



# The National Trust Policy for the Collecting of Geological Materials (Fossils, Rocks and Minerals)

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*This paper sets out the National Trust policy for the collection of geological materials (fossils, rocks and minerals) on Trust land.*

*It is intended for use by staff, professional<sup>1</sup> and amateur collectors, researchers and leaders of educational parties and aims to clarify our position on collecting geological materials. It sits within the Trust's wider Geological Policy.*

*This policy does not include commercial extraction and or dredging as this was felt to be more relevant to planning and thus outside the remit of this paper. However, the Trust may review this policy from time to time in the light of changes in the law or other circumstances.*

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## **The Trust recognises that geological materials can have scientific, recreational and aesthetic value and aims to:**

- Promote responsible and safe geological collecting on Trust land, where appropriate.
- Minimise loss and damage to geological specimens and sites.
- Share the significance and beauty of geological specimens with local communities, interest groups and individuals for all to appreciate and enjoy.

## **Collection of geological materials**

The Trust acknowledges that the collecting of geological materials has a long history in the UK and that amateur collecting has often been the stimulus for a life-long interest and/or future career in the natural environment. It recognises that collecting has contributed significantly to the development of geology as a science and to the understanding of the geological history of the UK.

However, there is some concern as to the possible adverse impacts of geological collecting. This may be due to: the apparent increase in professional collecting; the fate of collected or extracted material; damage done to some sites; the possible decline in the resource at some sites; the sale of important specimens and the loss to the nation if sold abroad. These concerns have led to attempts to manage the amount or nature of collecting by regulation or by adopting codes of good practice.

Under the National Trust Byelaws the removal of geological materials is not permitted unless Trust consent is given and / or local codes of conduct are strictly adhered to.

<sup>1</sup> Here 'Professional' means commercial and scientific collecting.

### Examples of where collecting is an important issue include:

- Fossil extraction and collection - West Dorset, Isle of Wight (South Coast), Yorkshire Coast, Somerset Coast, Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire.
- Mineral extraction and collection - Cornwall, Lake District, Peak District, North Pennines and areas in Wales - mine spoil heaps and mine shafts (adits).
- Removal of decorative pebbles, rocks and boulders; quarried out rocks from coastal exposures for serpentine minerals – Cornwall.
- Coring of glacial erratics – Snowdonia.
- Extraction of cave fossil fauna - Mendips and Gower coast.
- Removal of cave stalagmites and stalactites - Yorkshire.
- Sale and disposal of fossils and minerals - Dorset and the Peak District.

Although now an historic issue, it is of interest to note that the Trust also has a number of properties with examples of water worn limestone, tufa, and rocks that were once readily extracted for ornamental garden features, such as grottos and rockeries.

### **Our approach**

The Trust will adopt a practical and realistic approach to the management of the geological sites on its land. It recognises that there can be great differences in the nature of sites, for example as to vulnerability, and that management should be tailored to particular needs and practicalities in each case. For example, management of a fast eroding easily accessed coastline would be likely to differ from that of an inland site with little erosion and potentially more easily controlled access.

It is desirable for the Trust to have a consistent approach to geological collecting, as far as is practical. To achieve this it will use the existing *Earth Science Conservation Classification* (Prosser *et al* 2006) to help define site type and assess vulnerability, follow a set of general collecting principles and practices and endorse local codes of conduct.

### **Our collecting principles**

- In general the Trust owns geological material on and sometimes under its land and has the right to control the removal of fossil, rock and mineral specimens. However, the Trust does not always own the mineral rights.
- The Trust recognises and supports the contribution that responsible collectors can and do make to geological study and the need to record and sometimes remove *in situ* specimens for research purposes or to save them from damage or destruction but opposes irresponsible geological collecting.
- As a general rule, the Trust is prepared to transfer the ownership of the recovered specimens to those collectors who follow responsible and safe geological collecting practices and record their scientifically important specimens at either the local museum, visitor centre or the Trust locally and nationally, as appropriate.
- The Trust will work closely with quarrymen on its land to ensure impacts on the environment are kept to a minimum and that any notable geological finds are extracted appropriately and recorded.

