

Westminster launch for Geodiversity Charter

21st October 2014

Yesterday a 'Geodiversity Charter for England' was launched at a Westminster MP Briefing – a first for a geodiversity initiative in England. The event was at the invitation of Julian Smith MP, opened by Lord de Mauley (Parliamentary Undersecretary for Natural Environment and Science) and brought to a close by Andrew Sells (Chairman of Natural England).

The Geodiversity Charter sets out the clear ambition that England's *'geodiversity is recognised as an integral and vital part of our environment, economy and heritage that must be safeguarded and managed for current and future generations'*

Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, fossils, minerals, soils, landforms and natural processes. It shapes our natural environment, landscape and where, and how, we live. England is privileged to be among the most geodiverse places in the world with 700 million years of geological history revealed by our rocks. Geodiversity, however, is an often overlooked environmental asset and resource.

For this reason an English Geodiversity Forum has been established to raise the profile of, and support for, England's geodiversity. The Forum is a partnership of organisations and groups with a shared ambition of encouraging 'action' for geodiversity, raising awareness of geodiversity, promoting and sharing good geoconservation practice, and advocating policy inclusion of geodiversity at all levels.

The Geodiversity Charter for England is a first step in achieving this ambition. Growing support for the Charter includes a range of national and local geological organisations and groups including the Geologists' Association, British Geological Survey, GeoconservationUK, and the Geology Trusts and other bodies including Natural England, the National Trust, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Natural History Museum. With 50 people in attendance at Westminster, including several MPs, there was a real sense of excitement and a keenness to grow this support and find ways of achieving this ambition together.

Lesley Dunlop, Chair of the English Geodiversity Forum said "England's geodiversity is world class and we are privileged to live in such a diverse and exciting environment. It is important that we conserve and enhance our heritage for future generations and help all to appreciate it. The Charter marks a starting point on a journey of collaboration."

The Westminster briefing was an opportunity to celebrate geodiversity. Presentations from the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site (England's only natural World Heritage Site), from the English Riviera Global Geopark, a minerals industry perspective from Aggregate Industries, and a reflection on the role and importance of geodiversity in local communities from Dudley Museum and Art Gallery gave a flavour of what has been, and can be, achieved for geodiversity. Spectacular fossils from the Natural History Museum (see photographs below) were also on show alongside a beautiful textile geological map of Hampshire.

Andrew Sells, Natural England's Chairman, who commended the Forum on the quality and clarity of the Charter, concluded that *"The fact that we are all here today in Westminster is a very positive sign. I encourage everyone here to play their part and to work with or even join the English Geodiversity Forum in the months ahead."*

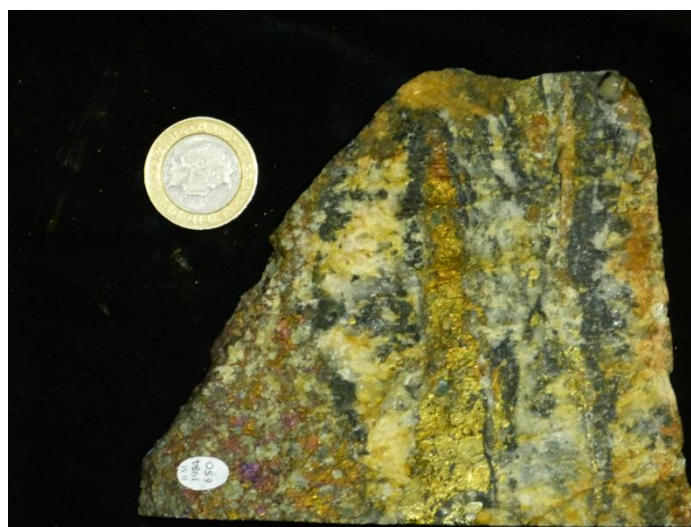
Fossils and minerals from the Natural History Museum



Lower Jurassic ammonites (*Promicroceras*) collected from Somerset, specimen approximately 20cm across (NHMUK PI C 2138) © Natural History Museum



Promicroceras detail (NHMUK PI C 2138) © Natural History Museum



Copper ore mineral vein from Geevor in Cornwall (NHMUK BM.1984,650) © Natural History Museum

Further information:

Geodiversity Charter for England and English Geodiversity Forum:

www.englishgeodiversityforum.org

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Supporters for the Charter include:

National

Aggregate Industries
British Geological Survey
Down to Earth
English Riviera Geopark
Earth Science Education Forum, England and Wales
Earth Science Education Unit
Earth Science Teachers Association
GeoConservationUK
Geological Curators Group
Geological Society
Geologists' Association
Geology Trusts
Heritage Lottery Fund
Jurassic Coast
National Trust
Natural History Museum
Natural England
Natural Sciences Collections Association
North Pennines AONB and Geopark
Palaeontological Association
Quaternary research Association
Scottish Geodiversity Forum
UK Geodiversity Action Plan (UKGAP)

Local

Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark
Cotswold Hills Geopark
East Midlands Geological Society
GeoConservation Staffordshire
Kents Cavern
Limestone Landscapes
London Geodiversity Partnership
Norfolk Geodiversity Partnership
Smiths of Bletchington