

Local Geodiversity Action Plans

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Abstract

Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPs) provide a framework for the delivery of geoconservation. This paper reviews progress on LGAPs, outlines the key principles of establishing an LGAP and provides a view on important next stages in LGAP development.

Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPs) are a new and effective mechanism for the delivery of geoconservation. They provide a context for the broad range of activities associated with geoconservation. They encompass the tradition of site conservation but also place the site in its wider context. Importantly, they engage a wide range of organisations, groups and individuals in their development and delivery. Establishing an LGAP establishes a process and provides a shared framework for the delivery of geoconservation that previously hasn't existed.

The story so far...

In 2002 initial work on LGAPs (Burek & Potter unpublished) took the experience of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and explored what worked and could be applied to Local Geodiversity Action Planning. From this grew a model approach to Local Geodiversity Action Planning which led to the first LGAP to follow this process – the Cheshire region GAP (CrGAP) (Potter, this volume) which was launched in 2003. At the same time a number of LGAPs were initiated and in December 2003 a workshop was convened to review progress and, sharing what was now practical experience in LGAP development, establish some common and practical principles for the establishment of an LGAP (Burek and Potter 2004 and English Nature 2004).

LGAPs now are moving forward apace. In three years, primarily through English Nature, Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund and MIRO funding and support there are now 24 LGAPs in development or formally launched (Table 1). Alongside this Company GAPs are being considered and developed with a focus currently on aggregate industries.

As a first step towards on-going sharing of experience an LGAP website has been established (www.english-nature.org.uk/special/geological/lgap). This should increasingly act as a focus for maintaining current information about the development and progress of LGAPs.

Table 1 Current status of LGAP development – September 2005

Local Geodiversity Action Plan	Stage	Comments
Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark	Consultation phase	LGAPs developed for specific areas within the Geopark
Black Country	Consultation phase	
Cheshire rGAP	Launched	Progress formally reviewed in 2005
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	Launched	
Cotswolds AONB in Gloucestershire	Launch October 2005	
Derbyshire and Peak District	Consultation phase	
Devon	Launched	Embedded in Devon BAP
Dorset and East Devon Coastal corridor	Launched	
Durham	Consultation phase	Geodiversity audit complete
Herefordshire	Initiate development Sept 2005	
Isle of Wight	Consultation phase	
Lancashire	Consultation phase	
Leicestershire and Rutland	Launched	
North East Yorkshire	Initiate development Sept/Oct 2005	
North Pennines AONB	Launched	Includes extensive geodiversity audit
Northumbrian NP	Consultation phase	
Oxfordshire	Launched	Embedded in BAP
Staffordshire	Launched	
Tees Valley	Launched	
Torbay	Consultation phase	
Warwickshire	Consultation phase	Sub- LGAPs have been developed
West Gloucestershire	Initiate development Sept 2005	
Worcestershire	Initiate development Sept 2005	
Yorkshire Dales	Initiate development Sept 2005	
Company GAP (CGAP)– a pilot study	Consultation phase	Development of best practice guidelines for a Company GAP (current focus on aggregate industries)
Hansons plc	Launched	Overarching CGAP
Tarmac	Consultation phase	

A successful LGAP

Local Geodiversity Action Plans – sharing good practice (English Nature 2004) establishes core principles for the development and delivery of a successful LGAP. LGAPs will vary according to local circumstances but there are fundamental similarities between them:

Boundary – establishing an agreed geographical boundary for an LGAP is an essential early step. Typically LGAPs follow administrative boundaries including county, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Park boundaries. LGAPs encompass the geodiversity resource owned (or managed) by a company or organisation.

Partnership – partners covering the geographical range and variety of interest groups within the LGAP should be involved in its development and subsequent delivery. Typical partnerships include representation from the local community, conservation and geological organisations, local authority, businesses, industry and education.

Aims and objectives – the challenge of establishing an LGAP is to agree an overarching aim with a clear set of objectives, targets and actions. If successfully done seemingly large tasks can be broken down into manageable actions. These actions can be shared within the partnership and, hopefully, with those more widely consulted. A standard range of objectives have emerged:

- Geodiversity audit – an important early objective that can include a standard audit of the geology, geomorphology and geological sites of an area as well as an audit of available information and skills.
- Communication and education – promoting an understanding and wider awareness of geodiversity and encouraging participation.
- Influencing planning – influencing local plans and planning guidance to support the delivery of the action plan and geoconservation.
- Conservation and management – establishing clear goals for the conservation and management of geological sites, natural processes and the geodiversity of our landscape.
- Resources – establish clear objectives for the resourcing (money and people) of the action planning process.

Consultation – an LGAP should reflect the views and priorities of the community. It is therefore important that a wide consultation with dialogue is undertaken so that the desires of the local community are reflected in the LGAP. Once agreed, the LGAP should be published, launched and made widely accessible.

Funding – an LGAP should provide a basis for identifying funding needs and priorities. Some aspects of the plan can be delivered by partners (particularly where the action is linked to the work they do) whilst separate funding may be need for other aspects.

Measuring achievement – LGAP targets should be clear and measurable. Progress should be regularly monitored and LGAP reviewed and adjusted if necessary. Progress and achievements should be widely promoted.

Where next?

Progression

It is essential that the momentum established in LGAP development is maintained. Those LGAPs that are launched and now being delivered should continue to push forward. Those in the development and consultation phase should get to launch and then delivery. Areas yet to start should follow suit. The current distribution of LGAPs shows paucity in the southeast, east and home-counties and it is important to bring LGAPs to these areas.

Measurement

It is also essential to measure progress in order to demonstrate the success and value of having an LGAP and to provide a stronger justification for the continued support of the LGAP process. The CrGAP is the most advanced and has recently undertaken a detailed review of progress. This, as well as quantifying completed actions, will guide the future direction of the CrGAP (Potter, this volume). Setting measurable targets is therefore very important when developing an LGAP and the review of the CrGAP provides further insight into the measurement of LGAP progress which should provide guidance to others.

National GAP

LGAPs were established at a local level and the process driven locally (though strategically facilitated by English Nature). Unlike Biodiversity Action Planning there is no national governmental driver for the development of LGAPs. A next important stage is to establish a national context for the delivery of LGAPs. An important first step is seen in *Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* which it is anticipated will highlight the value of LGAPs in the supporting good practice guidance.

The next stage, now we have the experience of how an LGAP works, is to establish a national GAP which will provide a context for the continued delivery of LGAPs. This should also establish a clearer justification for continued funding support from, hopefully, an increasing range of fund providers.

The objectives of a national GAP should mirror the LGAP but set a national context in which LGAPs can effectively work. It should provide the impetus to facilitate the completion of LGAP coverage which are central to the delivery of the national GAP. Promoting consistent standards and targets will be essential as will providing a coherent view of the role from national government to local community in delivering the national GAP.

The LGAP process is now firmly established and consolidation is now needed to ensure the LGAP becomes a widely recognised and standard mechanism to deliver geoconservation through shared goals and partnership.

References

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