPPG 16: Open Cast Coal and Related Minerals	1999	Covers energy policy, sustainable development, national considerations, environmental impact and guideline principles.
MPG 14: Environment Act 1995: Review of Mineral Planning Permissions	1995	“In preparing and considering restoration and aftercare proposals regard should therefore be had to ... the desirability of conserving features of geological interest.” (Para 116e)
PPG12: Development Plans (consultation draft of revision; England only)	1999	Provides a useful synopsis of the role and different types of development plan.
Reclamation of Damaged Land for Nature Conservation (DoE/HMSO)	1996	2.35 – 2.49, 3.34 – 3.37, 10.1 – 10.24 Acknowledges importance of damaged land for not only scientific geological interest, but also for ‘awakening public interest in the geological record’. Stresses value of RIGS in not only being of geological value, but having ‘a wider community role’.
The Use of Land for Amenity Purposes (DoE/HMSO)	1992	Fact Sheet 29 outlines practical considerations for different types of geological conservation.

In addition, in England the Secretary of State issues Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), setting out broad strategic policies where there are issues which, though not of national scope, apply across an area greater than a single authority.

## Appendix 7.3 – The preparation of the development plan



## **Appendix 7.4 – Development plan policies**

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**Below are examples of how RIGS groups have been involved in different aspects of the development plan.**

### **Deposit Norfolk Structure Plan**

#### **Policy ENV.8**

Development which would be detrimental to designated and proposed sites of regional and local importance for nature conservation and geological interest, including Local Nature Reserves and County Wildlife Sites, will only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposals which outweigh the need to safeguard the nature conservation interest of the site.

### **Adopted Norfolk Minerals Local Plan**

#### **Policy MIN 5**

Proposals for mineral extraction and associated development in other areas of nature conservation interest will be permitted only where it can be ensured that there would not be significant damage to such areas, including County Wildlife Sites, woodland areas which are predominantly broadleaf and Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS).

### **Deposit Norfolk Waste Local Plan**

#### **WAS 12**

Waste development in or near to conservation sites of regional or local importance (including County Wildlife Sites, woodland areas which are predominantly broadleaf and Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites) will only be permitted where they would not adversely affect these sites.

### **Adopted Norwich Local Plan**

#### **NE21**

Planning permission will not normally be granted for any development which would adversely affect the scientific interest including flora, fauna or geological features at or near a site of special scientific interest, a local nature reserve or a 'C' site or other area of nature conservation or geological importance.

### **Deposit South Norfolk Local Plan**

#### **RUR 17**

Development which would destroy or adversely affect the nature or geological conservation value of designated or proposed County Wildlife Sites or Regionally Important Geological Sites will not normally be permitted. The District Council will encourage the positive management of these sites.

## Case Study: Cornwall Minerals Local Plan March 1998

Most local authority development plans now include policies which relate to RIGS. However, there are regions where specific development plans such as minerals and waste plans still do not contain reference to RIGS and local Earth heritage conservation. It is important for both planners and developers involved in minerals and waste to identify areas of Earth heritage importance. Opportunities may arise for RIGS to be created as an afteruse of such developments, through a Section 106 Agreement for example, or for landfill schemes to be sympathetic to Earth heritage conservation. Such activities may lead to the creation of RIGS and the opportunity to find out more about the UK's Earth heritage. RIGS are referred to in detail in the Cornwall Minerals Local Plan.

### Cornwall Minerals Local Plan

#### Section 4.18 – Earth Science Conservation

*The unique geology of Cornwall, combined with its long and extensive history of mining and quarrying, have resulted in numerous sites of local, national and international geological and geomorphological importance. Few areas in the UK contain such a comparable wealth of interest. To reflect this English Nature are currently re-notifying existing and additional geological and geomorphological SSSIs. To complement the designation of sites with national importance, there are the Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)... The minerals industry has a key role to play in the management of these sites which are frequently owned by mineral operators and in the creation of new exposures and sites through their extractive activities. The County Council will encourage the minerals industry to conserve, manage and display sites of Earth science conservation interest.*

