

Local Nature Conservation Site Condition Monitoring Form v2021 Guidance Notes

Introduction

This site condition monitoring form has been developed in partnership with the Malvern Hills AONB, Natural England, GeoConservationUK, the Geology Trusts and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. This form was updated for the Scottish Geology Trust in 2021.

It is the method recognised by geoconservation organisations in the UK to assess the condition of a designated local sites in a consistent manner.

It is intended that this form will be used as the national standard with which to independently, and with minimal subjectivity, monitor and record the condition of sites, to achieve a common standard of monitoring and to easily compare sites across the geoconservation network.

These guidance notes should ensure that the user understands each section and that the form is filled in as it was intended to be.

Before using the form, the assessor should adapt the form title to their own group’s name, logo and contact address.

1. Site Information

Site Name & ID no. – This should be the exact same name as used to identify the site on the group’s database. If the site has been assigned a unique ID number, then it should also be included.

Site Code & Type – Each site should be assigned a site type based on the accepted Earth Science Conservation Classification, as shown below. Enter two-letter code and brief type.

Exposure or Extensive Sites		Integrity Sites	
Active quarries and pits	EA	Static (fossil) geomorphological	IS
Disused quarries and pits	ED	Active process geomorphological	IA
Coastal cliffs and foreshore	EC	Caves	IC
River and stream sections	EW	Karst	IK
Inland outcrops	EO	Finite Sites	
Exposure underground mines and tunnels	EU	Finite mineral, fossil or other geological	FM
Road, rail and canal cuttings	ER	Mine dumps	FD
Extensive buried interest	EB	Finite underground mines or tunnels	FU
		Finite buried interest	FB

Interest feature(s) – The reasons why the site was designated a Conservation Site should be listed here. It should be a checklist of all the important features of the site so that the assessor is clear what feature(s) should be accessible, and therefore what needs to be assessed.

It should include an overall summary of the geodiversity value of the site, a location map indicating the location, site boundary and position of features of interest. Additionally, any features that might be of interest to third-party groups should be listed.

Previous Management and Dates – If known, details of any previous site management should be given, with dates if possible.

2. Primary factors

This section explores the factors that could have a direct affect on the geodiversity feature(s). The table is split into three feature types:

Bedrock feature (solid rock exposures, structural features etc.)

Superficial deposit feature (drift, river terraces, static mass movement deposits, peat deposits etc.)

Geomorphology feature (active geomorphological processes)

The assessor should delineate on the form which features are present at the site by completing each question for each feature type with a Yes or No answer. If a feature is not present (as listed in the Interest Features section), then N/A (not applicable) should be entered.

If any of the factors are having an affect on the feature(s) of interest (this is where reference to the reason for site designation is critical) this should be recorded by placing a Y in the appropriate "Y/N" box and the comments box filled in with the appropriate details.

3. Secondary factors

These are factors that do not directly affect the feature(s) but may need to be managed in order that the feature(s) to maintain a desirable condition for their designation.

Site Access – Details the accessibility of a site, a factor that is not considered with regards to SSSIs, however Geoconservation Groups tend to consider this. Issues over site access may include safety, physical obstacles such as vegetation, landowner permission, or a protected species (e.g., peregrine falcon) restricting access at certain times of the year.

Furniture – Central to interpretation and/or safety at the site. Issues may include a damaged interpretation panel, a bund or fence being damaged leading to the site becoming unsafe.

Other features – There may be other features of interest at a site that should be considered and noted e.g., a rare species of plant, or a cave of archaeological interest.

4. Site Status

Primary factors – In order for monitoring to be a useful tool to focus management, the changing of, or status quo of, a site needs to be recorded. This section deals with the site status, in order that the geoconservation community can interpret it at different levels as they see fit.

At its most basic level, an assessment is given of whether a site is in a desirable condition for use of its feature(s). A site should be given a Yes if it is in a fit state for use of its features (i.e., for educational purposes via regular school/university visits). A site may also be in a desirable condition if it is designated for scientific reasons only, and the feature(s) can practically be re-exposed, even though they may be in a slightly worse overall condition than a site that is used for education. There is a degree of subjectivity here, but the assessor is given freedom to determine this. Therefore, at the most basic level, the site can be given the status of being in a desirable or undesirable condition.

Next detail potential site management. Monitoring is undertaken with a view to both assessing the state of the site, but also what (if any) management may be undertaken. Depending on what initial condition status was given (Yes or No/Uncertain) go to the appropriate box and detail the suggested management. It is recommended that this includes both the general aims of the management and specific examples of how these aims might be achieved.

Then in the box below, the level of management (being undertaken, not going to be undertaken, etc.) should be filled in after consultation with the geoconservation group and/or landowner. This final stage is the most critical in determining a specific site status.

Finally, the condition status can then be determined from the table below as follows:

Desirable condition?	Management Status	Condition Status
Yes	Minimal management (monitoring only)	GOOD
Yes	Management required and is being undertaken	GOOD IMPROVING
Yes	Management required and is going to be undertaken	GOOD STEADY
Yes	Management required and is not going to be undertaken	GOOD DECLINING
Yes	Management required but is not possible	GOOD DECLINING
Uncertain/No	Management being undertaken	POOR IMPROVING
Uncertain/No	Management going to be undertaken	POOR STEADY
Uncertain/No	Management not going to be undertaken	POOR DECLINING
Uncertain/No	Management not possible	POOR DECLINING / LOST

Secondary factors – An assessment of whether any secondary factors need management can be given in the appropriate box. Again, ideally provide details of the overall general aims and specific examples.

References & Links – Provide a full list of references and internet links cited in the document.

Photos – A key tool in comparing site condition at different moments in time are photos and photo mosaics. The first time a site is assessed, photos should be taken in a suitable place, of the features of interest. The exact location (Eight figure grid reference), orientation and description as to where the assessor stood needs to be clearly outlined in order that for future monitoring, photos are taken from the same place to allow for comparison over time. Photographs should be resized before inserting into the form to ensure best quality and small document size. The originals can be provided separately.