

Geological Conservation Review

Theme 3 Gathering and maintaining information on our geodiversity.

Objective 5 To audit and document our geodiversity including sites, archives and collections.

A major initiative to identify and describe the most important geological and geomorphological sites in Britain began in 1977 with the launch of the [Geological Conservation Review \(GCR\)](#). Whilst the GCR was mostly completed by 1990, the ongoing identification of GCR sites continues to be part of the responsibilities of the statutory nature conservation agencies in Britain; the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage. After more than three decades of site evaluation and documentation, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee holds an inventory of over 3000 GCR sites encompassing the range of geological and geomorphological features of Britain.

The GCR reviews the current state of knowledge of the key Earth science sites in Britain and provides a firm basis upon which site conservation can be founded in years to come. The Geological Conservation Review Series includes 45 volumes describing the network of British sites; within each individual volume, every GCR locality is described in detail in a self-contained justification of the particular scientific interest of each site.

GCR sites were originally selected on the basis of their scientific value and the majority of these sites have since been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) by the relevant statutory nature conservation agency and receive legal protection. [Criteria and guidelines](#) were developed for GCR site selection, which are encapsulated in three components:

- Sites of importance to the international community of Earth scientists;
- Sites which are scientifically important because they contain exceptional features; and
- Sites which are nationally important because they are representative of an Earth science feature, event or process which is fundamental to Britain's Earth history.

In Scotland, over 800 sites that represent the nation's geodiversity were identified by [Scottish Natural Heritage](#) (SNH) and its predecessor, the Nature Conservancy Council, in the GCR. As well as featuring in the GCR Series, GCR sites notified as SSSIs in Scotland have an associated Earth Science Site Documentation Report. These reports contain additional information to enable management and monitoring to be carried out at the sites by SNH staff. Some sites, however, remain un-notified and SNH is currently running a programme to gather and document information about these remaining sites, in the form of Site Documentation Reports, in preparation for their eventual notification as SSSIs. Each Site Documentation Report includes a combination of Plain English site descriptions, photographic catalogues and recommended management activities of each site, to be used to maintain the record of geodiversity information.