

A
Geodiversity Action Plan
for
Lancashire

Prepared
by
Lancashire RIGS Group

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Introduction

Geoconservation in Lancashire

The present County of Lancashire is the result of local boundary changes which took place in 1974 and 1998. It represents the area adopted by Lancashire RIGS Group which includes the two inset unitary authorities of Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen together with thirteen other local authorities. It is the core area adopted for this Plan though since geology and landscape are no respecters of political expediency, the Plan necessarily has been written with an eye to neighbouring areas as well.

Lancashire RIGS Group was set up in 1991 as part of a national initiative to identify geological sites and landforms of regional importance. Working closely with English Nature, the County Council, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and The Environment Agency, its activities are co-ordinated with those of other RIGS groups through a national steering body, the Association of UK RIGS Groups. Over 700 sites have been investigated in the county and recorded. Of these, approximately 100 have been designated as RIGS and recognised by the County Council as Geological Heritage Sites. These are indicated on the map (Fig. 1), which is available with details of each site to the four main partners above. The Group has also recently concluded a pilot scheme of interpretation including two field guides plus four interpretation boards, and has just completed its website at www.lancashirerigs.org.uk.

It was following a review of the first ten years work by the Group that it was realised that a strategic plan is needed both to structure the work of the Group over the next 3 to 5 years and to ensure that geoconservation is given at least the same prominence in the County as all other forms of conservation into the foreseeable future. Hence this Local Geodiversity Action Plan.



Rotational slip on Skirden Beck RIGS, Bolton by Bowland.

