

Scottish Geodiversity Forum Annual Report 2016



The Forum was active in promoting Scotland's Geodiversity Charter and taking forward various initiatives. We organised a very successful writing competition that promoted Scotland's geodiversity and the legacy of Hugh Miller. The first Arran Geofest was well-attended and has led to further partnership activity on the island.

The Forum hosted the UK-wide Annual Geoconservation Gathering in Edinburgh in October and became a member of Scottish Environment LINK. The year finished with the beginnings of an important new initiative, following the award of a £10,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for our project *Revealing the stories in the rocks: raising awareness of Scotland's outstanding geoheritage*.

Hugh Miller Writing Competition

This competition invited entries inspired by the geological and landscape writings of Hugh Miller, Scotland's celebrated self-taught geologist. We received 37 entries in three categories – fiction, non-fiction and poetry. The judging panel were greatly impressed by the high quality of the pieces submitted. Entrants were from across the UK, and abroad too, perhaps thanks to the dissemination of information on Twitter, and included some well-known, previously published names. The competition was organised by Lara Reid and Angus Miller of the Forum, in collaboration with partners The Friends of Hugh Miller, Dynamic Earth, Lochaber Geopark, Scottish Centre for Geopoetics, St Andrews University Geobus and Edinburgh Geological Society.

A well-attended Awards Ceremony was hosted by The Friends of Hugh Miller in Cromarty, on 14 May 2016. Twelve awards were given – 1st-3rd in prose and poetry, highly commended in prose and poetry, and two under-16 winners. Our thanks to the competition partners who donated a range of high-quality prizes. Perhaps the most successful element of the competition was its appeal to members of the public (journalists, writers and poets) who would not normally engage with geodiversity. We hope that the competition will also spark renewed interest in Miller and his work.

Arran Geofest, 18-20 March 2016

A wide range of partners from Arran and the wider geological community came together to organise this new venture, which comprised 8 guided walks, two family drop-in activity sessions and two talks held over a March weekend. Feedback from participants was good, and most events were very well-attended. Connections were made with the Lochranza Centre, which has an excellent UK-wide reputation for geology field trips at school and university level, and is now run as a Community Interest Company. Several local and national organisations were represented at a discussion on the prospect of Arran becoming a Geopark, and further planning and discussion on this has since taken place.

Geoconservation Annual Gathering, 28 October 2016

The Forum hosted the Geoconservation Annual Gathering, an event organised by the Geoconservation Committee of the Geological Society of London. The meeting was held in Edinburgh and was attended by 46 people from across the UK. The theme was *Local geosites for people and conservation* and the meeting aimed to bring together key stakeholders and those working in geoconservation to discuss the value of local sites, review what is going across the UK and encourage more activity and wider involvement from relevant policymakers, local government and the wider geological community.

Afterwards, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh hosted a Civic Reception in the City Chambers. This was an opportunity to recognise the city's unique position in the establishment of modern geology, and the richly diverse geology of Edinburgh; it also celebrated the City of Edinburgh Council's recent designation of 30 geodiversity sites as Local Nature Conservation Sites in the City Local Development Plan.

Every rolled pebble a casket...



Rippled sea-grey silk hewn from Atlantic islands skims the still water.

Atlantic Islands haiku by Elizabeth Pickett,
inspired by Hugh Miller.

Scotland's Geodiversity Charter

We continued our work promoting Scotland's Geodiversity Charter, 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, safeguarded and managed for the future. It has been signed by 61 organisations. We published a third update on progress in June 2016.

The Charter Working Group, which comprises Forum members with representatives of the Scottish Government, the British Geological Survey, Scottish Natural Heritage and other partners, continued to meet regularly. Discussion began on refreshing and taking the Charter forward beyond its original five-year span, and planning a major Charter conference in November 2017.

Connections with other organisations

One of the strengths of the Forum is acting as a Scotland-wide network that encourages sharing of information between individual members and relevant organisations, including Scottish Natural Heritage, the British Geological Survey, Scotland's Geoparks, local geological and geoconservation organisations, universities and museums. The Forum also connects with the wider geoconservation community in the UK through representation on the Executive Committee of GeoConservation UK and the Geoconservation Committee of the Geological Society of London.

In November 2016 the Forum became the 36th member of Scottish Environment LINK, the network for the voluntary sector environment organisations in Scotland.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee, elected at the AGM on 30 January 2016, 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, Jim Blair and Lara Reid. Organisations are represented by Colin MacFadyen (Scottish Natural Heritage), Mike Robinson (Royal Scottish Geographical Society), Katie Whitbread (British Geological Survey) and Hermione Cockburn (Dynamic Earth). The committee conducted its business mostly by email, and met four times in 2016.

