

A
Draft
Local Geodiversity Action Plan
for
Cumbria



Prepared by
Cumbria RIGS Group
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A LOCAL GEODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN FOR CUMBRIA

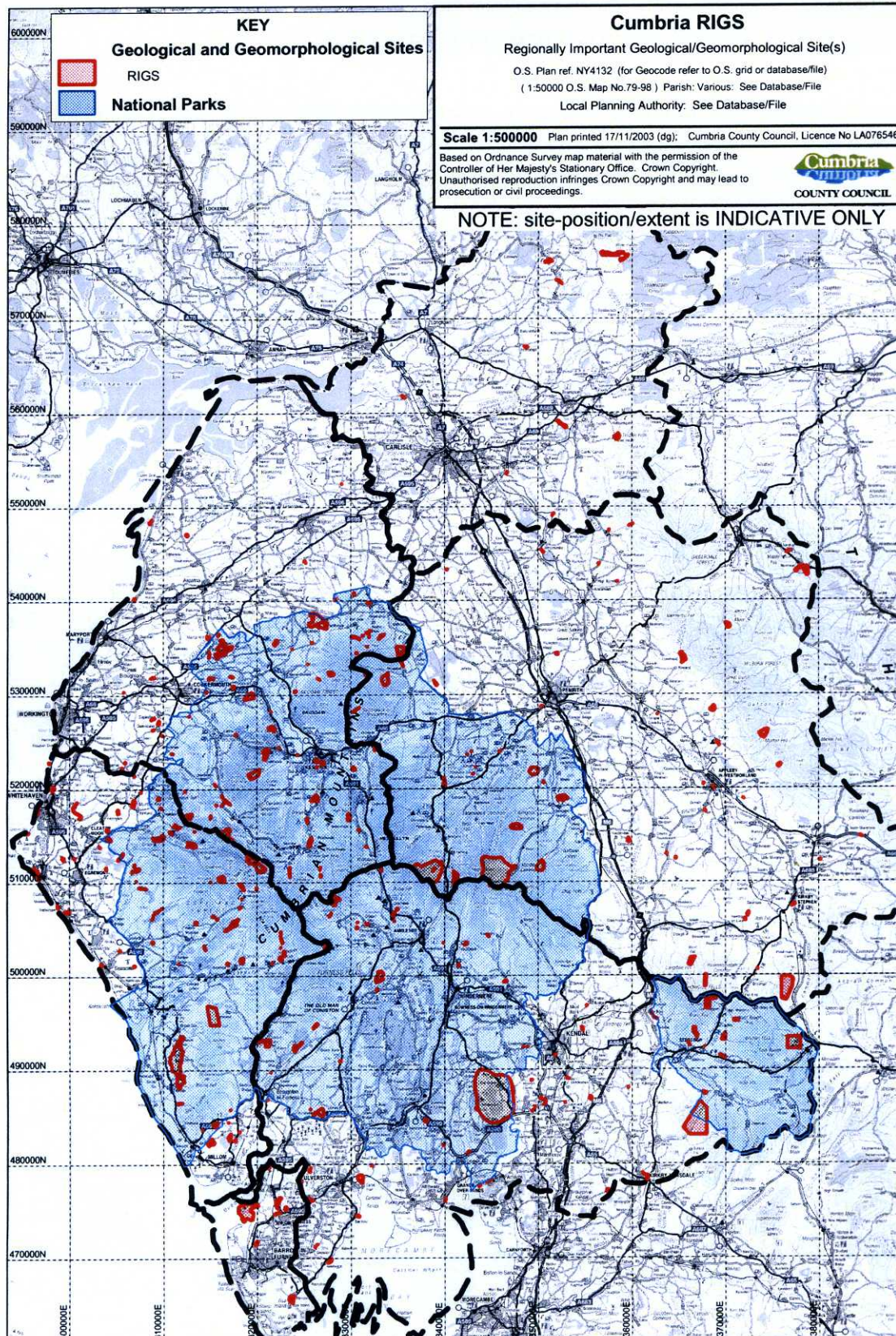
INTRODUCTION

Geodiversity is defined in terms of the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils, soils and natural processes forming the earth's surface and its structure and the importance of ensuring their protection. Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPs) are strategic plans which are being developed throughout the UK to safeguard UK geodiversity. The corresponding concept of Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs), which are committed to preserving and protecting the number and variety of plants and animals, which are currently being implemented, has already benefited regional and national biodiversity within the UK. (Burek & Potter, 2002).

The success of LBAPs in providing a strategic plan to safeguard the biodiversity of the UK at both regional and national level has led to a Natural England project to create corresponding LGAPs with the aim of conserving, protecting and enhancing the geological diversity of the UK. The geological, geomorphological and landscape value of Cumbria is an important aspect of the economic life of the area.

