

Update No 6: Autumn (Sept) 2018

Working in partnership with Somerset Wildlife Trust to encourage appreciation, conservation and promotion of the geology of Somerset

<http://wp.somerc.co.uk/specialist-groups/somerset-geology-group/>



Dear all

- Please find attached the agenda for the next meeting of our network **Somerset Geology Group (SGG) meeting on Monday 8 October 2018, 10 am to 2 pm**, kindly hosted by Frome Museum. It will be an opportunity to share information on geo-conservation and earth science education projects relevant to Somerset, including an introduction to Frome Museum's geological collection.
- **Review of Somerset's Local Geological Sites (LGSs)** - in April we welcomed Leanne Butt as Somerset Environmental Record Centre (SERC)'s new manager and we were able to advertise for and recruit two SERC-based student volunteers to assist with the project this summer. Wesley Harris and Louis Warnes are both graduates in geology from different courses at Cardiff University. The second field season of this joint project with SERC is therefore well underway, with Wes and Louis assisting with site visits and form completion for LGSs within the Exmoor National Park and Quantocks AONB not covered in Year 1. Leanne has been updating SERC's procedures, including risk assessment requirements for the site visits. We have also developed our induction from last year, so that we are now achieving a much greater degree of completion of the desk work. Our priority this year is to complete coverage for Exmoor and the Quantocks (and ideally the whole of the western part of Somerset), but there is still considerable desk work needed to complete the review process for those sites that were visited in Year 1.
- In May we held a first meeting of SERC's new **LGS Panel**, which includes local planning authority representation, for a first batch of twelve sites from Year 1. We have therefore now established a *modus operandi* for the complete review process – and it is becoming increasingly clear, that the scale of work is a much larger task than we originally envisaged, with, for example, time needed: to identify full references to relevant geological literature (to provide a robust evidence base for each site); and for SERC to identify and contact land owners/managers in advance of the site visits.
- The project is also revealing considerable potential to liaise with managers and landowners to encourage **conservation work** and/or **interpretative material** as a follow-on. Garry Dawson arranged a scrub clearing session by the South West Region group of the Open University Geological Society (OUGS) for the Clatworthy reservoir LGS owned by Wessex Water, while Phil Parker has been assisting Exmoor NP with geological information for its nature trail at Tarr Steps National Nature Reserve.
- In July a revised **National Planning Policy Framework** was published by the Government. It continues to make provision for Local Geological Sites, with some adjustment of the wording. Specific mention of geology comes in Para 170 (a): *'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); ..'* (my underlining of the new text which now specifically refers to sites and local plans). The more detailed DEFRA Guidance, with relevant criteria for LGSs, remains the same.
- There continues to be plenty of field use of geological sites in Somerset. **Mendip Rocks Festival 2018** has been running as a series of events from July onward to its finale on Sun 28 October at Wells Museum. See <http://www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/events/> for details of events still to come, including those during **Earth Science Week**. The latter is co-ordinated nationally by the Geological Society and takes place this year 13 - 21 Oct (<https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/earthscienceweek>). A first **GeoWeek**

2018 took place 5-13 May 2018 (organised by the Earth Science Education Forum), with future plans currently being considered (see www.geoweek.org.uk in due course for how to get involved in 2019).

- **Building stone surveys** - Mike Barr has produced a draft *Inventory of the building Stones of Devon* (which includes adjacent areas of Somerset and Dorset) in two volumes, while Peter Wright and Garry Dawson are continuing their work to document the geology of building stones across Somerset (a voluntary project under the Somerset Heritage Centre).
- **Events** - as per our last *Update*, there are now event calendars organised by Graeme Church on two linked websites, bristolgeology.com and westcountrygeology.com. Somerset events can be included on the latter and there are instructions on how to contact Graeme to add events and advertise them on his blogspot <http://geologywestcountry.blogspot.co.uk/>. See also below re our piloting an advance listing from April 2019. There are several organisations that run geological field trips or talks covering Somerset. For example, the Geologists' Association and its local groups (such as WEGA for the West of England), OUGS, U3A geology groups, Bath Geological Society, Ussher Society, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, etc. So please do support them. For example, Garry Dawson attended the annual symposium of the OUGS in August <https://ougs.org/society-events/ougs-46th-annual-symposium-worcester-18/>.
- **Data protection** – Our co-ordinating group will endeavour to make sure that SGG *Updates* are always sent as a blind email and that we only send 'non-blind' emails to you, where you have indicated that you are happy and where a small number of people need to liaise on a particular topic (for example, if you are involved with our LGS project steering group). Please make sure you delete any personal contact addresses if you are forwarding anything, such as this *Update* to others. Our full list of SGG contacts will be held only by myself, with Garry Dawson holding a back-up list, as my co-coordinator. **Please let us know via Somersetgeology@gmail.com if you would no longer like to receive SGG Updates.** A Facebook page, created by Geoff Roland as a closed account, is also still available. If you would like to access it contact Somersetgeology@gmail.com, for Garry to check you are on our network and note that Geoff will be site 'administrator'.
- **Next Update** - please let me have any information on coordinating activity in Somerset on geological conservation and earth science education by **Friday 29 March 2019** and I will endeavour to include it in the next *Update*, for early April 2019. We will also pilot a simple list of forthcoming field events or talks in Somerset then. So organisers: please send very brief details only as: date; time; title; field location/venue; cost; booking contact (website/email address) to Somersetgeology@gmail.com.

Finally, **Earth Heritage** is a magazine covering Geoconservation and related topics nationally. It is published twice a year and is free by download from <http://www.earthheritage.org.uk/>.

With much appreciation for everyone's activity in conserving and encouraging an understanding of Somerset's geology.

Wendy Lutley, Coordinator

Somerset Geology Group is a member of **GeoConservationUK**, the association of groups whose mission is to *encourage the appreciation, conservation & promotion of local/regional geological sites for education & public benefit*. See http://wiki.geoconservationuk.org.uk/index.php5?title=Main_Page.

SGG also aims to encourage delivery in Somerset of the UK Geodiversity Action Plan www.ukgap.org.uk and England Geodiversity Charter www.englishgeodiversityforum.org.