

Meet the new Geopark Team

Laura Hamlet - Information Manager

Laura is a Geoarchaeologist and joins the North West Highland Geopark as an expert in Geomorphology and Environmental History. She is currently in the process of submitting her doctoral thesis on prehistoric land management and resource use to the University of Stirling. Laura is a qualified mountain leader and is delighted to be working



alongside local providers to deliver an exciting program of geotours and events this summer and develop new pebble routes. Laura has been involved with a British Geological Survey research consortium, experimenting with the application of geological modelling software to soil subsurface mapping and very much looks forward to acting as geologist for the North West Highlands Geopark. Laura is passionate about the value of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage, and is thrilled at the opportunity to work towards a sustainable future for Scotland's communities and geodiversity. She will be moving to Elphin in spring 2014 with her husband Tim and their collie Kiera.

Pete Harrison – Business Manager

Pete has lived just outside Ullapool for over 30 years and recently retired as head teacher of Ullapool High School. His original degree was in geology and physics from London and then, after a couple of years working for such employers as the British Geological Survey and a seismic oil prospecting company, he trained as a geology and physics teacher in Aberystwyth. He has been involved in earth science education in schools for all of his teaching career

and with adults via evening classes, the Open University and more recently for the Macphail Centre, targeted at those resident in the Geopark. In the last 3 years over forty adults have taken this course, which consists of distance learning and day schools. He is looking after the company finance and governance, making funding applications and investigating setting up a temporary geocentre with geotours, so that the Geopark can start interacting with residents and visitors. He is still teaching a geology class in Ullapool High School and working with a group of S5/6 pupils in 4 secondary schools around the Moray Firth.



Mike Goodwin – Marketing Manager

Prior to joining the North West Highlands Geopark Mike enjoyed a successful career in the international oil industry as a geophysicist then more recently as a sales and marketing manager for ION Geophysical. Mike has a BSc in Geophysical Sciences from the University of Southampton and is a member of the PESGB and the EAGE. Having specialised in seismic



modelling and imaging for the purposes of oil and gas exploration, Mike is looking forward to his new role promoting geotourism and helping develop our business plan to ensure sustainable funding for the future. In addition to his responsibilities with the Geopark, Mike runs The Spice Route ethnic catering business with his wife Lucy and works a small diversified croft overlooking Loch Inchard.

Funding secured from the Petroleum Exploration Society of Great Britain

In December 2013 we were pleased to receive notification of an award of £19,000 from the PESGB Sub Committee for



Investments and Disbursements. A condition of the funding is that it is used for redevelopment of the website, brochures and leaflets. Once complete we have been invited to supply an article to the PESGB's monthly newsletter which is read by the great majority of geoscientists in the UK and Irish oil industry. The SCID utilises PESGB surplus from the biennial PETEX conference and exhibition to make disbursements in line with the objective of the Society: *"to encourage, for the public benefit, education in the scientific and technical aspects of petroleum exploration"*. Since 2004 beneficiaries of a fund exceeding £1.2M have included: The Geobus outreach educational earth science demonstrations to schools, The Cambridge University Time Truck and Aberdeen University Scholar Awards. We have a number of grant applications pending to other organisations so hope to have more good news on funding for our next newsletter.

Plans for 2014 and beyond ..

During the summer of 2013 the North West Highlands Geopark hosted a team from the Global Geoparks Network and submitted its detailed plans for the Geopark though to 2016. Whilst there was much to be proud of the revalidation team made a number of recommendations which we need to consider if we want to remain part of the Global Geoparks Network beyond 2015. These include the recruitment of dedicated staff, establishing a geocentre and increasing the visibility of the North West Highlands Geopark within the community. The board feel it is important for the North West Highlands Geopark to remain within the GGN. Following a two year funding commitment from the Scottish Government we have begun to incorporate the inspectors recommendations in our plan which includes a new programme of geotours ranging from half day to week long excursions. Additionally we are making significant progress with our plan to open a geocentre within the Geopark in the spring of 2015. We are

looking at a number of sites and with negotiations ongoing are unable to confirm the location yet. However we anticipate the geocentre will incorporate a geology exhibition and coffee shop in addition to a Geopark interpretation centre.

March Geology Course in Assynt

Our colleagues at the Assynt Learning Centre are running a geology course and some follow-up field trips in March. The first session on 11th March will be held at Assynt Leisure Centre from 7pm - 9pm. There are then 3, 3 hour outings scheduled with their tutor Fiona Saywell. These will explore sites in Assynt and be arranged on the 11th March with the people that attend to best accommodate everyone. The course fee is £30 or £15 concession for over 60's.

Marking Time in Assynt - A Creative Response to an Ancient Landscape

The renowned poet Norman MacCaig had an enduring relationship with the landscape of Assynt, which inspired much of his best-loved work. Following in his footsteps, this coming August Assynt-based artist Jan Kilpatrick and Massachusetts-based writer Christian McEwen will be running a new week-long course set within the Geopark, with the aim of taking their interest in geology beyond the science, towards an imaginative and creative response. The course will visit key locations, such as Knockan Crag, the Bone Caves and Little Assynt, to provide inspiration for the creative writing, print-making, photography and book-making that will take place back at Jan's Studio in Elphin. For more details about this week, see www.wildtiles.co.uk/marking-time-assynt-elphin.

Christian McEwen has a long history of writing and teaching about the natural landscape and so, to take advantage of her visit to the area, the two will also be running community workshops at the same three locations, producing art and writing for a community exhibition called "Creating Assynt", which will travel throughout the Geopark area over autumn. More details of these events to follow.