The interrelationship of biodiversity and geodiversity is central to the development of many LGAPs. Many geodiversity sites, both of regional and national importance, coincide with sites of biological importance and it is frequently the geology and geomorphology of an area which underpins the biodiversity and supports the habitat. Only by properly recording these sites of geological or geomorphological importance can the biodiversity be fully protected (Cox 2004). LGAPs provide a framework within which all geodiversity sites of both national (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and region sites (Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS)) within a region are considered.

Many regions of the UK now have an LGAP, including Cheshire and Lancashire. The Greater Manchester RIGS group has identified the need for an LGAP covering the ten unitary authorities which make up Greater Manchester. The importance of developing an LGAP for Cumbria cannot be stressed enough. Tourism accounts for a considerable proportion of the local Cumbrian economy and the rich geodiversity is a key element in this respect.



BACKGROUND TO GEODIVERSITY PLANNING

Recent Government policy in relation to general conservation issues has been advanced through the 1994 Planning Policy Guidance Note 9 on Nature Conservation. Important revisions were made to this policy in 2005 with the publication of Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS 9); Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.

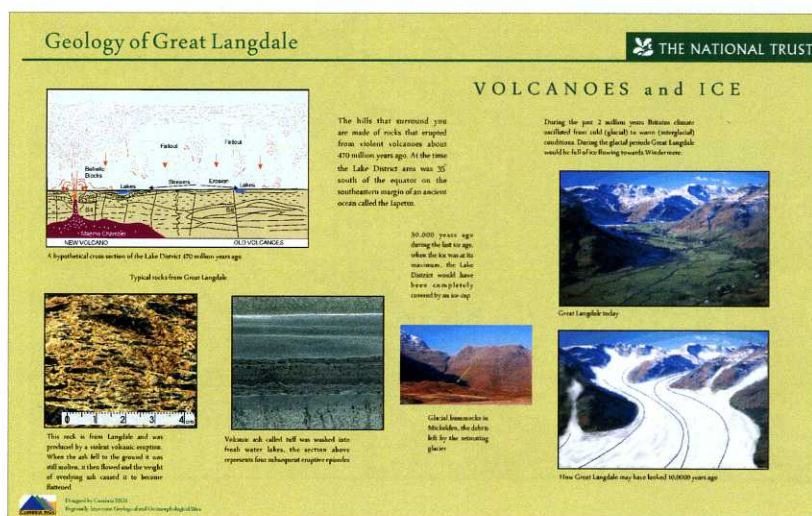
Key principles of PPS 9 include the following:

1. The need for local authorities to base development plan policies and planning decisions upon "up to date" information about the environmental characteristics of their area. These characteristics should include the relevant biodiversity and geological resources of the area. In reviewing environmental characteristics local authorities should assess the potential to sustain and enhance these resources.
2. The requirement for local development frameworks to "indicate the location of designated site of importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, making clear distinctions between the hierarchy of international, national, regional and locally designated sites".
3. Placing greater emphasis on geological conservation than had previously been the case. Many councils are already including Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites in their planning strategies. One example in Cheshire County Council which has included geodiversity, as well as biodiversity within their County Council Community Strategy draft.

A National UK Geodiversity Action Plan has recently been developed and is awaiting adoption which is anticipated by the end of 2008. Briefly, its objectives are:

- making geodiversity relevant to the way we work and live.
- providing a sense of place and contributing to the decisions we make about a sustainable future for our environment for both people and nature.

LGAPs are a vital prerequisite to make such aims and objectives achievable.



STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPs) are strategic plans which are being developed throughout the UK to safeguard the UK's geodiversity.

LGAPs may vary between regions. These variations are a reflection of the different challenges faced in the geo-conservation of each area. Natural England has recently encouraged a model developed by Burek & Potter (2005) to guide the development of LGAPs which, whilst remaining individually tailored to the requirements of the local region, aims to ensure the effectiveness of each LGAP within the National context. The Cumbrian LGAP prepared by Cumbria RIGS is being developed in accordance with the Burek and Potter model.

The Cumbria LGAP covers the Cumbria County Council Area which comprises the six district councils of Allerdale, Barrow, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland. It represents the area adopted in 1992 by Cumbria RIGS Group and is co-incident with the area covered by Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Some Cumbria RIGS registered sites cross the boundary of, or lie in, other administrative areas hence consideration will be given to the objectives of LGAPs in these neighboring areas. It will be necessary, therefore to liaise with conservation and environmental groups not only within Cumbria but with those in adjacent areas.

