

## Lothian shapes up for its second first

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West Lothian, pioneer of the Local Biodiversity Action Planning process in Scotland, is set to take the lead again with the first Local Geodiversity Action Plan north of the border. Thanks to funding from the Scottish Executive's Community Environmental Renewal Grant Scheme, which represents the proceeds of the Aggregate Levy, the British Geological Survey (BGS) will begin the process this summer with a geodiversity audit of West Lothian. BGS and West Lothian Council (WLC), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Lothian and Borders RIGS Group (LaBRIGS), will assess the state of geodiversity in the area in its local to national context and its relevance to biodiversity, soil conservation and other protection designations. The audit will inform sustainable planning and development, and management, conservation and interpretation of the Earth heritage. It will provide the essential basis for the construction of the follow-on West Lothian Geodiversity Action Plan. As well as a more integrated approach to nature conservation, the project will lead to new GIS-based information; wider recognition of local sites and features with educational and recreational value, and recognition of geological and geomorphological assets and their value by local communities and land managers. Just west of Edinburgh, West Lothian covers 425 km<sup>2</sup> from the Pentland Hills in the south-east, over the valley of the River Almond to the Bathgate Hills and the south shore of the Firth of Forth.



Participants at the sixth UKRIGS Annual Conference visiting Petershill Quarry SSSI and RIGS in the Bathgate Hills, West Lothian. This abandoned quarry and former water reservoir is owned by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and is one of the many geological highlights of West Lothian, where work on a Local Geodiversity Action Plan is being undertaken. A leaflet produced by LaBRIGS interprets the geology and the intimately associated flora and fauna.

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