#### Cornwall Minerals Local Plan - Appendix 6. RIGS

*A4.1 RIGS are sites of geological or geomorphological interest, excluding Sites of Special Scientific Interest, that are considered worthy of protection for their education, research, historical or aesthetic importance. RIGS are broadly analogous to non-statutory wildlife sites. They can include important teaching sites, Wildlife Trust reserves and Local Nature Reserves. RIGS are not regarded as understudy SSSIs, but as sites of regional importance in their own right.*

#### A4.2 Site selection

*RIGS are selected by the Cornwall RIGS Group, an informally constituted, largely voluntary group composed of individuals drawn from the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, the County Museum, Cornwall County Council Planning Department, teachers at all levels from primary to higher education and a number of individuals with an interest in geology, geomorphology and conservation. The site selection process is based on clearly defined, locally determined criteria including the value of the site for educational fieldwork, for scientific study, the historical importance of the site in terms of advances in geological or geomorphological knowledge or the aesthetic value of a site in the landscape. The balance of importance between these values will vary from site to site. When selecting sites the group takes care to gain the support of landowners whenever possible, explaining the importance of the site and the need for conservation and sensitive management. The designation of a RIGS does not confirm any right of access. In the case of educational sites the issue of access has proved particularly important and has normally been resolved through the use of access agreements.*

#### A4.3 Site protection

*The recognition of RIGS in this document is an important stage in the protection of such sites and they should be regarded as equivalent in status to Cornwall Nature Conservation Sites (CNCs). The Cornwall RIGS Group will review and update the list of designated sites and will be requested to comment on planning applications that may affect either a site or its setting.*

## A4.4 Cornish RIGS

*Cornwall with its extremely rich geology, its long coastline and complex mining history providing exceptional interest to many people, contains a relatively large number of sites that are considered worthy of a designation as a RIGS site. It is anticipated that up to 200 sites may be so designated.*

*A4.5 Further details regarding the designation and location of RIGS are available from:*

*Cornwall RIGS Group  
Cornwall Wildlife Trust  
Five Acres  
Allet  
Truro  
TR4 9DJ*

More information can be obtained from David Owens at Cornwall County Council. The Cornwall Minerals Local Plan normally costs £10, but it may be available free of charge to RIGS groups.

David Owens  
Planning Directorate  
Cornwall County Council  
Planning  
County Hall  
Truro  
TR1 3AY

## Appendix 7.5 – Summary of typical operations and potential for damage

Type of site	Usually highly damaging if unmodified	Damage can usually be avoided if work sensitively planned and carried out	Damaging only in exceptional circumstances
Disused quarries, pits and cuttings	Landfill Face reprofiling/stabilisation Liquid storage/reservoirs	Quarry floor developments Forestry Minor restoration and landscaping	Tree and scrub clearance Fencing Drainage and buried services Research collecting
Active quarries and pits	Landfill/disposal of quarry waste	Quarry extensions	Normal quarrying operations Collecting
Coastal and river cliffs	'Hard' coast protection schemes Developments above eroding cliff Dumping cliff foot	Beach replenishment 'Soft' coast protection schemes Chalet/beach huts Commercial and educational collecting	Signs, paths and fencing Tree and scrub clearance Research collecting
Foreshore exposures	Reclamation schemes Marinas, barrages and similar major developments	Pipelines Small jetties Collecting	Small-scale sand removal
Inland outcrops and stream sections	Major afforestation Industrial/housing developments	Small plantations Isolated developments Roads/tracks Fencing and deer fences Quarrying Collecting	Changes in agricultural practice Normal agricultural operations
Mines and tunnels	Adit or shaft closure Infilling Surface subsidence Effluent or waste disposal Commercial and educational collecting	Show mine developments Research collecting	Demolitions above mines Normal agricultural operations
Static geomorphological sites	Major excavations/levelling Dumping and infilling Major afforestation First time deep ploughing Coastal reclamations and sea defences Industrial housing developments	Pits or small trenches Small plantations Fencing and deer fences	Sites generally vulnerable and no specific operations in this box