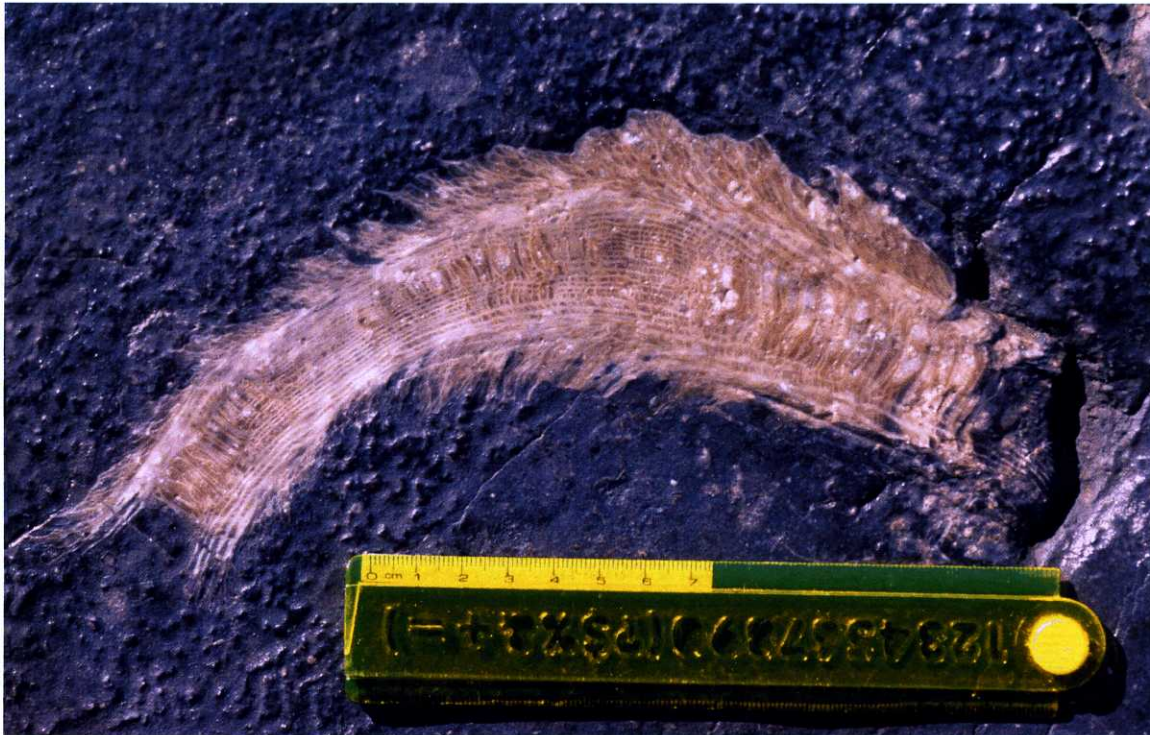
Cumbria RIGS Group has strong links with the two local geological groups in Cumbria, the Westmoreland Geological Society and the Cumberland Geological Society. These linkages involve both amateur and professional geologists contributing very effectively to bring the considerable local geological knowledge into the development and the sustenance of the proposed Cumbria LGAP. Both societies will be included consultees in this exercise.

The majority of the population of Cumbria live in semi-rural or rural areas and have regular contact with geodiversity and outstanding landscape. Hence geodiversity is immediately accessible to many. To encourage its conservation is a key goal. The links between geodiversity, tourism and the economy of the region is undeniable.

The Cumbria LGAP sets out a framework of objectives and targets to progress geodiversity conservation in the region through a network of interested parties and organizations. The lead partner in the implementation of the plan is the Cumbria RIGS Group whose role is the successful conservation of the local geological and geomorphological heritage. Cumbria RIGS Group forms part of a national movement-UKRIGS. A number of key objectives intrinsic to the proposed LGAP are set out briefly as follows;

1. Carry out a geodiversity audit of Cumbria,
2. Develop a continuous strategic approach to partnership and involvement in the Local Geodiversity Action Plan,
3. Disseminate geodiversity information,
4. Raise awareness of the geodiversity of the region,

5. Monitor and update the Cumbria LGAP,
6. Establish a sustainable conservation and management programme to ensure the long term protection of the geodiversity of Cumbria.



A rugose coral – *Siphonophyllia* sp. At Far Arnside RIGS

GEOCONSERVATION IN CUMBRIA (CUMBRIA RIGS GROUP)

In 1992 Cumbria Rigs Group was initiated to promote a wider appreciation of geological and geomorphological sites in Cumbria other than those covered by statute (e.g. SSSI's). Cumbria RIGS Group is a member group of UK RIGS which functions at national level to develop conservation and an understanding of the educational and recreational value of the geological environment.

The Cumbria LGAP will provide a strategy which will contribute to and shape the activities of the Group and its partners.

