



REPORT

The Nottinghamshire RIGS (Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites) Scheme

The Nottinghamshire RIGS Group held its inaugural meeting in September 1991. The meeting was well attended and the Group now comprises representatives from the British Geological Survey, East Midlands Geological Society, North Nottinghamshire Environmental Partnership, Nottinghamshire County Council, District Councils, Nottinghamshire Geological Records Centre and Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, who co-ordinate the scheme.

The Group has been meeting regularly since its inception and is now well on the way to achieving some of the aims and objectives of the scheme. This progress has been aided by the appointment of a Voluntary RIGS Officer between May and December 1992.

One of the first tasks of the Group was to decide what constituted a RIGS site in Nottinghamshire. Using site records created at the Nottinghamshire Geological Records Centre between 1987 and 1991, 106 RIGS were selected, spread across eight districts. Sites have been chosen to represent the variety of geology and, in part, the geomorphology of the county based on the RIGS criteria, but also reflect a perceived educational need to have locally accessible sites throughout the county.

Formal protection of RIGS is achieved through planning control, primarily by inclusion of RIGS in District Authority Local Plans. English Nature have been offering modest funds to help offset the cost of supplying information to District Planners. To this end, the Group has produced site information sheets locating sites and detailing their importance. In addition, the new Local Minerals Plan, now at deposit stage, is the first to include a policy on protecting RIGS.

The Group also discusses changes affecting individual RIGS. Recently considered were sites as far apart as Styrrup Quarry, near Harworth (SK 605 902) in the far north of the county to Redhill Road cutting, Nottingham (SK 584 471) in the south. A proposal by English Nature to designate Styrrup Quarry a SSSI has been supported by the Group and slope stability work at Redhill Road cutting has been monitored and advice given to the County Council on ways to improve the educational potential of the site. Styrrup Quarry was also the subject of a recent public inquiry after rare orchids on the site were bulldozed in an attempt to influence planning consent to dump on the site. The appeal was quashed and, whilst the geology is not directly threatened, worrying questions have been raised about the lack of protection against wilful damage by unscrupulous owners.

This year, the RIGS Group is spending more time trying to raise public awareness, encouraging use of sites, and stimulating those interested to take a more active role. The Group is currently compiling a leaflet with these aims in mind, and hopes to circulate it throughout the county early next year. A permanent RIGS display is also to be produced, and will be seen at events around the county.

Although most geological sites in the county have been surveyed, new exposures, either temporary or permanent, are constantly being created. If anybody becomes aware of a new site or would like to monitor an existing RIGS in their area, either individually or as a group, please contact the RIGS officer at the Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust, 310 Sneinton Dale, Nottingham, or the Keeper of Geology, Nottinghamshire Geological Records Centre, Nottingham Natural History Museum, Wollaton Hall, Nottingham.

Neil S Turner
Stephen R Powell