Active geomorphological sites	As for static geomorphological sites River management works Sand fencing Slope stabilisation Dredging in active coastal 'cell' Introduction of vegetation	No specific operations although minor examples of operations to left may avoid damage	Sites generally vulnerable and no specific operations in this box
Unique mineral and fossil sites	Industrial Housing development Waste disposal and infilling Reprofiling and excavation Removal of material Commercial and educational collecting	Research and small-scale amateur collecting Stabilisation of faces	Sites generally vulnerable and no specific operations in this box

## **Appendix 7.6 – Case study: Merseyside RIGS Group planning inquiry – landfill site conditions**

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**Merseyside RIGS Group is one of the few groups to date that have encountered a planning inquiry. The process of inquiry is outlined in this case study. One of the key lessons learned from the experience was the need for quality data that is reliable and defensible. The experience led to a revision of the group’s recording systems.**

The site is Delph Lane Quarry, Whiston, Merseyside, a disused sandstone quarry in a residential area. The site is of significant geological and historical interest. The geological features on display are those of a fluvial sandstone formation. The quarry is believed to be one of several which supplied stone for the building of Liverpool Cathedral. Quarrying of the site possibly began in the 16th or 17th century, and there is much evidence of how the site was worked, including quarry walls covered in chisel marks and alcoves cut into the faces at varying levels. Rock climbers used the site, despite it being in private ownership, the maximum drop of the sheer walls being 24 metres.

Knowsley MBC’s Draft Unitary Development Plan (UDP), identified the site simply as ‘other amenity greenspace.’ However, following submission of an application to infill it, the site was surveyed in detail, and found to meet the UDP criteria for designation as a RIGS. The application for infill was refused in 1992 for three reasons, the third being that “The infilling of the quarry would lead to the loss of a site of local biological and geological significance contrary to policies in the Draft Unitary Development Plan...” The applicant appealed and the first public inquiry occurred in 1993. A second public inquiry was held in 1994.

### **The public inquiry**

Evidence for the geological value of the site was presented by geologists on behalf of both the council and the appellant. The proximity of another, more modern site located in a Country Park (Pex Hill Quarry) proved to be important for the appellant. Comparisons between the two sites were made by both inspectors. However, the first inspector concluded: “I consider that the different methods of working the quarries provides a meaningful educational experience. The site could be made reasonably accessible, including provision for disabled people, and, in my opinion, could complement Pex Hill Quarry.” The inspector dismissed the appeal, stating that the council should be given the opportunity to produce a management plan for the site.

The decision was successfully challenged at the High Court on its technical validity, and there was another public inquiry in 1994. The Council’s UDP had by now gone on Deposit and identified the site as both a Site of Biological Interest and RIGS. However, the UDP was not yet adopted and the relevant policies were subject to objection and hence given less weight. The same arguments were made at the second public inquiry for retention of the site.

### **The outcome of the inquiry**

The second inspector permitted the appeal in March 1995. She stated: “Even putting on one side the various features in dispute I believe that the site has some geological value, which increases considerably when added to the visible historical elements... on balance, I find no fault with the designation as such... The site is, in my opinion, interesting in both geological and historic terms, but in view of the existence of Pex Hill not far away I am not convinced that its importance is sufficient to justify refusal in this case.” She allowed the appeal and granted planning permission, subject to many conditions, including one to submit a scheme for retention of geological features in the access track, included because she thought it could be useful for study by local residents and school children.

The lessons learned from this case study include the importance of establishing the individual distinctiveness of a site, the benefit of sites being included in an adopted UDP, and the overriding importance of the method of designation being objective, systematic and capable of withstanding intense

scrutiny with credibility. As a footnote, the site in 1999 still has not been infilled, and there is the hope that its potential value as a scientific, educational and recreational resource might yet be achieved.