- Where important new specimens are collected the Trust favours their display and availability for research through suitable accredited establishments, subject to appropriate agreements.
- The Trust will support and promote existing good practice and better communication that encourages self-policing and other solutions to secure safe and responsible collecting.
- The Trust will promote public access to geological sites, subject to conservation and safety considerations, including site fragility and vulnerability, in order to provide public enjoyment, recreational, educational and interpretation opportunities.
- The Trust will work with collectors, museums, organisations and communities to share experience and knowledge, and improve the sustainable management of geological resources.
- The Trust will participate in any work with statutory agencies and the geological community to review controls on exporting and importing material.
- The Trust will strive to ensure any geological material that may be sold in its shops is from sustainable and ethically sound sources. The Trust will encourage the sale of local geological publications.
- The Trust will encourage in-house displays of its existing geological specimens, where possible, include them on house inventories, and ensure this information is readily available to staff, and eventually researchers and the public, as appropriate.

### **Our collecting practices**

- The Trust will normally permit collecting from *ex situ* loose and fallen material, particularly where it is at risk of damage or loss if not collected and/or where it can be justified on legitimate scientific or educational grounds. For example at an eroding coastline, where it is likely to be lost to sea, or a mine spoil heap at risk of being levelled or weathered. However, large and robust specimens are usually best left for all to see and enjoy.
- Subject to the provisions of any relevant collecting code, permission from the Trust must be sought before any *in situ* excavation and removal of specimens takes place. If extracting specimens from a designated site (statutory and non statutory - as defined in the Trust's Geological Policy) there must be close liaison with and / or consent obtained from the relevant statutory agency. Evidence of credentials (professional status) and aims of collecting may also be required.
- Risk assessments and insurance papers must be prepared and discussed in advance with the Trust; and the Trust must be informed of progress with any excavations and advised when completed. Where possible, excavations should also be written up in a worthy journal.
- The Trust does not permit collecting outside the principals of responsible collecting. It will consider taking legal action where this policy and any local codes of conduct for geological collecting or Trust Byelaws are clearly being ignored to the detriment

of the site and its resource or where it is putting people in danger or other valued assets at risks.

- Collection must not conflict with other conservation objectives, such as wildlife and archaeological interests. The Trust urges collectors to be mindful that collecting can, for example, disturb nesting birds on cliffs and bats in underground sites. It can also be damaging to mosses, liverworts and lichen communities, as well as the habitat of mining bees and wasps. Such disturbance and/or damage should be avoided.
- The Trust encourages the recording of important geological specimens, where such a service is available, for example at a museum or other suitable facility. If the removal of large geological specimens is permitted the location should be recorded, including the stratigraphical position of the find, and the Trust and the nearest available museum with geological expertise notified.
- The Trust expects collectors, as with all members of the public, to be responsible for their own health and safety, to consider the safety of others whilst working and to abide by local advice. They should be aware, for example, of tide times, the risk of cliff fall and falling debris, dangers of mudflows, unstable quarry faces and sludge lagoons. The Trust will not allow collectors to climb or descend cliffs on ropes to get to a particular level without express consent from the Trust.
- The Trust expects all collectors to exercise common sense when considering suitable clothing and safety equipment and what tools to use, if any.
- The Trust advises collectors unfamiliar with a site to consult field guides, maps and the local museum or visitor centre before setting out, and to take suitable materials for wrapping any specimens found, together with writing materials for recording information about them in order to preserve their scientific value.

**Appendix 1 - Other relevant Trust policies and papers – see Intranet and Internet or contact relevant staff for further information on these publications**

- *Geological Policy* (2007)
- *Coastal Policy* (2005)
- *Shifting Shores - Living with a changing coastline* (2005)
- *Soils Policy* (2000)
- *Water Policy* (2006)
- *Policy for the use of Peat in Gardens* (1999)
- *Climate Change - Coast and River Basins* (draft 2005)
- *Open Countryside Report: Part A. Principals for Access, Part B. Managing for Access, & Part C. Recreational Activities: Guiding Principles, Practices and Impacts* (1995)
- *Recreational Activities: Guiding Principles, Practices and Impacts* (2000)
- *Policy for the re-opening of National Trust Quarries for the Provision of Building Stone* (in prep 2006)
- *The Manual of Housekeeping* (2006)
- Historic Buildings-conservation: *Policy on conservation of fixtures, fittings, decorations and contents* (1996)
- Loans to Exhibitions (in prep 2007)
- *Nature and the National Trust* (2005) central nature conservation policy
- Country and Regional Nature Conservation Strategies (via Country/ Regional Nature Conservation Advisers)
- Health and Safety: *Conservation Safety Manual* (1999)
  
