

Expanding the geoconservation toolbox in Northern Ireland

ANDREW BRATTON^{1,2} - 1. Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, Armoy, BT53 8SL, Northern Ireland <andrew@ccght.org> ¶ 2. School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland

Focusing on the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site (WHS), located within the aspiring Causeway Coast Geopark in Northern Ireland, this project aims to improve conservation of geoheritage by ensuring that technology supports rather than substitutes practical conservation measures. As a tourism 'honeypot', the Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast WHS represents Northern Ireland's most significant natural heritage resource site. Located within the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the site is beset with conservation designations and legal requirements that have an overwhelming focus on the protection of bio- rather than geodiversity. As such, it represents a contested space, around and within which stakeholders capitalise on its' world-class values. The Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust and Queen's University Belfast demonstrate how 'Digital Documentation' of natural heritage data within a single Geographical Information System (GIS), combined with 3D laser scanning, can facilitate development of simple integrated tools which provide managers with information necessary to make informed decisions about conservation of the area's outstanding geodiversity. Results from the project feed directly into the development of a geoconservation education program and associated field guides for teachers throughout the UK and Ireland. The aim is to enhance the quality of geological education through 'hands-on' training for teachers and students in the appropriate use and conservation of geoheritage sites.

Presented in Theme 3