The principle aims and objectives of Cumbria RIGS Group include,

1. To identify, survey, record and subsequently to recommend conservation measures for geological and geomorphological sites in Cumbria,
2. To raise public awareness of the importance of preserving, protecting and maintaining such sites,
3. To publicise the value of geological and geomorphological sites,
4. To forge links with educational establishments by promoting sites of particular teaching value,
5. To establish links with like-minded individuals and organizations.

The Groups activities thus far have involves liaison with adjacent RIGS groups such as Lancashire, Cheshire, West Midlands and the UKRIGS Association. Recent activities

include participation in the development of the Northwest Geodiversity Partnership. The key objectives of the partnership are to facilitate and to review the delivery in Northwest England of;

- Local Geodiversity Action Plans, and
- LGAP objectives and targets.

The Cumbria RIGS Group currently has some 270 refereed and registered sites in its collection. New sites are being surveyed and added to this collection and a long term monitoring exercise is currently taking place whereby field visits are made to existing sites to assess their continuing value within the terms of our objectives. The establishment of educational contacts with schools and colleges and the promotion of the recreational value of the geological environment are important objectives.

The LGAP will provide a context for the group to raising public awareness of geodiversity and geological heritage of the region. This will be achieved through a combination of educational and community based projects including extending the range of field guides and interpretation boards.

THE PLAN AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

The Cumbria LGAP sets out a strategy with the aim of conserving, protecting and enhancing the geological and geomorphological heritage of Cumbria for the future. It is envisaged that the plan will enable those parties with a common interest in, or obligation to, the geodiversity of the region to work collectively towards these aims.

The geological heritage of Cumbria contributes to the regions economic and social history and to its landscape. Therefore, there are likely to be a large number of potentially interested partners including Cumbria County Council, the Cumbrian District Councils, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, the National Trust, English Heritage, landowners, the utilities, the extraction industries and the general public. The successful implementation of the Cumbria LGAP requires that all stakeholders work collectively to achieve the targets that are relevant to them.

The development of this LGAP is the initial stage of a long term geoconservation project in Cumbria. The next stage is to begin the implementation of the plan and to seek the funding necessary to achieve the aims of the plan and appoint staff to co-ordinate the many processes involved.

Ultimately, it is envisaged that invitations will be sent out to join the wider LGAP working group to a range of organizations and individuals. From this a smaller steering group comprising the lead partner and representatives from the main stakeholder groups will be established to co-ordinate and effect the implementation of the plan.

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PREPARED BY CUMBRIA RIGS GROUP

Table 1

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	ACTIONS
Develop a co-ordinated strategic approach to partnership and involvement in the Cumbria LGAP	1. Produce Cumbria LGAP.	1.a Produce draft LGAP for consultation, 1.b Review consultation responses, 1.c Publish CUMBRIA LGAP.
Carry out Geodiversity audit for Cumbria	2. Establish stakeholder group.	2.a Identify local stakeholders, 2.b Invite expressions of interest, 2.c Arrange stakeholder briefing.
	1. Complete database of Geodiversity Resources (to include statutory and regional sites e.g. SSSI, RIGS).	1.a Review existing records, 1.b Identify additional sites for survey, 1.c Review survey programme.
	2. Continue RIGS recording system.	2. Record new RIGS sites and monitor existing locations.
	3. Carry out audit of geodiversity skills and resources.	3. Identify organisations and individuals who could deliver LGAP actions and targets.
Disseminate geodiversity information	Make database accessible to a wide range of users.	1.a Produce database on compact disc, 1.b Place database material on Cumbria RIGS web site, 1.c Prepare and maintain register of digitised RIGS approved sites.

Table 2

OBJECTIVE	TARGET	ACTIONS
Raise awareness of geodiversity in region	1. The inclusion of geodiversity information in local policies and plans.	1.a Liase with local authorities, 1.b Identify and liase with other organisations.
	2. Promote geodiversity within the wider community.	2.a Identify appropriate local businesses, community groups etc, 2.b Identify sites where information boards and trail guide literature could be located, 2.c Identify events where geodiversity could be promoted, 2.d Identify market for special events such as guided walks or talks could take place, 2. e Establish links with schools and other educational establishments.
Monitor and update LGAP	1. Establish monitoring and review programme for LGAP on a four year cycle.	1. Stake holder group to agree and publish suitable programme to monitor and review Cumbria LGAP.
	2. Continue monitoring programme for RIGS sites.	2. Cumbria RIGS Group to prepare suitable programme to manage designated sites in collaboration with other stake holders.
Explore conservation and management programme to ensure long term protection of geodiversity resources	To be established in principle during 2009.	Key potential stakeholders: Cumbria RIGS Group, Cumbria County Council, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Natural England.