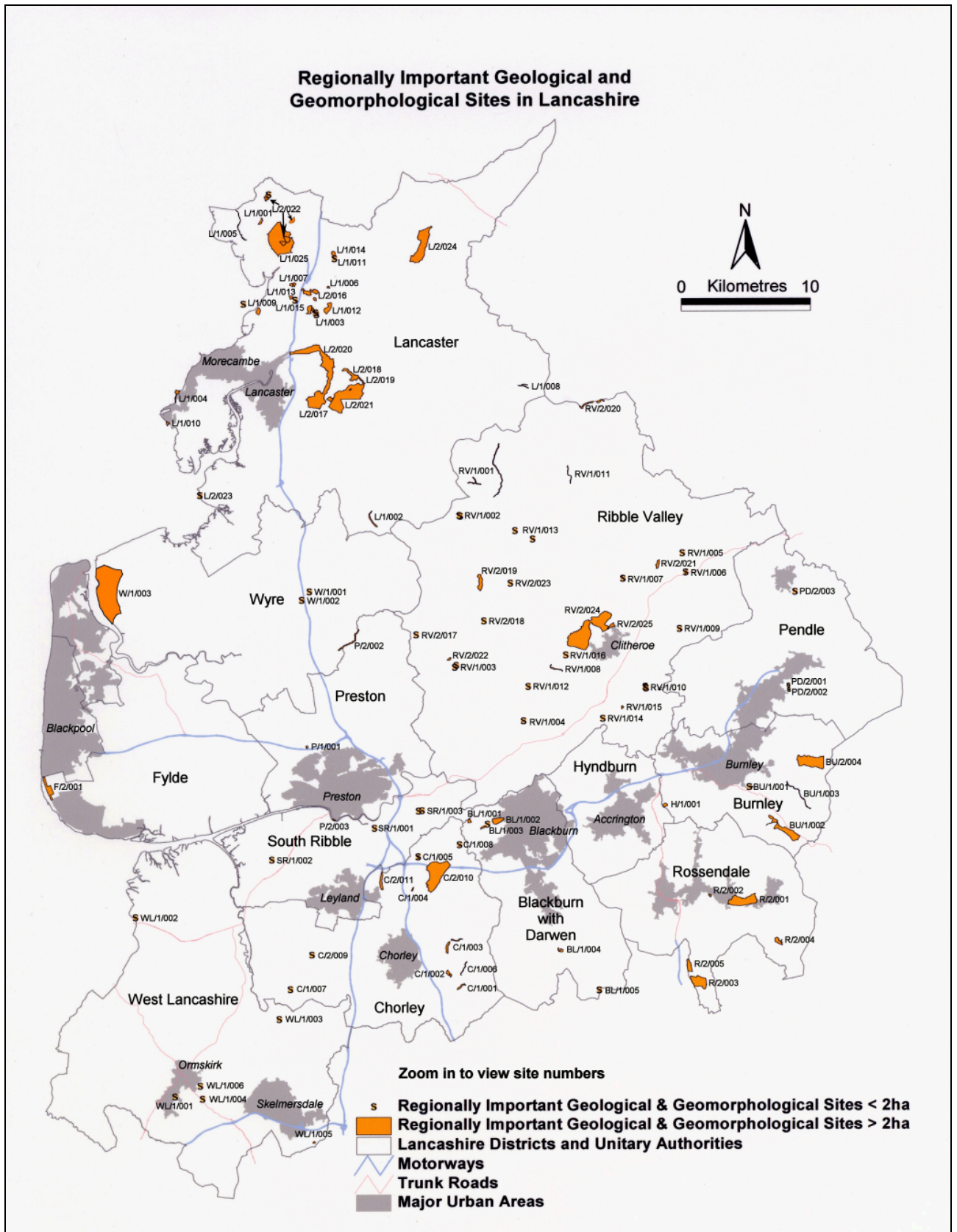


Fig. 1 Designated RIG sites in Lancashire

The need for an LGAP

The development of Biodiversity Action Plans has long been adopted as a necessary measure in order to safeguard the wildlife, habitats and ecology of Britain. Over the two to three years especially, the importance of the parallel concept of 'geodiversity' has been gathering weight and with it, a realisation of the need to put in place geoconservation strategies to safeguard our landscape and geological heritage. Hence the development of Local Geodiversity Actions Plans (LGAP). A fuller account of both the concept of geodiversity and approaches to writing LGAPs is available in the English Nature research document which can be viewed on the LGAPS website at www.lgaps.org.

Currently, between five and ten such plans are in various stages of completion up and down the country. Equally, the form adopted for these plans varies considerably although the English Nature documentation discusses desirable components for successful plans. Unsurprisingly, many plans (BAPS as well as LGAPS) are strongly rooted in the 'sites' that form the core localities where the respective areas of interest can be seen and investigated. These sites have typically been identified as being special in some way and important in geodiversity terms at various levels, local to international.

Cross section through infilled delta channel at Denham Hill quarry RIGS, Chorley.



Combined RIGS and Biological Heritage Site, Cross Hill Quarry, Clitheroe.

In considering an appropriate approach to geoconservation in Lancashire, it has become obvious that restricting attention largely to the narrow confines of sites would be to miss much of the significance of those sites. Rather, there is a need to see *as a whole* the physical landscape as the end result of the interaction between geology and many geomorphic processes. This physical landscape then provides a platform upon which all biological activity takes place and interacts with seamlessly. (Such a perspective simply

states an obvious rationale that binds together the work of all conservationists, whatever their more specific interests and expertise.) Individual sites of geological or geomorphological interest are essentially *exemplars* of the materials and processes that have formed the wider landscape though they have usually been particularly identified because they possess some special quality in this regard.



Interpretation board at Longridge Fell car park which explores the links between geology and landscape.

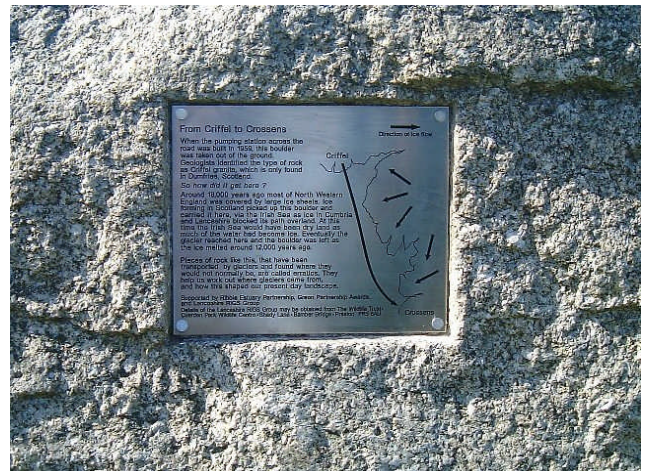
Identifying landscape units that will form the key elements of geoconservation policy lies at the heart of this Plan though it is an approach which chimes well with the already established notions of distinctive landscapes developed by the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the County Council. We believe that it is the geology and landforms that are critical in determining such landscapes but that their defining physical characteristics need to be clearly identified and recorded in order to vouchsafe and manage them for maximum benefit.

The Plan and its Implementation

The Plan sets out a vision and a model by which geoconservation in Lancashire may be pursued collectively by those bodies and individuals with an interest or obligation in respect of such matters. Its overall aim is to vouchsafe the geological and landscape heritage of Lancashire for the foreseeable future with a system analogous to that which is already in place for the protection of biological heritage sites through Biological Action Plans.

Six objectives have been identified which broadly address the three principal issues of extending our knowledge of the geological assets of the county, identifying the human and other resources available to actively engage in the processes of geoconservation, and setting up a programme of practical conservation activities which involves the wider community.

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Glacial erratic at Crossens RIGS, Southport

The wide-ranging impact of the geology and landforms on the whole character of Lancashire inevitably means that there are many potential interested parties ranging from local authorities, official national bodies, landowners, public utilities, academic institutions, private companies and the general public. These all have a role to play in geoconservation and it will be necessary to bring them together as and when required in order to implement the Plan effectively. Wide publicity given to geology and landscape through the BBC's recent programmes on this theme together with the enormous enthusiasm shown by the general public to the Group's local 'Walk through Time' show that we are pushing at an already opening door.

