

Scottish Geodiversity Forum Annual Report 2014



The Forum made good progress in 2014 of furthering our aims of widening the profile of geodiversity and influencing national and local policies. We have seen lively engagement by Forum members in projects and events, supported the resurgence of Scotland's three Geoparks, and worked to promote and implement Scotland's Geodiversity Charter.

Scotland's Geodiversity Charter

The Charter, published by the Forum in June 2012, sets out the importance of Scotland's geodiversity and a vision that our geodiversity is better recognised, safe guarded and managed for the future. A further six signatories were added in 2014, bringing the total to 57 organisations that support the vision of the Charter. The Charter Working Group, which comprises Forum members with representatives of the Scottish Government, the British Geological Survey, Scottish Natural Heritage and Visit Scotland, focused on tourism in 2014. We published a short paper on tourism (available from the Forum website), highlighting the potential of Scotland's geodiversity to increase visitor numbers and enhance the visitor experience throughout the country. Visit Scotland are now doing more to promote Scotland's three Geoparks on their website, and are keen to take forward further initiatives. The Forum and Scottish Natural Heritage are planning an important Sharing Good Practice event on geodiversity and tourism on Wednesday 25 November 2015.

The Charter has a proposed five-year span, and the Forum has started to explore with the Scottish Government and other agencies what we can do to build on the Charter beyond 2017.

We have supported the efforts of the Geological Society of London, through their Geoconservation Committee chaired by Rob Butler, to change the culture of rock sampling and coring for research, which sometimes is done indiscriminately and without permission at important outcrops. The Geological Society has put ethical rock sampling at the core of their Code of Ethics for scientific publication, requiring all authors to confirm that rock samples used for research have been collected ethically. The Forum has prepared and consulted on a draft Ethical Rock Collection Policy for Scotland, which will draw together and publicise existing policy and advice.



Hugh Miller & the Cruise of the Betsey

The Royal Scottish Geographical Society and the Friends of Hugh Miller chartered the traditional sailing boat *Leader* for a week in September 2014, to follow the journey of discovery taken by Hugh Miller in the summer of 1844 on the sail boat, the *Betsey*. The project, supported by the Forum, celebrated the life and achievements of a great Scot, a great scientist but also a remarkable observer of the social history of the time. On board *Leader* was a mix of geologists, geographers, artists, writers, ecologists, storytellers and musicians, aged 18 to 68. Geology, landscape, people and story were at the heart of the journey. Very successful linked public events were held in Cromarty and on the island of Eigg, and education materials were developed for both primary and secondary schools. Sponsored places for young artists and scientists ensured a vibrant intergenerational & interdisciplinary mix

of participants on board the sailing boat, where both young and old greatly benefited from shared experiences and perspectives. Working in partnership with the Isle of Luing Community Trust, the Forum has chartered *Leader* for a second voyage of geological discovery in summer 2015.

Write Right Conference – 22 November 2014

This one-day conference was organised by the Forum and the School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh. It focused on writing about geodiversity, and encouraged sharing of experiences, aiming to inspire new insights and work towards top-quality writing that informs, interprets and inspires. The conference was well attended, with a lively and diverse audience of about 60 people from across the country. The conference keynote was delivered by writer and naturalist Kenny Taylor, who encouraged us to embrace our own senses, including a sense of enthusiasm for geology and the excitement of scientific inquiry – past, present and potential future.

An excellent range of workshops, seven in total, then allowed participants to explore issues further, covering a diverse range of topics including writing for different audiences, social media, poetry and best practice in writing interpretation panels.

Fossil Five Poll

The Fossil Five Poll has been one of Forum's main initiatives for 2014-15. It was proposed by Forum member Al McGowan as a follow-on for a national poll that selected Scotland's Big 5 - iconic wild animals, but all extant species! We wanted to highlight the range of fossil animals and plants found in Scotland, representing a wide range of ages and some very important and beautiful specimens.



A group of Forum members chose a short list of 16 fossil groups for the poll, and the public have been asked to choose their favourite five via the scottishgeology.com website. Science writer and Forum member Lara Reid was instrumental in preparing brief, accessible descriptions of each group and in promoting the poll widely via twitter. The poll will run until March 2015.

Web & Social Media

The Forum continued to update and maintain our website (www.scottishgeodiversityforum.org). New developments included updates on the Charter and a new "Who Can Help?" section to highlight the organisations who are able to offer support and advice on geodiversity.

Improvements to scottishgeology.com included a new section on Scotland's fossils to support the Fossil Five Poll and a "Where to go" map that highlights the wide range of leaflets, information boards and visitor attractions across Scotland where people can find out more about Scotland's geodiversity.

Both websites and our Facebook page were updated reasonably regularly with news items and events. A new initiative for 2014 was the development of our twitter account ([@ScotGeodForum](https://twitter.com/ScotGeodForum)), which is managed by Forum member Lara Reid and has proved successful in engaging individuals and organisations in our work.

Other developments – Geoparks, GeoConservation UK and the wider picture

Interest and awareness of geodiversity does seem to be flourishing in the UK and despite slow progress and lack of resources in many areas, there are many interesting new initiatives that involved members of the Forum. The three Scottish Geoparks took big steps forward in 2014, both individually and in their ability to work together, for example in organising a Geopark Open Day in Edinburgh. The Forum continues to engage in the wider UK scene through GeoConservation UK and the Geological Society of London, and it is a measure of our success that initiatives of our Forum often feed into developments elsewhere.

The continued success of the Forum depends on the engagement of our members, and the lively and varied debate and sharing of information through our email group is testament to the range of activity that is happening across Scotland, much of it relying on voluntary effort, goodwill and working together.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee, elected at the AGM on 8 March 2014, is Angus Miller, chair; Mike Browne, vice-chair; Hugh Lockhart, treasurer; Margaret Greene, membership secretary; ordinary members Seonaid Leishman (resigned 17 September), Sarah Stewart, Beverly Bergman, Simon Cuthbert, Andrew McMillan, John Gordon, Neil Clark and Jennifer Roberts. Jim Blair was co-opted on 17 September. Organisations are represented by Colin MacFadyen (Scottish Natural Heritage), Rachel Hay (Royal Scottish Geographical Society – replaced Joyce Gilbert), Katie Whitbread (British Geological Survey). The post of Secretary, which had remained vacant for a year, was filled with the co-option of Gavin Eardley as Secretary and Kate Saunders as Assistant Secretary on 17 September. The committee conducted most of its business by email, and met three times during the year.

Accounts summary

Opening balance 31/12/2013	£289.19
Income 2014	
SNH grant – support for Nov 2014 conference	£800.00
Nov 2014 conference income	£156.00
Betsey project	£770.00
Total income	£1726.00
Expenditure 2014	
Office bearers expenses	£97.80
Meeting expenses – AGM & Exec Committee	£189.95
Betsey project	£770.00
Total expenditure	£1057.75
Balance 31/12/2014	£957.44

Note: Payments for costs associated with the November 2014 Conference totalling £738.68 were made in early 2015 and are therefore not included in the above accounts.