

UKGAP Theme 2: Influencing planning, environmental policy and development design

UKGAP Indicator 3: Organisational Policy Recognition: the number of organisations with a specific geodiversity policy or where geodiversity is recognised within corporate plans or action plans

Relevance

This indicator should reveal the number and type of individual organisations that are making formal commitments to the consideration of geodiversity in their operations, both strategically and within their daily work activities. It might also help to indicate the extent to which national policy and guidance is filtering down to individual organisations.

Data Sources

The following guidance, policy and strategies were reviewed:

- Bell, L (2008) *Our Nature with Aggregates: A Strategy to Conserve and Enhance Biodiversity and Geodiversity for the Aggregates and Quarry Products Industry in Northern Ireland*, Quarry Products Association Northern Ireland;
- Thompson, A. *et al* (2006): *Geodiversity Action Plans for Aggregate Companies: A Guide to Good Practice*. Report to the Mineral Industry Research Organisation;
- Hanson (2005) *UK Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plans*;
- Hanson UK (2010) *2010 Sustainability Report*;
- Aggregate Industries *Quarry Geodiversity Action Plan: Bardon Hill*;
- Aggregate Industries *Quarry Geodiversity Action Plan: Croft Quarry*;
- The National Trust (2005) *Nature and the National Trust*;
- The National Trust (2007) *The National Trust Geological Policy*;
- The National Trust (2007) *The National Trust Policy for the Collecting of Geological Materials (Fossils, Rocks and Minerals)*;
- Scottish Wildlife Trust Policy (2002) *Geodiversity*;

Background to the Data

It is currently difficult to gather statistics in relation to this indicator as there is no central repository for the information. However it is useful to identify the methods used by a select number of organisations to ensure that geodiversity is considered as part of their ongoing operations. In documenting some of the approaches taken to date, it should assist other organisations, particularly those with land-holdings in developing their own geodiversity policies and / or action plans.

Guidance on the production of company Geodiversity Action Plans (cGAPs) has been produced for the aggregates industry: *cGAPs: A Guide to Good Practice* (2006). In actual fact, much of this guidance is also applicable to other companies and organisations and could be a useful reference source. The guidance is based on a staged approach to the creation of cGAPs: *'The creation of cGAPs is a continually evolving process, leading to the production of both a Core Plan that is periodically reviewed to remain in line with the Company's business objectives [or an organisation's corporate strategy], and a series of prioritised, Site-specific Action Plans that are progressively implemented and added to in future years. The Core Plan and the collection of Site specific Action Plans together make up the cGAP.'*

Data

Quarry Products Association Northern Ireland (QPANI)

Our Nature with Aggregates (2008) sets out the legislative and policy background to biodiversity and geodiversity and the particular contribution made by Northern Ireland. The role and responsibilities of the quarry products industry are identified, including the need for partnership working, developing a strategy and taking action. *'The aim of Our Nature with Aggregates has always been more than writing a plan; accordingly it has been a commendable process and commitment by the industry to guide the protection, enhancement and management of biodiversity and geodiversity on the variety of quarries and associated products manufacturing sites belonging to QPANI Member Companies.'*

Good practice guidance for the different stages of mineral working (planning, working and restoration) is reiterated and a detailed strategy and action plan (2008 – 2013) has been developed. *'The key aims of the Our Nature with Aggregates Biodiversity and Geodiversity Strategy for the Aggregates and Quarry Products Industry are all focused on the themes of Awareness, Action, Involvement and Partnership to conserve and enhance our biodiversity and geodiversity'*. Seven more detailed objectives have been developed to fit with this aim and actions are then described under the following headings: Policy and legislation / Links to other plans; Site / Species safeguard and management; Habitat creation / restoration; Funding / Resources; Communication – Advisory; and, Communication – Publicity.

Hanson UK

Hanson, now part of the Heidelberg Cement Group created a succinct UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and GAP in 2005 which presented 10 objectives, a brief method statement and a target date, together with a number of case studies. Hanson's BAP and GAP was designed to be delivered through Hanson's ongoing work, rather than becoming a separate activity: *'Our action plans will be integral parts of our resource planning, site development and restoration. They will enable us to build on the good work we have already done, and to set new priorities....The GAP will deliver geological conservation and opportunities for learning by the protection, enhancement and creation of resources, and the provision of information. The plans will be delivered through our existing environmental management systems and will operate at corporate and site levels. Site action plans will set measurable targets and will relate closely to LBAPs and LGAPs.'*

Hanson UK's most recent Sustainability Report (2010) shows a focus on site specific GAPs and BAPs with just over half of their mineral extraction sites having a GAP/BAP. This is working towards a target set in 2009 *'to increase GAPs and / or BAPs by 10 per year for the next three years'*.

