Scottish Geodiversity Forum Annual Report 2013



The Forum has had a busy 2013, successfully furthering our aims of widening the profile of geodiversity and influencing national and local policies. We have engaged with a wide variety of partners on numerous consultations, events and issues, and have worked to promote and implement Scotland's Geodiversity Charter.

The Forum was proud to be the UK nomination for the UNESCO Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation 2013, in recognition of our work in establishing the Charter; we were ultimately not awarded the prize, but our nomination was recognition in itself. There was welcome news for all three Scottish Geoparks in 2013 when they received short-term Scottish Government funding.

Scotland's Geodiversity Charter

Good progress has been made in 2013 in continuing to promote the Charter, and encouraging signatories to work in partnership to implement it. 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.

During 2013, the number of Charter signatories increased from 35 to 51, including key national organisations such as Historic Scotland, the University of Glasgow and the Geological Society of London. Signatories now include 6 Local Authorities, with the addition of The Highland Council, West Lothian Council and Perth and Kinross Council during the year.

The Forum published a four-page update about the Charter, with news and additional case studies. All case studies, 24 in total, are now available on our website, with links to additional information.

The Charter Working Group, composed of Forum members with representatives of the Scottish Government, the British Geological Survey, Scottish Natural Heritage and Local Authorities, continued to meet regularly with a focus on engaging Local Authorities in the Charter. We published a short paper illustrating the contribution that Local Authorities can make to delivering the vision and objectives of the Charter, through ensuring much better integration of geodiversity in a range of existing activities and its recognition in development planning and policy. The paper is available on our website and was distributed with the Charter to all Local Authorities.



Sharing Good Practice Conference - 17 December 2013

Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forum organised a very successful Sharing Good Practice conference: Scotland's Geodiversity Charter – realising opportunities for communities, the economy, conservation and tourism. This was well attended, with over 50 delegates including several from organisations who had not previously engaged with the Charter. The Forum's patron, Iain Stewart kicked off the day with an inspiring keynote looking at the value and importance of geodiversity, followed by group discussions that explored a range of case studies, posing the question of what landowners/managers could do to implement the Charter.

In the afternoon, workshops explored this in more detail, with sessions on geodiversity audits, management of rock faces, landscape scale interpretation, biodiversity links and coastal geomorphology. The conference finished on a high with a beautiful and inspiring audiovisual presentation about the Bedrock Walk.

Strategic Priorities

The Forum Executive has given some consideration to our strategic priorities for the next few years, recognising that a small organisation with limited resources cannot do everything we might want to do. Discussions taken forward from the AGM in March 2013 have identified 6 priorities:

- 1. Implementation of Scotland's Geodiversity Charter: Work with partners to embed geodiversity into existing activities and develop new projects.
- 2. Geoconservation: Encourage all local authorities to carry out local site audits and include sites in local plans. Support local geoconservation groups through networking and events.
- 3. Education: Campaign for the establishment of new Earth science qualifications, made widely available in Scottish schools, at National and Higher level, and support and campaign for more Earth science teacher training at all levels. Promote opportunities and support lifelong learning in Earth science.

- 4. Interpretation: Work with other organisations to include accurate and meaningful geodiversity in their interpretation. Highlight available resources through central website.
- 5. Tourism: Work with VisitScotland, Geoparks and tourism organisations to promote Scotland's geodiversity as the foundation of our scenery; develop better awareness within the industry of existing interpretation and information, and work to develop training opportunities and more resources.
- 6. Develop the Forum; promote what we do and look for opportunities and funding to do more.

Engagement with other organisations

The Forum continued strong links with key national organisations such as GeoConservation UK (GCUK), Scottish Natural Heritage, the British Geological Survey and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS). These organisations have nominated representatives on the Forum Executive and the Charter Working Group, which helps facilitate good communication between them and support from them.

Our strong association with GCUK, which is chaired by the Forum's vice-chair Mike Browne, provides a useful link with the rest of the UK geoconservation network and the English Geodiversity Forum, established in 2013. There was some concern about the Geological Society of London's replacement of the Geoconservation Commission with a new Geoconservation Committee, which does not have representation from statutory bodies such as Scottish Natural Heritage. The Forum accepted an invitation to join the new committee, and will work with the Society on new initiatives including the status of Geological Conservation Review sites in Scotland.

RSGS has continued to coordinate a campaign highlighting the demise of geology qualifications in Scotland, with some success. The society, with input from the Forum, organised a very successful student conference in March 2013 that brought Higher Geology students from across Scotland together for the first time, interacting in workshops, debates and a fieldtrip with geologists from universities and industry. The Bedrock Walk, a five-day journey across the Highlands in July organised by the RSGS, was another successful collaborative venture, engaging with the landscape and inspiring new ways of thinking.

Planning and Biodiversity - consultations and engagement

The Forum responded to two major Scottish Government consultations, on Scottish Planning Policy and National Planning Framework 3; and on the National Marine Plan and proposed Marine Protected Areas network. Both these consultations took substantial amounts of time to absorb and respond to the contents of hundreds of pages of text. We were able to highlight positives in both consultations, in particular in the recognition of the importance of seabed geodiversity in the proposed MPA network. As a result of hard work by GeoConservation UK, the Forum and other organisations going back many years, there is increased recognition of the importance and role of geodiversity, but it still remains undervalued.

Following our engagement with the 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity in 2012, the Forum were invited to be represented on the Strategy Habitats & Species Group, one of 9 committees and groups working on governance, delivery and key topic areas. There are good opportunities here for us to highlight the role of geodiversity in ecosystems and in supporting biodiversity.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee, elected at the AGM on 2 March 2013, is composed of Angus Miller, chair; Mike Browne, vice-chair; Linda Mckee, treasurer; Margaret Greene, membership secretary and ordinary members Seonaid Leishman, Sarah Stewart, Simon Howard, Beverly Bergman, Simon Cuthbert, John Gordon and Andrew McMillan. Organisations are represented by Colin Macfadyen (SNH) and Joyce Gilbert (Royal Scottish Geographical Society). Neil Clark was coopted on to the Committee in November 2013. The post of Secretary remained vacant, following the resignation of Mihaela Newton at the AGM. The committee conducted most of its business by email, and met three times during the year including a full-day session in October.

Accounts summary

Opening balance 31/12/2012	£1045.72
Income 2013	
SNH support for 2012 conference	£800.00
Donations for Charter reprint	£630.00
Misc income, including £50 bank compensation	£87.76
Total income	£1517.76
Expenditure 2013	
Office bearers expenses	£38.29
2012 conference venue, etc	£1160.00
Printing - charter reprint and newsletter	£1076.00
Total expenditure	£2274.29
Balance 31/12/2013	£289.19