

WARWICKSHIRE LOCAL GEODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN, CONSULTATION DRAFT, 2009

Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group and Warwickshire Museum, 2009

Background

Geological conservation in the UK is now adopting a strategic approach, similar to that applied to biological conservation (Local Biodiversity Action Plans - LBAPs). As a consequence, Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPs) are emerging as an important tool for co-ordinating and delivering local geological conservation. Central to the philosophy of these schemes, the 'geodiversity' concept views geological (rocks, minerals, fossils), geomorphological (landforms and active geological processes) and soil features in a holistic sense.

The Warwickshire LGAP was initiated by the Warwickshire Museum in 2002 through a pilot study funded by English Nature. From the outset, the main aim of the county LGAP has been to provide an achievable, timetabled framework within which to promote and deliver local geoconservation. This looked at existing biodiversity and geodiversity action plans within the UK at that time, and established a number of themes to provide a co-ordinated strategic approach (LGAP) to geological conservation activity by Warwickshire's museum and local groups. This was followed by a second study during 2003-2004, also funded by English Nature, which tested these themes with reference to a 'mini-LGAP' for Warwickshire's Permian-Triassic fossil sites. Significant events in national geoconservation since our second study have included publication by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister of 'Planning Policy Statement 9' (2005) which sets out planning policies on geoconservation through the planning system, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs document 'Local Sites: Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Development' (2006). The latter provides important guidance relating to selection and administration of Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites (RIGS; also known as Local Geological Sites - see below). These publications provide a strong context for the Warwickshire LGAP and will inform it as it develops.

At this stage we are inviting potential partners and consultees to comment on the action plan. Once comments have been received we will organise a meeting to discuss the issues arising, and to provisionally establish a partnership group.

LGAP: geographic scope

Modern geological conservation activity in Warwickshire stems largely from a partnership between the Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group (WGCG) and Warwickshire Museum, responsible for compiling this LGAP. The WGCG identifies Warwickshire's Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites, within the context of the 'Greater Warwickshire' Vice-County 38 boundary, which includes Coventry and Solihull Districts, as well as parts of what are now within the West Midlands administrative region. Vice-County 38 also forms the geographic framework for Warwickshire Museum's Geological Localities Record Centre (GLRC) and is therefore the logical area in which to establish and deliver an LGAP.

A county LGAP

Pilot studies (see above) and existing LGAPs for other areas have resulted in establishment of five **Objectives** to act as a framework for a number of **Actions**.

The Objectives are:

- **1:** to identify and audit the geodiversity resource

- **2:** to conserve and manage Warwickshire's geodiversity
- **3:** to protect Warwickshire's geodiversity through the planning system
- **4:** to research Warwickshire's geodiversity
- **5:** to increase awareness of Warwickshire's geodiversity with reference to professional bodies, conservation practitioners, landowners, the education sector, and the general public

In accordance with our pilot studies, other LGAPs and guidelines, we recognise the need to establish a network of partners to help us deliver our geoconservation actions, and consultees who will assist in the drafting process. It should be noted that this document is not intended as a rigid set of actions and will evolve in consultation with the partnership.

Objective	Action	Timetable	Lead organisation(s) (in bold) and partners <i>[to be confirmed]</i>	Notes
1. To identify and audit the geodiversity resource	(1a) Field surveys of un-notified sites recorded in Warwickshire Museum's Geological Localities Record Centre (GLRC)	Vet 50 sites by November 2009		GT and UKRIGS to be consulted with ref. to methodologies
	(1b) Literature-based update of site records within GLRC	ongoing		
	(1c) Identify new geological and geomorphological sites and record them within the GLRC	ongoing		Covered mainly through work programme of Warwickshire Museum's geologist
	(1d) Construct a database of geological expertise with respect to Warwickshire geology, geomorphology and geoconservation	End-2009		To be initiated as a questionnaire within the Newsletter of the WGCG and e-mail links on WGCG and Warwickshire Museum pages
2. To conserve and manage Warwickshire's geodiversity	(2a) Field surveys of existing RIGS recorded in the GLRC	Vet all sites by November 2009		Ongoing work by members of the WGCG and Warwickshire Museum geologist
	(2b) Adoption by WGCG of relevant fieldwork and conservation procedures	December 2009		Procedures have been researched by WGCG's conservation sub-committee; these require formal endorsement through