Aggregate Industries

Aggregate Industries is also producing company GAPs for all their UK sites. The introduction to both the Bardon Hill and Croft Quarry GAPs states: *'The action plans are being constructed to assess the geodiversity of Aggregate Industries quarries in the view to develop any geo-assets for use in education and local engagement. The reports are 'designed to identify all the apparent Geodiversity features the quarry has to offer and develop them into an accessible geo-asset.'*

Quarries provide many of the most valuable geological exposures and are therefore a vital resource for geological education, training and research. The development of geological trails, interpretation boards, the retention and cleaning of exposures for educational use and the provision of fossil collecting sites are just some of the geodiversity activities recommended in quarry GAPs and implemented at active and restored extraction sites.

The National Trust

Nature and the National Trust (2005) is a statement of the National Trust's responsibilities together with a policy and a strategy for nature conservation. It is recognised that: *'Much of the Trust's land has been acquired for the quality of its landscape - the distinctive character of underlying geology ... and ... is an unparalleled holding of geological interest. Our properties include a range of spectacular*

landforms ... Nearly half of the Trust's SSSIs and ASSIs are designated for earth science interest and more than 50 sites are important for fossils.'

Appendix 3, *Key Earth Science Features: The National Trust's Responsibilities* identifies key actions required for the different types of earth science features but does not identify site specific actions.

The National Trust subsequently developed a specific *Geological Policy* (2007) which considers the wider aspects of geodiversity, beyond the conservation of individual features:

- *'The Trust will care for the natural and cultural geological significance of all our properties;*
- *The Trust will inform conservation and manage change in the geological environment and its features through learning, identifying, recording, understanding and communicating its significance;*
- *The Trust will share the geological significance of our properties with members, visitors and stakeholders for all to appreciate and enjoy.'*

The accompanying text places particular emphasis on the need to work with and adapt to natural processes.

The National Trust has also created a policy for the *Collecting of Geological Materials* (2007) and identifies that *'geological materials can have scientific, recreational and aesthetic value and aims to:*

- *promote responsible and safe geological collecting on Trust land, where appropriate;*
- *minimise loss and damage to geological specimens and sites;*
- *share the significance and beauty of geological specimens with local communities, interest groups and individuals for all to appreciate and enjoy.'*

Both policies are linked with the Trust's broader nature conservation policy and include a number of management principles that the Trust will adopt on its properties.

Scottish Wildlife Trust

The Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) has produced a policy document that is focused entirely on objectives and measures to protect and conserve geodiversity. The policy statement is as follows:

1. *'Scottish Wildlife Trust recognises Geodiversity as an essential component of our natural heritage.*
2. *Scottish Wildlife Trust believes that land management practices should recognise conservation of geodiversity as a major aim and attribute high value and importance to this.*
3. *Scottish Wildlife Trust will promote education about Geodiversity by raising awareness by means of interpretation on appropriate Reserves and through the promotion of 'Rockwatch', the Wildlife Watch club for young geologists.*
4. *Scottish Wildlife Trust will promote the conservation of Geodiversity through its work on its reserves and its support for the Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites system (RIGS).'*

The SWT recognise that *'maintaining geodiversity is as important as maintaining biodiversity since both are fundamentally linked'* and *'Although there are no specific targets relating to it within the Corporate Strategy, Geodiversity and its maintenance have to be considered when implementing a number of Corporate Strategy priorities.'*

It is also recognised that *'in order that staff and volunteers can take better account of geodiversity concerns, action is desirable in two areas – awareness raising and training.'*

Assessment of Approaches

In most documents, there is recognition of the importance of geodiversity in contributing to both landscape and biodiversity, and an understanding of the dynamic nature of ongoing processes and the need to work with these.

There is a tendency for organisations to link their strategy and actions on geodiversity into other existing organisational policies, strategies and activities. For example: Hanson UK delivers GAPs through their environmental management systems; the National Trust's geological policies link to the wider ranging policy for nature conservation and the SWT deliberately demonstrate how geodiversity fits in with corporate strategy priorities.

It is recognised that internal training in geodiversity is required, as well as raising awareness and providing information and activities for the external public.

It is also recognised that there is a need to enhance as well as conserve the geodiversity resource and partnership working is highlighted as a key way forward in getting actions achieved.

Policy and strategies developed for geodiversity tend to set out the organisations stance and some general management principles. Company or organisation GAPs set out the need to complete action at both the corporate level and the site specific level.

Future Recommendations

In the future, a count of the organisations with a geodiversity policy, strategy or action plan would need to be completed. Once the website is launched, it is hoped that organisations would want to promote their contribution to the UKGAP and in this way data would be provided to make an assessment against this indicator.