

Scottish Geodiversity Forum Annual Report 2015



The Forum had a busy and interesting year, with several initiatives that took forward our aims of widening the profile of geodiversity and influencing national and local policies. We organised the Fossil Five poll, celebrating Scotland's fossil diversity, and collaborated with Scottish Natural Heritage and other partners to organise a significant and well-attended event promoting the potential input of Scotland's geology to the tourism industry. We continued our work to implement Scotland's Geodiversity Charter, and celebrated the new UNESCO Global Geopark status of Scotland's Geoparks.



Fossil Five Poll

The Fossil Five Poll was one of Forum's main initiatives for 2014-15, 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.

The general public were invited to vote for their favourite five fossil groups, from a short list of 16. Science writer and Forum member Lara Reid was instrumental in the success of this initiative, preparing brief, accessible descriptions of each group and helping to promote the poll widely.

We helped organise a fossil open day at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh, which was supported by a wide range of specialists from universities and museums and well attended by the public.

Scotland's top 5 fossils, as voted for by hundreds of members of the public, were announced in an awards ceremony on 24th March at the Hunterian in Glasgow. Cllr Phil Greene, Baillie of the City of Glasgow, awarded certificates to supporters and champions of the top five fossil groups, which were:

1. Devonian fish
2. Jurassic dinosaurs
3. Early Tetrapods
4. Trilobites
5. Carboniferous trees



Scotland's Geodiversity Charter

We continued our work on promoting Scotland's Geodiversity Charter, which was published by the Forum in 2012. The Charter sets out the importance of Scotland's geodiversity and a vision that our geodiversity is better recognised, safe guarded and managed for the future. It has the support of 60 organisations.

The Charter Working Group, which comprises Forum members with representatives of the Scottish Government, the British Geological Survey, Scottish Natural Heritage and Visit Scotland, continued to meet regularly. Progress was made on boosting the profile of Scotland's Geoparks on visitscotland.com.

We published a further update on progress with the Charter in March 2015 and circulated this to all signatories. Discussions took place on how to take the Charter forward beyond its proposed five-year span, and the Charter Working Group agreed to refresh and republish the Charter in 2017 with a conference to celebrate progress so far.

The Forum prepared and consulted on an Ethical Rock Collection Policy for Scotland, with the support of the Geological Society of London's Geoconservation Committee. This drew together and publicised existing policy and advice. The new policy was finalised and launched in April 2015, and is supported by the *Rock Damage Scotland* Facebook page that encourages the community to share and highlight examples of good and bad practice.

UNESCO Geopark status

The Forum was delighted to celebrate and promote the new UNESCO Geopark status achieved by two of Scotland's Geoparks – Northwest Highlands and Shetland – in November 2015. This is the first new UNESCO designation of its kind to be established in over 40 years and puts Global Geoparks alongside UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. Lochaber Geopark moved quickly to join the global network and hopes to be confirmed as a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2017.

Sharing Good Practice event on geology and tourism

A Sharing Good Practice event in November 2015, organised by Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forum, created a buzz about the potential for Scotland's landscape to build on its reputation as a world-class visitor attraction. The event was well attended, especially by tourist guides who work face-to-face with Scotland's visitors. Many of these guides are members of the Scottish Tourist Guides Association, and in studying for their Blue Badge qualification received some introductory training in Scotland's geology. Their experience with visitors though has left them hungry for more information, and the event was a great opportunity to increase their knowledge, network with organisations such as the Geoparks, and become inspired by the potential to include more about the underpinnings of the landscape in their tours.

Hugh Miller & the Testimony of the Rocks

The Forum continued our work with partners including the Friends of Hugh Miller, to draw inspiration from and celebrate the work of Hugh Miller. The *Testimony of the Rocks* journey took place in June, a voyage in the traditional sailing boat *Leader* with a mix of geologists (including several students), geographers, artists, writers, ecologists, storytellers and musicians. They sailed by Mull, Shuna, Jura, Oronsay, the Garvellachs and ended the week with a fantastic and well-attended community event at the Atlantic Islands Centre on Luing. Solid connections were formed and built on between many different organisations, and strong links with artists that, along with last year's journey the *Cruise of the Betsey*, will lead to a series of exhibitions and events.

Web & Social Media

The Forum continued to update and maintain our websites www.scottishgeodiversityforum.org and scottishgeology.com with regular news updates. We made use of Facebook and Twitter (@ScotGeodForum) to engage with a wide range of individuals and organisations.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee, elected at the AGM on 24 March 2015, is Angus Miller, chair; Mike Browne, vice-chair; Gavin Eardley, secretary; Kate Saunders, assistant secretary; Hugh Lockhart, treasurer; Margaret Greene, membership secretary; ordinary members Sarah Stewart, Beverly Bergman, Simon Cuthbert, Andrew McMillan, John Gordon, Neil Clark Jennifer Roberts and Jim Blair. Organisations are represented by Colin MacFadyen (Scottish Natural Heritage), Rachel Hay (Royal Scottish Geographical Society), Katie Whitbread (British Geological Survey). The committee conducted its business mostly by email, and met twice in 2015.

Accounts

Opening Balance 31/12/2014		957.44
Income 2015		
SNH grant	800.00	
Testimony of the Rocks project	3,810.00	
Grant from Edinburgh Geological Society	125.00	
Grant from Geological Society of Glasgow	125.00	
Total Income		4,860.00
Expenditure 2015		
Testimony of the Rocks project	3,820.00	
Conferences & Meetings	743.68	
Charter Newsletter	248.00	
Misc	78.80	
Total Expenditure		4,890.48
Balance 31/12/2015		926.96