

**© UKRIGS Education Project: Earth Science On-Site**

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## INTRODUCTION

### REGIONALLY IMPORTANT GEOLOGICAL AND GEOMORPHOLOGICAL SITES [RIGS]

In the United Kingdom, important geological and geomorphological sites are protected in several ways. Nationally important ones are protected in law as Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSIs]. Several of these have been designated National Nature Reserves. Non-statutory sites have less protection and are called Local Sites. These include Regionally Important Geological & Geomorphological Sites [RIGS], as well as Wildlife Sites, and are protected through the local authority planning process.

RIGS were established in 1990 as part of a national review of all sites. The four nationally agreed criteria for their selection are: Educational value, Scientific study, Historical value and Aesthetic value.

More than a thousand sites have been designated throughout the UK, mostly for their educational value. Two of the aims of UKRIGS are to increase public awareness of geoconservation and encourage the educational use of sites by teachers and others.

### THE *Earth-Science On-Site* PILOT PROJECT

Through **English Nature**, UK Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites [UKRIGS] received an **Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund** (ALSF) grant for this Education project to use former aggregates sites to develop and publish examples of high quality Earth Science field teaching activities. The pilot project ran from August 2004 to March 2005 and four sites were chosen:

- \* The National Stone Centre, Wirksworth, Derbyshire
- \* Apes Tor / Ecton Hill, Wetton, Staffordshire
- \* Black Rock, Matlock, Derbyshire
- \* Park Hall Country Park, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire

The selected sites are designated RIGS or SSSI sites, have open access or are owned by public bodies. In 2005 with further funding from the ALSF, the ***Earth-Science On-Site*** Project was extended nation wide to cover eight more sites.

The purposes of this pilot project are:

1. to encourage non-specialist science teachers to undertake Earth Science fieldwork with pupils from primary to GCSE level;
2. to demonstrate the educational value of RIGS and SSSI sites to local planning and education authorities to the aggregates industry and to the wider public community;
3. to foster the wider use of RIGS and SSSI sites by providing teaching materials as exemplars that may be adapted for use at similar sites elsewhere;
4. to provide links between these field teaching activities and the classroom / laboratory practical activities produced by the **Earth Science Teachers' Association, the Earth Science Education Unit** and partners, hosted on the <http://www.jesei.org> website. For available printed materials go to <http://www.esta-uk.org>

### THE *Earth-Science On-Site* GUIDES

The guides to the sites will include the following information to assist group leaders and teachers when planning field activities:

1. details of location, access and initial risk assessments;
2. background information relating to the site and its geological (Earth science) and geomorphological (landscape) interest;
3. materials to support field activities, their preparation and follow-up primarily by teachers and their pupils. These will be informed by the National Curriculum at Key stages 2, 3 or 4, thereby requiring the use of some specific terms, but written for appreciation by a wider, less technical, audience.

The guides have been written on the assumption that ***Earth-Science On-Site*** visits by Key Stage 2 pupils will be taken in year 3; Key Stage 3 pupils in year 8; and Key Stage 4 pupils in year 11. However, it is anticipated that teachers, and others, will freely adapt the materials here to their own context and their own programmes of study as they see fit, and in the light of their own experiences.

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**Contacts:** For further information about UKRIGS and the ***Earth-Science On-Site*** project, contact <http://www.ukrigs.org.uk>