- *Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside principals and practice* (revised 2005) (via Property Managers)
- *Active quarries - site visits* - NT Model/Site Risk Assessment (2005) (available via David Hodd, Countryside Manager or Angela Peters, Ecologist, Purbeck, Wessex)
- *Disused quarries – site visits* - NT Model/Site Risk Assessment (2005) (available via David Hodd, Countryside Manager or Angela Peters, Ecologist, Purbeck, Wessex)
- *Entry into disused mines* - NT Model/Site Risk Assessment WRK013 (1997)
- *Entry into and work in confined spaces* - NT Model/Site Risk Assessment WRK012 (revised) (2004)
- *Work near cliffs and crags* - NT Model/Site Risk Assessment WRK014 (Rev1) (2005)
- *Rocky shore visit (at outdoor activity centres)* - NT Model/Site Risk Assessment 0A003 (1996)
- *Beach visit (at outdoor activity centres)* - NT Model/Site Risk Assessment 0A006 (1996)
  
- Water Resources Risk Assessment (has geological database)
- Coastal Risk Assessment (via Land & Property Data officers)
  
- The National Trust 1907 Act
- The National Trust Byelaws

## Appendix 2 - External references and further information

- Basset, M.G. King, A.H. Larwood, J.G. Parkinson, N.A. and Deisler, V.K. (eds) 2001. *A future for fossils*. National Museum of Wales Geological Series No.19, Cardiff.
- *Code of Conduct for Rock Coring* the Geologists' Association
- Edmonds, R. Larwood, J. and Weighell, T. (in prep) *Sustainable site-based management of collecting pressure on palaeontological sites*.  
[www.geoconservation.com/EHWH/Docs/fossil.htm](http://www.geoconservation.com/EHWH/Docs/fossil.htm)
- English Nature *Fossil Collecting Position Statement* (2000)  
<http://www.english-nature.org.uk/news/statement.asp?ID=13>
- English Nature. *Nature in the garden* – Media page  
[http://www.english-nature.org.uk/virtualtours/Gardens/media\\_pages/rockeries\\_and\\_stones.htm](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/virtualtours/Gardens/media_pages/rockeries_and_stones.htm)
- *Geological Fieldwork Code* the Geologists' Association  
<http://www.es.ucl.ac.uk/undergrad/fieldwork/image/code/fwcode.htm>
- *Guidelines for Collecting Fossils on the Isle of Wight*
  
- JNCC Geological Conservation Review Series <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-2947>
- *Mineral Collecting and conservation – hammering out a future?* One day conference (December 2002) English Nature.
- *National Fossil Collecting Code* UK Fossils and Discovering Fossils Initiative (2006)  
[http://www.discoveringfossils.co.uk/National\\_Fossil\\_Collecting\\_Code.htm](http://www.discoveringfossils.co.uk/National_Fossil_Collecting_Code.htm)
- Prosser, C. Murphy, M. and Larwood, J. 2006. *Geological Conservation a guide to good practice*. English Nature. Peterborough.
- *The Fossil Code of Conduct for the West Dorset Coast*  
<http://www.jurassiccoast.com/309/conserving-the-coast-35/manangement-issues-159/the-west-dorset-fossil-collecting-code-388.html>

## Appendix 3 - Useful contacts and websites

- Natural England (formerly English Nature) <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/>
- Countryside Council for Wales <http://www.ccw.gov.uk/>
- NI Environment and Heritage Service  
<http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/>
- JNCC <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/>
- UK Regionally Important Geological and geomorphological Sites (RIGS) groups  
<http://www.ukrigs.org.uk/html/ukrigs.php>
  
- British Geological Survey <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/>
- European Geoparks <http://www.europeangeoparks.org/>
- Geologists' Association <http://www.geologist.demon.co.uk/index.html>
- Geological Curator's Group <http://www.geocurator.org>
- Geological Museum, London <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit-us/history-architecture/geological-museum/geological-museum.html>
- Geology Trust (via the Gloucestershire Geology Trust)  
<http://www.glosgeotrust.org.uk/on-line%20version/frames.htm>
- Local museums <http://www.museums.co.uk/> <http://vimp.museophile.org/uk.html>
- Natural Sciences Collections Association <http://www.natsca.org>
- The GeoConservation Commission <http://www.geoconservation.com/>
- The Geological Society

