

## Geology Policy

The Trust's Articles of Association include geology as one of the disciplines which it can be involved in. Currently the Trust has a very limited involvement with the study and conservation of geology in the county. The geology and geomorphology of the county fundamentally underlie the wildlife interest and there are consequently a number of elements of the Trust's work that could have a geological strand. These include:

- 1) Identification of Local Sites
- 2) Wider countryside policy
- 3) Site acquisition
- 4) Site management
- 5) Education and interpretation

### 1) Identification of Local Sites

The Trust has a programme to identify Local Wildlife Sites, and a parallel process is being run to identify geologically important sites by the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust (HWEHT) and it is unlikely that they have missed anything of significance. The former Regionally Important Geological/geomorphological Sites (RIGS) have now been incorporated into the Local Sites system, and local authorities have the details of their locations. The Trust would not have anything significant to add to this.

### 2) Wider countryside policy

Work by the HWEHT has already identified the important sites for geology outside of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) in the county, and local authorities have both included these on proposals maps and protected them under policy.

The Trust will continue to support inclusion of policies for geological conservation in all local authorities' forward planning. The Trust will also support the use of these policies in relation to the work of local authorities so that sites are adequately protected.

If HWEHT ceased to operate, the quality of geological sites outside of the SSSI series could well deteriorate. The Trust accepts the intrinsic value of these sites, but believes it does not have the resources to take on this area of work. Given that geological sites fall outside of most current grant schemes, the Trust would support the extension of agri-environment schemes, with an appropriate amount of additional funding, to include geoconservation. The Trust will also support the principal aim of the Worcestershire Geodiversity Action Plan (GAP): *To make a positive contribution to the enrichment of Worcestershire's environment and quality of life by managing, conserving, educating and enhancing the county's geodiversity for the benefit of all.*

### 3) Site acquisition

The county has a number of significant geological sites. At least 11 SSSIs have been notified all or in part for their geological or geomorphological features. These sites have full protection under

legislation, and no benefit would be gained for their conservation if they were acquired by the Trust, although there might be education benefits.

The biggest number of SSSIs are either geomorphological or 'green field' sites where the interest feature is buried sediment. Acquiring these sites would have little benefit with nothing to see. Other sites include road and railway cuttings, where access would be very difficult, with serious health and safety issues. The Malvern Hills have a concentration of sites, but these are either in the ownership of the Malvern Hills Conservators or the Eastnor Park Estate.

It is our view that the Trust should not have a broad policy for the acquisition of geological sites though in special cases where there is a high interpretation value acquisition could be considered. Such sites would need to tell the story of landscape development and associated ecology, and have additional biodiversity value.

#### **4) Site management**

The Trust already owns a number of SSSIs with significant geological interest, eg Devil's Spittleful. It is important in managing sites that consideration is given to the geological interest.

There may be occasions when there is potential conflict between the geological and biological interests of a reserve. In such cases the relative merits of the interests should be fully assessed and prioritised. If management for a geological interest has a detrimental effect on a biological interest, works for the geology should be kept to the minimum necessary for the interest to be preserved.

#### **5) Education/Interpretation**

The Education team already includes geology, specifically "rocks and soils" in its materials. Watch material also covers geological topics. The Trust should consider giving greater emphasis to geology and geomorphology over a greater range of materials. This is important for reserve interpretation boards and leaflets and particularly the 'Reserves Handbook'. An understanding of geology greatly aids understanding of the wildlife present, and so more information on it would enhance visitors' experience of the sites.

#### **Summary**

The Trust should retain a geological remit in its Articles of Association. However, the lead role is undertaken by the HWEHT who we wish to continue working closely with.

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