**Dr Jim Mackay**

**JCAS (a partner in the Merseyside RIGS Group)**

## Appendix 7.7 – Typical letters introducing/notifying RIGS to a local authority

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Director of Technical Services  
Ambridgeshire County Council  
County Offices  
AMBRIDGE  
AM1 3CC

Attn: Mr Budd Green, Senior Planner

Dear Sir

### **Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites in Ambridgeshire**

Sustainability is a buzzword used now by many local authorities in the UK. But what it actually means and how it is delivered, remain a challenge for all those in local government. One feature that has to be central to delivering sustainability is the conservation of our built and natural heritage. In addition, systems have to be in place to enable those who live and work locally to make a positive contribution to their environment and enhance the sense of community.

This is where Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) come in. While there is considerable awareness of local wildlife issues, few people are aware of the importance of our Earth heritage. However, much of Ambridgeshire's geological heritage is under threat. It is fair to say that many of Ambridgeshire's key geological sites are quite robust. Some, however, are as vulnerable as any wildlife habitat and, like many semi-natural habitats, once destroyed they are gone for ever. Essentially, RIGS are the geological equivalent to Wildlife Sites and should be treated as such in any policies relating to ecology and nature conservation.

The importance of RIGS is emphasised in government guidance on nature conservation PPG9 (para. 17), and indeed, policies within the Ambridgeshire Local Plan (Consultation Draft, Aug 1998, L1, L22) require the protection of such landscape features.

However, the RIGS scheme is not just about the scientific value of our Earth heritage. It is about involving and empowering local people to gain a wider understanding and feeling about their local environment. It is about linking our landscape with our past and present culture.

I would welcome the opportunity to provide a fuller explanation of how RIGS can deliver a number of objectives of your department. Should you wish to meet on site, one of Ambridgeshire's key RIGS is only 10 minutes from your office. I would be happy to visit you at a convenient time.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully

Ivor Lotterock  
**Ambridgeshire RIGS Group**  
cc Cllr Ivor Nutt

Director of Technical Services  
Eryrshire County Council  
County Offices  
ERYRI  
AM1 3CC

Attn: Mr Budd Green, Senior Planner

Dear Sir or Madam

**Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites**

Please find enclosed notification of the following Regionally Important Geological/ Geomorphological Site(s) (RIGS):

Llebur End

Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites are non-statutory sites which provide an important contribution to the overall network necessary to ensure maintenance of the range and diversity of our Earth heritage. The significance of RIGS is stated within Planning Guidance (Wales), Technical Advice Note (Wales) 5 - Nature Conservation and Planning. Features of interest of geological, geomorphological and/or physiographical interest may be notified on the basis of their scientific, educational, historical and/or landscape importance.

Possibly one of the greatest threats to our Earth heritage is the lack of awareness of many of our important sites, and the misconception that all Earth heritage sites are robust. Many sites are extremely vulnerable, particularly those that are geomorphologically related. Consequently, every effort has been made to ascertain ownership of the site(s), and where this has been possible, owner(s) have been informed of the importance of the site(s).

The site(s) listed above has (have) been surveyed by a qualified geologist on behalf of North-East Wales RIGS in consultation with Countryside Council for Wales, and is (are) considered significant in the context of our current knowledge of the geology of this area. Nevertheless, all RIGS are being notified on a 'provisional' basis, since it is accepted that new information may emerge which may influence the relative significance of any RIGS.

The notification details enclosed include the grid reference(s), a brief description of features of interest and a plan of the site(s), with boundary(ies) delineated by a solid black line.

Should you require any further details, please contact me.

Yours faithfully

Ivor Stone  
for **North East Wales RIGS**  
Encl

# West Yorkshire RIGS Group

## Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)

ADDRESS OF RECIPIENT

DATE

Dear Sir/Madam

This introduction accompanies the enclosed Designation Sheet for Regionally Important Geological Sites within the Calderdale/Kirkless/Bradford/Wakefield/Leeds districts of West Yorkshire.