Accounts

Opening Balance 31/12/2015	926.96
Income 2016	
SNH grant – Charter	800.00
Arran Geofest	368.50
Donations from membership	132.50
SNH grant – Fossil Code promotion (March 2017)	600.00
Friends of Hugh Miller grant – Stanza event (March 2017)	200.00
Edinburgh Geological Society grant – Stanza event (March 2017)	200.00
Total Income	2301.00
Expenditure 2016	
Arran Geofest	533.72
Hugh Miller Writing Competition	51.35
Website costs	58.80
Charter Newsletter	248.00
Office bearers' expenses (travel / postage)	286.69
Membership of Scottish Environment LINK	100.00
Total Expenditure	1278.56
Balance 31/12/2016	1949.40

Scotland's Geodiversity Charter Update Summer 2016

Scotland's Geodiversity Charter highlights the importance of Scotland's geodiversity and calls for it to be safeguarded and managed appropriately for this and future generations. The Charter's 60 signatory organisations have committed to maintain and enhance Scotland's geodiversity and recognise the contribution it makes to many aspects of society. This is the third update published since the Charter was launched in June 2012.

Further information and case studies are available at <https://scotlandgeodiversityforum.org/charter>
Angus Miller, Chair, Scottish Geodiversity Forum 0131 555 5488 chair@scotlandgeodiversityforum.org

UK-wide Geoconservation Annual Gathering, Edinburgh - Friday 28 October 2016

Local geosites for people and conservation
Across the UK there are thousands of Local Geodiversity Sites (LGS), important places that conserve and celebrate local geodiversity. These are places that are often valued and well-used by people, where we can find out about the geological history of our area, and how this influences nature, land use, building style and the 'sense of place' that all local communities have.

Local sites across the UK are labelled in different ways, and progress towards networks of designated sites is patchy across the country. Some areas have hundreds of sites that are designated, monitored and celebrated by active geoconservation groups, but in other places awareness of the importance of local sites is non-existent.

The UK's Geoconservation Annual Gathering comes to Edinburgh this October, with a focus on local, practical geoconservation. This is a great opportunity to

- find out more about the value of local sites;
- explore case studies including Geodiversity Audits and how Local Authorities in Scotland are designating Local Geodiversity Sites;
- network with the people and organisations, including local voluntary groups, who are involved in identifying, monitoring and celebrating the value of local sites.

The meeting is organised by the Geological Society of London's Geoconservation Committee, the Scottish Geodiversity Forum and GeoConservationUK. We hope it will encourage more activity in Scotland and wider involvement of the geological community.
www.geosoc.org.uk/Geoconservation-Annual-Gathering-2016

Geodiversity audit on a shoestring – just add local expert volunteers

Assessing Local Geodiversity Sites doesn't need to be time-consuming or expensive, as a recent audit in North Lanarkshire has demonstrated. Two retired volunteers, Paul Carter and Mike Browne, started meeting for monthly walks, and over the course of four years they catalogued 50 potential local sites, recording the geodiversity value and key features. They focused on existing Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). North Lanarkshire has over 350 of these already designated. Since these existing sites contain a good range of the geodiversity features of the area, this provided a convenient and quick way of auditing the geodiversity using volunteers. Sites with important local geodiversity will now be included in Local Plans, and a Geodiversity Action Plan has been included in the Biodiversity Action Plan for 2015–2020.

www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=30026

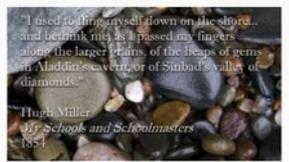


New life for the former Duffield Sand Quarry, Cumbernauld as a Local Geodiversity Site © Mike Browne

Celebrating Hugh Miller

Hugh Miller (1802–1856) was a self-taught pioneering Scottish geologist, folklorist and social campaigner. He began working life as a jobbing stonemason, and went on to achieve great acclaim as a national newspaper editor, church reformer and best-selling author on geology. Hugh Miller's legacy has inspired recent projects involving a wide range of partners including The Friends of Hugh Miller and the Scottish Geodiversity Forum. These have helped to promote Scotland's geodiversity in new and innovative ways.

The Hugh Miller Writing Competition concluded in March 2016, and invited prose and poetry entries inspired by the geological and landscape writings of Miller. The competition was a resounding success, with many entries not only sharing in the spirit of Hugh Miller but also extending his legacy. Nine winners were selected – among them a few well-known names and including two under-16s – and prizes were awarded at a ceremony in Crieff on 14 May 2016. The competition provided a unique way of engaging people with geodiversity, both on a local and national scale, and our winners certainly embraced the challenge of writing about our country's geological heritage in new and interesting ways. The winning entries are available to read online at: www.scotlandgeology.com/hughmiller



"I tried to dig myself down on the subject of Hugh Miller and his fossil fish bones along the larger part of the length of the Atlantic sea-ridge, or of Simbad's valley of diamonds."
Hugh Miller
My Schools and Schoolmasters
NS1

"You touched the cold enamel scales of *Osteolepis macrolepidoides*, cracked open from its sea-washed nodule. A story opened, a page in an ancient book, a foliate whispered from the rocks: You, part seraphim, part religious scientist. May be it is not only the Earth that holds deep time and folded complexities but also ourselves."
From "Learn to make a right use of your eyes" by Jane Verburg
First prize in prose, The Hugh Miller Writing Competition 2015–2016