

Write right - Putting geodiversity into words

Saturday 22 November 2014, 10am – 4pm

Grant Institute, Kings Buildings, University of Edinburgh

A one-day conference organised by the Scottish Geodiversity Forum and the School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh

In leaflets, museums, websites, blogs and interpretation boards, Scotland's geodiversity is being written about for a range of audiences. This conference is for anyone interested in writing about our geodiversity. It will encourage sharing of experiences, inspire new insights and work towards top-quality writing that informs, interprets and inspires. The conference will create and publish best practice guidance and appropriate examples to aid anyone writing about Scotland's geodiversity in the future.

Attendance at the conference is free, but places are limited - you must book in advance at writeright.eventbrite.co.uk.

Outline Programme

9:30 am	Registration, refreshments
10:00 am	Welcome & Opening Presentation – New Stories from the Stones, Kenny Taylor (writer, naturalist, photographer and musician - www.kennytaylor.info)
11:15 am	Workshops: Session I (see below)
12:15 pm	Lunch, pop-up poetry & displays; bring your own lunch, or catered lunch available for £7 (book in advance, pay on the day).
1:00 pm	Workshops: Session II & III
3:30 pm	Plenary: Presentation from the <i>Cruise of the Betsey</i> project: engaging diverse audiences and partners and promoting Scotland's geodiversity.
4:00 pm	Close

Workshops

Participants attend your choice of three workshops during the day – make your selection when booking. We will try to satisfy all workshop choices but we advise booking early since some workshops may fill up. Each workshop will be hands-on and practical, aiming to get participants working together to put ideas into practice.

Workshop descriptions (see below for further information)

A Science writing for kids Steve Brusatte, *University of Edinburgh*

B Museum labelling Neil Clark, *University of Glasgow*

C Creating compelling stories in the geosciences Lara Reid, *science writer*

D Panels: Interpretive vs information - what works best where Colin Macfadyen, *Scottish Natural Heritage*

E Science and Social Media Isla Myers-Smith, *University of Edinburgh*

F Gaia's Library - Bring a favourite piece of geopoetry or geoprose, and try out one of your own Earth-works! (outdoors) Simon Cuthbert, *University of West Scotland*

G What should we do about Siccar Point? Angus Miller, *Scottish Geodiversity Forum*

Workshop A Science Writing for Kids *Steve Brusatte, School of GeoSciences, University of Edinburgh palaeontologist and children's book author*

Getting kids enthused about science, nature, and the world around them is an important, yet challenging, goal. Presenting information to children is very different than presenting information to adults. Children usually have less background knowledge about complex scientific concepts and a smaller vocabulary than adults, but at the same time, they have a propensity for awe and wonder that many adults sadly lose as they grow up. We shouldn't shy away from trying to communicate geoscience concepts to children, but should embrace it and try to tailor our message to children. In this practical workshop Dr Brusatte will share some of his experiences writing books on dinosaurs for children, visiting primary and secondary school classrooms to speak to children about science, and delivering public lectures for school-aged groups. Group activities will challenge workshop participants to take a fairly complex scientific story and distil it down into a fun, engaging, relevant, and understandable message for kids.

Workshop B Museum labelling *Neil Clark, University of Glasgow, palaeontologist and author*

Museum labels can be frustrating for the visitor – condescending to some and overly complex to others. How do museums strike the balance? Who is their target market when writing labels? How do museums draw on their knowledge of geodiversity and condense it into short paragraphs? There are many techniques used in the writing of museum labels so as to include the maximum information in as few words as possible. The Hunterian in Glasgow University mounted many exhibitions in the last 20 years that Dr Clark has been employed there and he has edited and written many of the texts to fit with the templates imposed by exhibition design. In this workshop you will be challenged to write a museum label by retaining as much relevant information as possible whilst still maintaining the interesting facts. These techniques have also been used by Dr Clark to write several children's books on dinosaurs, more academic books on amber and gold, as well as many research publications on a variety of geological topics.

Workshop C Creating compelling stories in the geosciences *Lara Reid, science writer*

Communicating science clearly and accurately is vital, particularly in this high-technology age where information is at everyone's fingertips. People often want information in smaller and smaller chunks, and maintaining accuracy under these circumstances is not easy. One of the most important goals in science communication is to tailor your writing specifically for different target audiences. Finding points of interest in your research and telling a good story is half of the battle; the other half should be spent in careful consideration of your reader. What would they likely find interesting and approachable? How might they relate to your work? It is possible for most scientific research, no matter how complex, to be described and explained clearly and accurately enough for the general public to understand. In this practical workshop, we will cover the basics of 'story-telling' for different audiences in the geosciences.

Workshop D Panels: Interpretive versus information - what works best where *Colin Macfadyen, SNH*

Panels may be found at a whole variety of locations, ranging from historic and cultural sites to natural heritage areas with geodiversity features of interest. Panels generally are used to present salient points of information, to inform and guide visitors, but can also be used to inspire and spark interest in areas that the visitor may not be aware of, and in doing so interpret a feature or fact they may otherwise never have been aware of. This workshop will examine aspects of information and interpretive panels and draw out the important distinctions that ought to be considered when preparing geodiversity content to ensure adoption of the most appropriate style. Ideal for participants considering preparing a panel for a geodiversity site. Feel free to bring along your ideas for discussion.

Workshop E Science and Social Media – How will you get your message out there? *Isla Myers-Smith, School of GeoSciences, University of Edinburgh*

Science is changing rapidly. It used to be that academic discourse happened through letters, printed journals and books. Now science is online. The internet and social media are opening the Ivory Tower up to the public and providing all sorts of engagement opportunities. But, before we as scientist can engage, we need to figure out our message and how we can best communicate it. In this workshop, we will cover the basics of branding yourself and your message. We will explore the use of blogs, twitter, websites, YouTube and more to communicate science. Have you ever wanted to improve your web presence, start tweeting or blogging or go public with your science? Then this is the workshop for you!

Workshop F Gaia's Library - Bring a favourite piece of geopoetry or geoprose, and try out one of your own Earth-works! (outdoors) *Simon Cuthbert, University of West Scotland*

You're invited to bring along one or two of your favourite pieces of creative writing about landscape and geology and, if you like, this can be a friendly forum to try out your own writing. We can discuss what makes it special to you - the images it creates, the story it tells, the style, or the history and significance of the piece. We might also consider the different roles and messages offered by technical and creative writing about the Earth. It is intended that we will collate some or all of the pieces presented in this workshop into a thematic set for the enjoyment of Forum members or perhaps a wider readership.

Workshop G What should we do about Siccar Point? *Angus Miller, Scottish Geodiversity Forum*

Siccar Point, described as the most important geological site in the world, is well visited by geoscientists but virtually unknown by the general public. The unconformity has changed little since James Hutton first discovered it in 1787. A beautiful natural site in a remote location, at the foot of a steep grassy slope, but it lies just a few miles from the A1 road. Written information – interpretation boards, leaflets and websites – is sparse. The Forum intends to work with partners to promote Siccar Point better. How should we proceed? Who should be involved? What is our ultimate objective for the site – a "Knockan Crag" type development or should the site be left exactly as it is? Discussion workshop, one session only.