The initiative for identifying geological sites of scientific and educational value originates from the Countryside Act of 1990. While providing no legal protection for designated sites, the 1990 act encourages the conservation of a nationwide network of important geological sites, (RIGS).

West Yorkshire RIGS Group has been responsible for surveying of sites and preparation of Designation Sheets for the five districts in West Yorkshire. The group, initiated by English Nature, has spent the last three years researching and visiting over one hundred sites throughout the county. Site inspections have been undertaken by Leeds Geological Association and Huddersfield Geology Group, working within the RIGS Group.

The work of the group is organised by a committee of professional and amateur geologists who convene at quarterly meetings. Although an autonomous organisation, the group works closely with English Nature, who along with local authorities, have provided limited funding.

Having recently completed site designation, the group hopes to remain active in West Yorkshire, concentrating on site conservation and negotiating access to sites where appropriate.

While not attempting to record all geological sites in the county, we have selected those sites which best reflect the local geology of each district, illustrating the various rocks of different ages and formations. The page layout of each booklet allows additional site information to be recorded on the vacant pages between each site.

We hope that the enclosed booklet will be of interest and value to you. Please contact the group with any queries or suggestions you may have regarding Regionally Important Geological Sites.

Yours sincerely

Ivor Rigg

West Yorkshire RIGS Group

# West Yorkshire RIGS Group

## Designation Sheet

SITE NAME: Lanshaw Delves STATUS: RIGS Site  
COUNTY: West Yorkshire DISTRICT: Bradford  
NATIONAL GRID REF: 126 455 to 132 454 OS SHEET: 1:25,000 SE 04/14

### Other information:

Mentioned in the *Geology of the Country between Bradford and Skipton* by the Geological Survey of Great Britain.

### Site description

#### Scientific importance:

*Lanshaw Delves moraine forms a narrow ridge of glacial moraine (600 metres long by 40 metres wide), parallel to the Wharfe Valley. The higher sections of moraine, above 350 metres, rest on solid rock, while lower sections lie on boulder clay. The moraine can be traced south-east from Lanshaw Delves towards Rava Reservoir (151 428), as its trend changes to conform with the Guisely Gap. This deviation in the direction of the moraine can be related to the lateral moraine of a glacier moving from Wharfedale towards the Airedale Valley.*

*At Lanshaw Delves the moraine consists of gravels made up of grit, chert, ironstone, nodules and Carboniferous Limestone erratics.*

#### Historical associations:

*In previous times the Carboniferous Limestone erratics were mined at Lanshaw Delves and utilised for lime burning.*

#### Educational value:

*The well-preserved moraine at Lanshaw Delves is an important site for understanding the glacial history of Wharfedale. Erratics can be found at Lanshaw Delves and also on the north band of Rava Reservoir (151 428).*

#### Aesthetic characteristics:

*The site overlooks Ilkley and the Wharfe Valley and can be included in an interesting geological excursion from Ilkley visiting the Cow and Calf Rocks, Rock Valley and Ilkley Crags (5km walk).*

#### Access and safety:

*The moorland area surrounding Lanshaw Delves moraine is served by an extensive network of footpaths. Park at Ilkley or Ben Rhydding and ascend to Lanshaw Delves via Gill Head. Beware of old workings and avoid dangerous areas, as indicated on the Ordnance Survey map. Also avoid areas reserved for grouse shooting.*

#### Ownership:

# West Yorkshire RIGS Group

## Designation Sheet

SITE NAME: Paul And Coal Clough STATUS: RIGS Site  
COUNTY: West Yorkshire DISTRICT: Calderdale  
NATIONAL GRID REF:  
Coal Clough: 904 273 To 904 275 OS SHEET: 1:25,000 SD 82/92  
Paul Clough: 907 272 to 908 278

### Other information:

*Detailed descriptions in Yorkshire Rocks and Landscape by the Yorkshire Geological Society.*

### Site description

#### Scientific importance:

**Coal Clough** - Sediments from the Lower Coal Measures are exposed in a 100 metre long cliff section, along the west bank of Coal Clough. The Lower Mountain Coal Seam outcrops at the base of the cliff. Goniatites and radically Dunbarella bivalves are found within a marine band which directly overlays the coal seam. Of particular interest are the uncrushed Goniatites preserved in nodules within the sediments.