				committee
	(2c) Research and identify possible funding sources for conservation projects	December 2009		To be compiled by a WGCG conservation sub-committee member
	(2d) Conservation projects: site protection and/or clearance; provision of management plans for these sites	4 sites by December 2009		Programme has recently been initiated by WGCG's conservation sub-committee
	(2e) Field collection of specimens for Warwickshire Museum collection; specimen documentation and curation at the Warwickshire Museum	ongoing		Covered through work programme of Warwickshire Museum's geologist
	(2f) Establish a WGCG local specimen set and supporting interpretative materials	Collection established by December 2009		To be undertaken by a WGCG volunteer, drawing from existing specimens in private collections (WGCG membership), Warwick University (Open Studies) and Warwickshire Museum handling collections
	(2g) Obtain suitable 'future-proof' electronic database for GLRC	As and when suitable computer software is identified and approved		Ongoing research by Warwickshire Museum, with special reference to the UKRIGS site database, currently being developed
	(2h) Install rest of GLRC data on an appropriate database	As and when suitable computer software is identified and approved		See (2g)
	(2i) WGCG to obtain GIS for RIGS data	As and when suitable software and funding is attained		
	(2j) Achieve 100 RIGS	December 2009		Ongoing work by WGCG's

				conservation sub-committee
3. To embed the geodiversity concept, its significance and the need to conserve local geodiversity, throughout the planning system	(3a) Ensure that all Local Authorities are briefed on the importance of geodiversity and RIGS and that WGCG is represented in Statements of Community Involvement	November 2009		Arrange meetings with Local Planning Authorities
	(3b) Input to planning process: attendance at meetings and input to Development Plan Documents, and Minerals and Waste Local Development Plans	ongoing		WGCG's conservation sub-committee members, Warwickshire Museum's geologist and Natural England's County Officer are acting as consultees in the LDPs
	(3c) Ensure that RIGS and SSSIs are adequately protected through the planning system, by commenting on planning applications	ongoing		Ongoing work for Natural England's County Officer, Warwickshire Museum's geologist and WGCG's conservation sub-committee members
	(3d) Raising awareness of Warwickshire geodiversity amongst key opinion-formers including planners, developers, councillors, waste and water management	ongoing		Ongoing work for Natural England's County Officer, Warwickshire Museum's geologist and WGCG conservation sub-committee members
	(3e) Review DEFRA Local Sites Guidance with respect to county RIGS	June 2009		To be undertaken by Warwickshire Museum's geologist and/or WGCG's conservation sub-committee member
4. To research Warwickshire's geodiversity	(4a) Research and publication of Warwickshire geodiversity	ongoing		Ongoing work, partly covered by Warwickshire Museum geologist's work programme. Warwickshire Museum's geologist and WGCG members maintain close

				links with researchers working on county geology
5. To increase awareness of Warwickshire's geodiversity with reference to professional bodies, conservation practitioners, landowners, the education sector, and the general public	(5a) To maintain close links with practitioners responsible for conservation of county biodiversity, archaeological and built heritage	ongoing		Ongoing work for Natural England's County Officer, Warwickshire Museum's geologist and WGCG's conservation sub-committee members
	(5b) Major education projects involving site interpretation and public presentations	As and when funding sources become available		Major part of WGCG conservation sub-committee's remit, as well as 'core' RIGS identification and notification work
	(5c) Rolling maintenance programme and/or renewal of outdoor interpretation provision	One site upgraded annually; funding dependent		
	(5d) Maintain WGCG programme of talks, exhibitions and field excursions	Monthly programme as advertised, and additional outreach events		Ongoing work for WGCG's education sub-committee
	(5e) Notify bodies of WGCG willingness/ability to provide talks and local excursions and outreach events	December 2009		Requires a circular and advertisement on WGCG website. Further discussion required with Warwickshire Museum's geologist to avoid direct competition with museum outreach programme
	(5f) Establish standard formats for WGCG leaflets and trail guides	December 2009		Conservation and/or education sub-committees need to research existing publication formats
	(5g) Publication of leaflets and trail guides by the WGCG	As and when funding sources		

		become available		
	(5h) Museum display and outreach programme	ongoing		Part of Warwickshire Museum geologist's work programme
	(5i) Publication of RIGS and SSSI lists on Warwickshire Museum and/or WGCG websites	End-2009		Separate lists have already been compiled by Warwickshire Museum's geologist and WGCG's conservation sub-committee.
	(5j) Maintenance and development of WGCG website	ongoing		
	(5k) Greater publicity through press, radio, TV	ongoing		
	(5l) To involve local businesses and community in conservation of individual sites	ongoing		