

Local Geological Sites/RIGS Condition Monitoring Form v2008 Guidance Notes

This Local Geological Sites/RIGS condition monitoring form has been developed in partnership with the Malvern Hills AONB, Natural England, UKRIGS, the Geology Trusts and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. It is the first dedicated form of its kind in the UK and as such, will be reviewed in late 2009.

It is the method recognised by Natural England, UKRIGS and the Geology Trusts to assess the condition of a designated Local Geological Site [RIGS].

Local Sites Partnerships will find the process a useful standard in reporting the conservation management of Geodiversity for the Improved Local Biodiversity Indicator - NI 197.

It is intended that this form will be used as the national standard with which to independently, and with minimal subjectivity, monitor and record the condition of sites, in order to achieve a common standard of monitoring and to easily compare sites across the RIGS network.

These guidance notes should ensure that the user understands each section and that the form is filled in as it was intended to be. Any problems, issues or comments on the form would be gratefully received. These should be sent to eht@worc.ac.uk

Before using the form, the assessor should adapt the form title to their own group's name, logo and contact address.

1. Site Information

This section is for entering basic information about the site and should be the same as that entered on the group's database.

Site Name – This should be the exact same name as used to identify the site on the group's database. If the site has been assigned a unique RIGS ID number, then it should also be included.

Site Type – Each site should be assigned a site type based on the accepted Earth Science Conservation Classification, as shown below. Only the abbreviations should be used on the form.

Exposure or Extensive Sites		Integrity Sites	
Active quarries and pits	EA	Static (fossil) geomorphological	IS
Disused quarries and pits	ED	Active process geomorphological	IA
Coastal cliffs and foreshore	EC	Caves	IC
River and stream sections	EW	Karst	IK
Inland outcrops	EO		
Exposure underground mines and tunnels	EU	Finite Sites	
Road, rail and canal cuttings	ER	Finite mineral, fossil or other geological	FM
Extensive buried interest	EB	Mine dumps	FD
		Finite underground mines or tunnels	FU
		Finite buried interest	FB

Interest feature(s) – The reasons why the site was designated a RIGS should be listed here. It should be a checklist of all the important features of the site so that the assessor is clear what feature(s) should be accessible, and therefore what needs to be assessed.

2. Primary factors

This section explores the factors that could have a direct affect on the geodiversity feature(s). The table is split into three feature types;

- Bedrock feature (solid rock exposures, structural features etc.)
- Superficial deposit feature (drift, river terraces, static mass movement deposits, peat deposits etc.)
- Geomorphology feature (active geomorphological processes)

The assessor should delineate on the form which features are present at the site by completing each question for each feature type with a Yes or No answer. If a feature is not present (as listed in the Interest Features section), then “not applicable” should be entered.

If any of the factors are having an adverse affect on the feature(s) of interest (this is where reference to the reason for RIGS designation is critical) this should be recorded by placing a Y in the appropriate “Y/N” box. The comments box can then be filled in as the assessor sees fit.

3. Secondary factors

These are factors that do not directly affect the feature(s) but may need to be managed in order for the feature(s) to maintain a desirable condition for their designation.

Site Access – This deals with accessibility of a site, a factor that is not considered with regards to SSSIs, however Geoconservation Groups tend to consider this. Issues over site access may include safety, physical obstacles such as vegetation, an unfriendly landowner, or a protected species (e.g. peregrine falcon) restricting access at certain times of the year.

Furniture – Central to interpretation and/or safety at the site. Issues may include a damaged interpretation panel, a bund or fence being damaged leading to the site becoming unsafe.

Other features – There may be other features of interest at a site that should be considered and noted e.g. a rare species of plant, or a cave of archaeological interest.

4. Site Status

Primary factors - In order for monitoring to be a useful tool to focus management, the changing of, or status quo of, a RIGS needs to be recorded. This section deals with the site status, in order for the geoconservation community to interpret it at different levels as they see fit.

At its most basic level, an assessment is given of whether a site is in a desirable condition for use of its feature(s). A site should be given a yes when it is clear that it is in a fit state for use of its features (i.e. for educational purposes via regular school visits). A site may also be in a desirable condition if it is designated for scientific reasons only, and the feature(s) can be practically be re-exposed, even though they may be in a slightly worse overall condition than a site that is used for education. There is a degree of subjectivity here, but the assessor is given freedom to determine this. Therefore, at the most basic level RIGS can be given the status of being in a desirable or undesirable condition.

Next is site management. Monitoring is undertaken with a view to both assessing the state of the RIGS, but also what (if any) management may be undertaken. Suggested management

should be entered into the appropriate box (depending on what initial condition status was given).

Finally the level of management (being undertaken, not going to be undertaken etc) should be filled in after consultation with the geoconservation group and/or landowner. This final stage is the most critical in determining a specific site status. The condition status of each site is as follows:

Site in desirable condition?	Management status	Condition status
Yes	Minimal management (monitoring only)	GOOD
Yes	Management required and is being undertaken	GOOD IMPROVING
Yes	Management required and is going to be undertaken	GOOD STEADY
Yes	Management required and is not going to be undertaken	GOOD DECLINING
Yes	Management required but is not possible	GOOD DECLINING
Uncertain/No	Management being undertaken	POOR IMPROVING
Uncertain/No	Management going to be undertaken	POOR STEADY
Uncertain/No	Management not going to be undertaken	POOR DECLINING
Uncertain/No	Management not possible	POOR DECLINING or LOST

Secondary factors – An assessment of whether any secondary factors are in need of management can be given in the appropriate box.

Photos – A key tool in comparing site condition at different moments in time are photos and photo mosaics. The first time a site is assessed, photos should be taken in a suitable place, of the features of interest. The exact location (8 figure grid reference), orientation and description as to where the assessor stood needs to be clearly outlined in order that for future monitoring, photos are taken from the same place to allow for comparison over time. Photographs should be resized before inserting into the form to ensure best quality and small document size. The originals should be provided separately.