**Paul Clough** - Rocks from the Millstone Grit Series are exposed at several localities along the length of the clough. The steep dip of the rocks enables a large amount of strata to be seen within a relatively small area. A series of marine bands are present within the shale exposures in the clough. Exposures of Rough Rock outcrop in a gorge form the lower reaches of the clough.

#### Educational value:

*The walk to Paul and Coal Cloughs is rewarded by extensive exposures of Coal Measures and Millstone Grit strata. The presence of marine bands containing well-preserved fossils is an additional interest. Suitable for small groups of secondary and higher level students.*

#### Aesthetic characteristics:

*Dramatic views along the Cliviger Gorge.*

#### Access and safety:

*Permission is required from Coal Clough Farm to visit Coal Clough. Paul Clough is accessible by public footpath as far as Stiperden House Farm. It is advisable to park in Cornholme and walk up Pudsey Clough to reach the cloughs.*

#### Ownership:

## Appendix 7.8 – Case study: Merseyside RIGS Group – Use of the system in planning

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The Merseyside RIGS Group has revised its survey, recording and scoring methodology for geological and geomorphological sites. The purpose was to devise an objective, balanced, transparent and consistent survey, recording and scoring methodology.

The group covers the metropolitan districts of Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens and Sefton which contain a wide range of Earth science interests. The internationally designated coast contains geomorphological features including the renowned dune system and peat beds as well as prehistoric mammalian footprints and bone assemblages. Numerous quarries in the Permo-Triassic sandstone used for construction and shales for brick-making reflect the industrial heritage of the area. Stone from local quarries is visible in local buildings, eg old farm buildings and Liverpool's Anglican cathedral.

### Weaknesses of other methods

The geological/geomorphological interests at a site need to be objectively appraised when considering the potential effects on them from development proposals. This is essential to ensure that the most valuable sites are given protection through local development plans; to consider the potential effects on them from development; and to ensure that survey and assessment methodologies withstand intense scrutiny when Earth science interests are used as nature conservation evidence at public inquiries. The following weaknesses were apparent in the initial methodology and in alternative methodologies considered:

- ◆ subjectivity: importance and emphasis placed on different features varied from surveyor to surveyor
- ◆ inconsistency: survey method and detail varied significantly between surveyors and between sites
- ◆ lack of balance: survey was strongly geology orientated
- ◆ lack of verification: survey results were rarely verified by a second appropriately qualified person

### Revised method

A working group including both geomorphologists and geologists was formed to develop a more robust methodology.

Firstly, a detailed recording form was produced which includes all rock types and geological/geomorphological features recorded on Merseyside. The form is equally balanced between geology and geomorphology, but also records information regarding site location, safety, educational, historical and cultural value. The form guides the surveyor with specific questions and a choice of answers, ensuring that no question is omitted. Each question also allows for additional comments ensuring no data are lost. The boundary of the site is mapped clearly on a plan of at least 1:2500 scale. The findings must be verified by a second suitably qualified and experienced professional. The result is a consistent and objective survey of all sites.

Results are then scored using the grading form (each section cross refers to the corresponding section of the recording form). Points are awarded based on rock types and features present and totalled for that site. A user-friendly computerised database is being developed. Mirroring the recording form, this will also automatically score the value of each site.

RIGS status requires a minimum award of points for the geological/geomorphological value of the site. Points are also awarded for accessibility, safety and educational value. Qualifying sites will be designated as RIGS in the local authority development plan.

## **Use of the system in planning**

The strong local authority representation on the Merseyside Group has facilitated designation of RIGS in development plans for the districts covered by the group. Three out of the four local authorities have designated RIGS in their plans. The fourth is in the process of reviewing its plan and will include designation of RIGS in the review. The revised RIGS methodology will be important in justifying inclusion of RIGS in the revised plan.

