

Item 1 What is a Geopark?

The North West Highlands Geopark lies in the Highland Region of Scotland and includes parts of the counties of Sutherland and Wester Ross. The park's eastern boundary generally follows the Moine Thrust Belt, one of its many notable geological features. Otherwise, the park is generally bounded by the north and west coasts of Scotland, with a few islands included in the park, such as the Summer Isles.

Awarded UNESCO Geopark status in 2004, it features some of the oldest rocks in Europe, around 3000 million years old. The area is one of the most sparsely inhabited in Europe and is largely treeless.

The International Network of Geoparks (INoG) is a UNESCO programme established in 1998. According to UNESCO, for a Geopark to qualify in the INoG, it needs to:

- have a management plan designed to foster socio-economic development that is sustainable (most likely to be based on agritourism and geotourism)
- demonstrate methods for conserving and enhancing geological heritage and provide means for teaching geoscientific disciplines and broader environmental issues
- have joint proposals submitted by public authorities, local communities and private interests acting together, which demonstrate the best practices with respect to Earth heritage conservation and its integration into sustainable development strategies.

The following material is taken from the North West Highlands (NWH) Geopark website.

At 3000 million years old, the rocks at the seashore are even older than the hills – and what hills they are! Where else can you experience a skyline that compares to the ridges of Foinaven and Arkle, or classic hills like Suilven or Stac Polly? In places like this it's not just the eagles or the peregrines that soar. This is the most sparsely populated corner of Europe. Set yourself free in a space with space to spare. Stunning mountain landscapes, clean sandy beaches, ancient settlements, thriving communities – NWH Geopark offers one of the best opportunities to explore wild places in Europe.

Whatever your interests and however you choose to travel, the Geopark has some fantastic activities and amenities on offer for everyone, all year round. Put together an itinerary that will please the whole family. Find a grocery store, a bookshop or a campsite close to a beautiful sandy beach. Discover more about the fascinating geology and natural heritage of NWH Geopark at award-winning visitor centres and local museums.

Find out more about the Geopark – who lives here, what impact geology has on our daily lives and what's on locally – or start searching for travel and visitor information by going straight to our website at <http://www.northwest-highlands-geopark.org.uk/index.html>

Who lives in the Geopark?

Throughout the Geopark, traditional ways of living and working are very much a part of daily life. The largest centres of population are Lochinver, Kinlochbervie and Durness. Many settled areas follow the pattern of crofting communities.

A croft is a small agricultural unit averaging around five hectares in size together with some hill grazing shared with other local crofters. The main products of Highland crofts are lamb and beef, but many crofters are diversifying into other areas such as small-scale tourism, fruit and vegetable production, weaving or teleworking.

Crofting is fundamental to the area's heritage and a vital component in its future. Creating the conditions for a sustainable future has seen the introduction of a number of new technologies, including renewable and green energy initiatives as well as energy efficient housing.

What are the benefits of living in a Geopark?

Strong local involvement in sustainable development strategies brings its own benefits for the local community, and every Geopark will have its own unique approach to issues according to local priorities.

Thriving communities are vital to the ongoing viability of NWH Geopark. The aim is to carry out appropriate development which maximises current potential without compromising future possibilities for generations to come.

Further benefits include:

- opportunities for local businesses to diversify into tourism niche markets such as geotourism or the green tourism sector
- meeting increasing demand for locally produced food, clothing, arts and crafts
- better promotion of local events and activities to a wider audience
- development and marketing of local skills, knowledge and aspects of cultural heritage, eg traditional skills, music festivals, language learning opportunities
- new employment opportunities for local people with expertise in geosciences or geotourism.

Extra space

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10

Turn over for the next question

Turn over ►



Extra space

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10

Turn over for the next question

Turn over ►



Extra space

10

Turn over for the next question

Turn over ►



