POSITION STATEMENT ON GEOCONSERVATION

Adopted 15 September 2014

This statement summarises the consensus views of the Quaternary Research Association on the conservation of locally, nationally and internationally important Quaternary sites, landscapes and museum collections, recognising their present and future scientific, educational, cultural, aesthetic, ecological and ecosystem values and the needs of Quaternary science and society.

The Quaternary Research Association supports and delivers geoconservation action and shares best practice through field meetings, conferences, outreach and publications, and through the work of the Conservation Officer.

The Quaternary Research Association:

NOTES that geoconservation is the conservation of those elements of geodiversity that have significant intrinsic, scientific, educational, cultural, aesthetic, ecological and ecosystem service values - our geoheritage;

RECOGNISES that geodiversity is an integral part of nature, and in the same way that plants and animals merit conservation for their intrinsic values, so too do abiotic features;

RECOGNISES ALSO that conserving Quaternary sites, landscapes and museum collections of international, national or local significance for science and education (at all levels from schools to life-long learning) is vital for current and future research, developing new techniques and theories, educating and training the scientists of the future, and for historical value (history of science);

NOTES that Quaternary sites include type localities for particular time periods or events; features representative of particular periods of the Earth's Quaternary history or particular geomorphological processes, or that are unusual or distinctive; sediments, landforms, deposits or fossils indicative of past environmental conditions, such as Quaternary glacial and interglacial phases; classic textbook features and landscapes; or other characteristics that are significant to education, research and society;

ACKNOWLEDGES that culturally significant Quaternary geosites are places where geological features or landscapes played a role in cultural or historical events, or have close links with archaeology, and that aesthetically significant geosites include natural features or landscapes that are visually appealing or as tourist attractions provide economic benefits;

ACKNOWLEDGES ALSO that geodiversity is a vital component of ecosystems in which biotic and abiotic components form an interacting system and that most species depend on the abiotic 'stage' on which they exist;

RECOGNISES that understanding Quaternary geodiversity and developing Quaternary science support and underpin landscape and biodiversity conservation and deliver many economic, social and environmental benefits for society, including: informing climate change adaptation and sustainable management of land and water; advancing knowledge about natural hazards and mitigating their impacts; evaluation of past human impacts (e.g. pollution, changes in land use) using palaeoenvironmental archives;

RECOGNISES ALSO the increasing impact of development and other pressures upon Quaternary diversity and geoheritage and that their values are often underestimated or overlooked in national and local planning and policy;

ACKNOWLEDGES, consequently, the need to promote the proper conservation and management of Quaternary geoheritage, and in particular of the sites and landscapes that have high potential for scientific studies, use as outdoor classrooms, enhancing public understanding of science, recreational use, and economic support to local communities.

The Quaternary Research Association therefore:

1. SUPPORTS geoconservation activities to recognise and protect Quaternary geosites, landscapes and museum collections, recognising their present and future scientific, educational, cultural, aesthetic, ecological and ecosystem values;

2. ENDORSES the aims and objectives of *Scotland's Geodiversity Charter*, the *Geodiversity Charter for England* and the UK Geodiversity Action Plan (UKGAP);

3. RECOGNISES AND SUPPORTS the designation and appropriate management of statutory Quaternary geosites for their scientific and educational values and recognises that many have aesthetic or cultural values or offer the potential for supporting local and regional development through (geo)tourism activities;

4. ENCOURAGES the conservation of local Quaternary geosites and recognition of their management requirements in the preparation of Local Geodiversity Action Plans (LGAPs);

5. ENCOURAGES collaboration and partnerships to identify, designate and manage local Quaternary geosites to the benefit of the broader community;

6. SUPPORTS UK participation in UNESCO's Global Network of National Geoparks and World Heritage Site designation of appropriate Quaternary sites;

7. ENCOURAGES outreach and positive actions to enhance the conservation of Quaternary diversity and geoheritage;

8. ENCOURAGES responsible fieldwork and sample collection that adhere to the Countryside Code, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, the Geological Society of London's Code for Geological Fieldwork, the Geological Fieldwork Code of the Geologists' Association and Natural England's specimen collecting guidance.