Much consideration has been given to delineating RIGS boundaries and the need for extending these by including buffer zones. Buffer zones would serve as a means of protecting RIGS from adjacent development. However, given the importance we have attached to obtaining sound, reliable and defensible supporting data, inclusion of arbitrarily applied buffer zones could not be realistically justified. After much debate and consultation with planners, the conclusion is that the RIGS boundary must be clearly delineated around those features actually contributing to the interests at the site. Further wider protection can only be achieved through planning policy.

The recognition of RIGS and their importance in planning is growing. If this is to continue, then supporting and qualifying data must be sound, reliable and defensible. The objective, transparent, balanced and consistent approach to survey and evaluation of sites established by the Merseyside RIGS Group ensures that such data are produced and will ensure that RIGS are recognised and protected in the planning process.

**Elaine Gallagher**

**JCAS (a partner in the Merseyside RIGS Group)**

# Appendix 7.9 – Case study: Norfolk RIGS Guidance Note

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**This extract from the Norfolk RIGS Guidance Note outlines the implications of RIGS designation for site owners.**

Section 5 of the RIGS site proposal form asks whether the owner of the prospective site is aware of the implications of RIGS designation and is happy for the site to be designated. This sounds more daunting than it is. In essence we are simply keen that sites are available for future use and that their interest is conserved.

It is likely that owners' main concern will be about possible restrictions on future use or development. It is true that local planning policies do presume against developments which would damage the conservation value of a site. However, there are lots of ways in which all interests can be accommodated.

Ultimately it is up to the owner to decide whether a site becomes a RIGS as presently our protocol is only to designate sites with their agreement. Consequently there is a need to try and emphasise the positive. The following sections go into the issues in some more detail.

## 1. Access

The present emphasis of Norfolk RIGS is identifying sites which are safe and of value for educational use. The implication of this is that any designated site should have public access, or failing that, at least be available for schools, further education or other organised educational groups by prior permission. It is proposed that designated sites will be promoted to potential users through a leaflet and on our own internet site.

The idea of public access may be a concern to some, but the reality is likely to be that the level of use will not be enormous. In addition, where public access does not presently exist, it is up to them to define the level of access they wish to see. It is important, therefore, in any discussion to clarify with the owner whether they will wish to apply any restrictions to access, and what access arrangements, if any, they wish to have (eg by prior permission through phone or letter).

## 2. Conservation management

In order to ensure that the geological interest of sites is maintained, they may require some sort of conservation management, particularly soft sedimentary sites. It is likely that any such management would be very low-key, being limited to measures such as keeping exposures clear of vegetation, slumped or dumped material. In some cases, such positive management may be a consequence of the normal use of the site.

The Norfolk RIGS Group is not in a position to undertake or organise the management of sites ourselves, although this may be an option in the future. However we can provide advice on appropriate site management, this being the subject of sections 21 and 22 of the site proposal form. Small-scale funding for site management work may possibly be available from English Nature.

When in discussion with a site owner it is important to stress that we can only encourage management, we cannot insist or enforce anything.

## 3. Planning policy

The presumption within the County Structure Plan and the various District Council Local Plans is that sites such as RIGS are protected against any development which would harm their geological interest.

When RIGS are designated the relevant local planning authorities will be notified. The wording of the present policies are shown in appendix 1 (appendix 7.4 of this handbook).

The important point to make is that not all developments are necessarily detrimental to the geological interest of a site. Potential threats to different types of geological sites are shown in appendix 2 (appendix 7.5 of this handbook). A copy of this table will be included with the description of every designated site, with the relevant type of site and associated threats highlighted.

Even potentially threatening developments can, however, be mitigated through careful development design which leaves the geological interest exposed and accessible. In such cases the restrictive planning policies should not apply as the interest is being conserved. Alternatively in some cases a site could be substituted by an accessible replacement site with similar interest.

**Peter Doktor**