

The Scottish Core Code

Theme 4 Conserving and managing our geodiversity

Objective 8 To share experience of conserving our geodiversity through the provision of good practice guidance.

Small diameter rock coring for the purpose of extracting samples for research has been a technique employed by researchers for decades. Core samples are used mainly in palaeomagnetic research to measure the orientation of magnetic minerals in rocks to determine past configurations of the Earth's magnetic field. Core samples are to a lesser extent used in geochemical studies. Cores are drilled into areas of particular interest including the contact zones of igneous rocks, in sedimentary boundaries, and in areas of structural and mineralogical interest.

In 1989 the Geologists' Association (GA) published the *Code of Conduct for Rock Coring*, a best practice guide to rock sampling by means of coring. The preparation of a Code in the UK was required following acts of thoughtlessness by some researchers that permanently defaced outcrops ruining their photographic value. Despite the existence of the GA Code the vandalising effects of irresponsible coring continue to this day and the cumulative effects are becoming increasingly apparent to even the most casual observers. As well as damaging exposures, irresponsible coring is tarnishing the reputation of geological science and there is concern that relations with landowners may be threatened by irresponsible coring which may impact upon future sampling and research in the worst affected areas.



Figure 1 Irresponsible coring of the Sandwick Fish Bed near Stromness, Orkney. Despite there being numerous less well exposed faces to choose from, the holes have been drilled in highly visible surfaces that are evident to all that pass by this exposure. Colin MacFadyen/SNH.

In response to the growing concern of both the general public and geoscientists to the increasing number of core holes defacing outcrop (see figure 1 for an example), in 2011 SNH produced the *Scottish Core Code* for those planning to extract rock cores from outcrops in Scotland. The Code may be found at <http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/rocks-soils-and-landforms/scottish-core-code/>.

SNH is keen to establish best practice guidelines on the infilling of core holes and the means by which defaced rock exposure may be restored. This will require securing information on the techniques and methodology that have been used to date for different rock types, and how restoration attempts fare with time.

If you are able to advise SNH on the infilling of core holes we would very much like to hear from you. Please contact colin.macfadyen@snh.gov.uk.