Now that the consultation process has been completed, the Plan has been finalised and circulated to key organisations. However, this is only the opening phase of a rolling project for geoconservation in Lancashire which it is envisaged will extend over many years to come. The all-important sequel has to be the early implementation of the plan which will require the funding and appointment of staff to co-ordinate this process. This is already in hand with a major joint-funding bid being currently prepared with Cheshire RIGS Group. This will be made to the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund.

It will also be preferable to set up a steering group to direct the implementation of the LGAP for at least the first three years. This should be made up of representatives from all the main stakeholder groups and will immediately need to address the issues of locating a base from which the Plan will be implemented, the collection of data, and establishing a system for monitoring progress.

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Aim: To provide a strategy to ensure that sound geoconservation policies inform all relevant aspects of life in Lancashire.

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Action</u>	
		Short term (1st. Year)	Long term 2nd & 3rd. Years)
1. To establish and make accessible a wide range of non field based geodiversity information.	Produce a database of geodiversity resources.	Focus on local authority departments, museums and schools.	Identify and record all relevant sources information including academic literature, museum collections, local authority departments, voluntary and official organisations, schools, colleges and universities.
2. To understand what physical landscapes and geodiversity sites exist in Lancashire.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce a geodiversity map of Lancashire. 2. Update and/or replace existing geodiversity databases. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map landscape units. 2. Establish a rolling programme for the re-survey of all RIGS. 3. Complete the first year of this. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and record the landscape units of Lancashire based on their geological and landforms. 2. Re-survey all existing RIGS and other identified sites and record the survey findings in the national UKRIGS database. 3. Create a mechanism for recording geodiversity information from temporary exposures.

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<p>3. To establish what skills and knowledge are available in the community to assist in the implementation of the LGAP.</p>	<p>Produce a database of relevant individuals (and organisations?) who could be valuable in delivering geoconservation in Lancashire.</p>	<p>Set up database for identifying, recording and updating information on available skills.</p>	<p>Drawing on 1. (above) and other sources, identify and record details of people, their skills, knowledge and availability. These should cover all aspects of managing and delivering the LGAP in addition to including as well as geologists and geomorphologists, IT specialists, graphics designers, secretarial staff, practical conservation workers and managerial staff.</p>
<p>4. To have geoconservation policies adopted by local and other relevant bodies.</p>	<p>Get geoconservation policies written into all local plans.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact all local authorities to establish their positions regarding the cycle of local plan revision. 2. Address those coming up for review in the ensuing 18 months. 3. Prepare model policies for the promotion of geoconservation. 	<p>Advise local planning departments with regard to writing such policies into all local plans within the cycle of plan renewal together with other landscape-impacting activities.</p>
<p>5. To raise awareness and appreciation of geoconservation among key professional groups and the general public.</p>	<p>Get geoconservation policies written into the activities of other major organisations concerned with for instance, public utilities, transport, aggregates, landscaping, leisure and tourism.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify all other relevant organisations. 2. Develop a programme for contacting them and offering advice and consultation. 	<p>Identify other relevant organisations. Advise and negotiate with them with a view to influencing their decision-making with regard to landscape-impacting activities. In the case of leisure and tourism, the emphasis will be on promoting appreciation of geoconservation in a sustainable manner.</p>

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6. To increase community and business activity in geoconservation.	Actively involve local communities and businesses in geoconservation schemes.	Identify sites and potential activities with a view to community and business involvement.	Identify and approach businesses and community groups. Identify sites and activities that they could become practically involved in as at Harpur Clough and Salt Hill Quarries.
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The Review Process

Drawing on the experience of other well-established bodies in the field of biological conservation and planning, it is important to establish a plan review process in order to give structure and coherence to the implementation process. It is also important to ensure progress and continuity in enhancing geoconservation provision against a background of changes within the wider legislative framework and developments in Europe, for instance. It is also important to continually seek out ways of bringing together the conservation of the natural environment as a whole together with the cultural landscape.

A provisional timetable for reviewing the Plan is set out in Fig. 2. It can be seen that this operates at different intervals depending on the significance of the particular review process. Thus major reviews are anticipated at three or six year intervals that would address significant operational and philosophical changes to the Plan, while annual reviews would focus on working methods and setting targets for updating databases, designating and working on sites, implementing the interpretative programme.

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Objective	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 6	Year 12	Year 18
	1			Database complete	Use review mechanism. Annual update of database.	
2			Mechanism established	Continue implementation of rolling programme of survey and designation. Annual update. Use review mechanism.		
3			Database complete	Use review mechanism. Annual update of database.		
4			Mechanism established	Continue with programme of local plan cycles responding to changes in local, national and European policies and procedures.		
5			Programme established	Continue with implementation of programme. Review and modify in the light of changing trends and practice.		
6			Programme established	As (5) above.		

Fig. 2 Lancashire LGAP – Review schedule