- <http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/template.cfm?name=geohome>
- The Russell Society <http://www.russellsoc.org/index.htm>

## Appendix – 4 List of Consultees

### Internal

Archaeology Adviser	Thackray, Caroline
Area Manager - South Wales	James, Phillip
Area Manager Suffolk/Essex/Herts	Turner, Keith
Area Manager, Lanhydrock	Davey, Andrew
Area Warden, Lizard	Whitehouse, Justin
Assistant Director of Policy - Environment & Land Use	Robinson, Ellie
Biological Survey Adviser	Foster, Andy
Coastal Warden West Sussex	Lawrence, Andrew
Conservation Undergraduate Assistant	King, Hannah
Conservator and Adviser on Natural Sciences	Moore, Simon
Countryside Manager Helston	Cameron, Alastair
Countryside Manager Purbeck	Hodd, David
Countryside Manager South Peak	Mortimer, Paul
Countryside Manager Zennor	Brookes, Jon
Director of Conservation	Nixon, Peter
Head of Archaeology	Thackray, David
Head of Buildings	Cullen, Rory
Head Curator	Adshead, David
Head of Environmental Practices	Jarman, Rob
Head of Gardens and Parks	Calnan, Mike
Head of Health and Safety	Daniels, Mark
Head of Land Use Planning	Watson, Alan,
Head of Nature Conservation	Bullock, David
Head of Rural Surveying	Evans, David
Head Warden Gower	Musgrave, Sian
Head Warden IoW	Lang, Robin
Head Warden Pembrokeshire	Ellis, Richard
Head Warden West Dorset	Rhodes, Rob
Head Warden, Brecon	Dagget, Joe
Health and Safety Officer, West	Morgan, Dale
Inventory Co-ordinator, Territory South	Brown, Hugo
Land Use Director	Riddle, David
Learning & Interpretation Officer Shropshire Hills	Stratton, Chris
Nature Conservation Adviser North	Hearn, Katherine
Nature Conservation Adviser South	Oates, Matthew
Nature Conservation Adviser, Devon & Cornwall	Lister, Janet
Nature Conservation Adviser, East Midlands	Hawke, Carl
Nature Conservation Adviser, East of England	Warrington, Stuart
Nature Conservation Adviser, North West	Hooson, John
Nature Conservation Adviser, Northern Ireland	Davidson, Phil
Nature Conservation Adviser, South East	Humphreys, Simon
Nature Conservation Adviser, Thames & Solent	Hodgkins, Joanne
Nature Conservation Adviser, Wales	Buckingham, Helen
Nature Conservation Adviser, West Midlands	Barker, Simon



Geoconservation Commission  
Geoconservation Commission - CCW  
Geoconservation Commission - DOE NI  
Geoconservation Commission - English Heritage  
Geoconservation Commission - JNCC  
Geoconservation Commission - UK RIGS  
Geoconservation Commission - World Museum Liverpool  
Geoconservation Commission - Dorset CC  
Geoconservation Working Group/Plymouth University  
Geological Curators Group Manchester Museum- Chair  
Geological Museum London - NHM  
Natural England  
Natural England/Geoconservation Commission  
Professional Fossil Collector West Dorset  
Shropshire Geological Society & Forum  
Shropshire Geological Society & Forum  
Somerset RIGS  
The Geologists' Association  
The Russell Society  
The Wildlife Trusts  
The Wildlife Trusts  
UK RIGS  
UNESCO  
University of Wales Aberystwyth

Weighell, Tony  
Wimbledon, Bill  
Elander, Ian  
Payne, Sebastian  
Ellis, Neil  
Burek, Cynthia Prof.  
Morgan, Tony  
Edmonds, Richard  
Page, Kevin Dr  
Edwards, Mandy  
Collins, Chris  
Larwood, Jonathan  
Prosser, Chris  
Sole, David  
Etheridge, Liz  
Toghill, Peter Dr  
Prudden, Hugh  
Benton, Mike Prof  
Ince, Frank Dr  
Everitt, John  
Hawkins, Katherine  
Reynolds, John  
McKeever, Patrick Dr  
Thomas, Barry Prof.  
Brunsdon, Denys  
Harvey, John

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