BGS OpenGeoscience: geological maps, photos and much more for free on the Web.

The BGS is leaping ahead in the release of free online materials with the launch of **OpenGeoscience (**www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience). This is a new free web service, where users are able to view high resolution geological maps, download photographs and other geoscience information. People are free to use this information in any way they wish in support of their teaching, research and other non-commercial activities.

In its first release, OpenGeoscience allows users to view the BGS Digital Geological Map of Great Britain at the 1:50,000 scale (DiGMapGB-50) for free. Not only this, but it also includes a new photographic database, GeoScenic, with almost 50,000 high quality photos at high (1000-by-1000-pixel) resolution. There are a range of special images collections, such as, 'Best of BGS images', the British Science Association's major historical collection of earth science field photographs and Dr R. Kidston's Carboniferous plants (scanned from original glass plates).

Professor Paul Smith, Head of School, Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences at Birmingham University, says, "The amount of online material provided for educational purposes by BGS has increased very considerably over a short time-scale, and has the capacity to transform the way in which geosciences are taught in universities."

OpenGeoscience is an acceleration of a process which has already seen an opening up of online provision of BGS digital materials. The service will continue to be enhanced during 2010 with further significant releases of digital materials, such as, scanned borehole records information for viewing, and a new range of INSPIRE[1]-compliant data discovery and view services of BGS datasets starting with the layers currently available within the BGS GeoIndex application www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex.

Professor John Ludden, BGS Director, says, "OpenGeoscience is an exciting initiative which will enable the BGS to meet its objective of providing modern geoscience knowledge and services for the UK's national good. Through OpenGeoscience the BGS will show the world the wealth of information it holds."

OpenGeoscience complements and enhances an already strong range of services and delivery routes for BGS geoscience information. For example, a range BGS digital materials are already available to the higher education sector for download through the EDINA Digimap service (www.edina.ac.uk/digimap) in support of teaching and research. In addition to this, the BGS also produces a free bespoke package, GeoScholar, which offers a wide range of digital teaching materials targeted at HEIs for classical areas of UK geology Britain. Re-use of BGS materials in the business sector continues to be served through a range of highly successful fee-paying services, such as, BGS GeoRecords and GeoReports, and Digital Data Licensing services available from the BGS and commercial resellers.

www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience

[1] INSPIRE is the EU directive which promotes sharing of spatial environmental information among public sector organisations

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