

# BGS Gilmerton Core Move Advisory Group

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010, Gilmerton

## Attendees

John Faithfull, Hunterian Museum, Glasgow [Chair, BGS Collections Advisory Committee] (JF)  
Peter Haile, Deputy Head, Promotion, Knowledge and Exploration, DECC (PH)  
Adam Moss, BG Group (AM)  
Andy Sims, Merlin Energy Resources [representative of the Petroleum Group of the Geological Society] (AS)  
Jeremy Giles - Head of the [National Geoscience Data Centre](#), BGS (JRAG)  
Mike Howe - Chief Curator, BGS (MPAH)  
Graham Tulloch – Scottish Collections Administrator, BGS (GJT)

MPAH welcomed Group members to Gilmerton and thanked them for attending. The aim of the meeting was to define a recommended set of procedures for the safe transport of the core from Gilmerton to Keyworth. BGS had developed a set of proposals, outlined in the discussion document “*Gilmerton Core Sample Collection: Keyworth Transfer*”, which they hoped would form the basis of open discussions at the meeting.

Informal discussion on the various stages of the move commenced. It was **agreed** that the caged pallets would be loaded onto transport with full sides outwards to avoid any possibility of boxes falling out.

GJT

MPAH said that each load would include a shock monitor to measure the acceleration applied to the material during the journey. The pallet would be clearly marked and the driver warned. It was suggested that, as well as viewing the results during the QA/QC inspection, a field should be added to the database to indicate if the load had been subject to abnormal shock. This information might be significant during subsequent core viewings.

MPAH

GJT commented that move would improve the curatorial knowledge of the cores. Photography prior to the move would assist not only the curation staff, but also users, through the web delivery of the images. It was also an opportunity to indicate the quality of the core and highlight potential conservation issues.

The availability of examination laboratories at Keyworth was raised, particularly in view of other competing users. MPAH confirmed that offices were being converted into two new confidential laboratories and the existing two laboratories upgraded. He thought services for visitors would be better, although BGS staff would need to be more focussed in their use of the facilities.

Following discussion on the possible effects of this move on the material, GJT was tasked with producing a short report on the history of the storage of the collection. The possibility of adding the movement history of each box to the

GJT

curatorial database would be considered.

AM asked if there was any truth in a comment made at a meeting of the London Petrophysical Society in ca. 2005 that BGS intended to destroy all samples in the collection more than 15 years old.

MPAH confirmed that there absolutely no truth in the statement. It was noted that this was the year in which BGS took back management of the Gilmerton core store from a private company, and it was assumed to be an attempt at troublemaking. AM would attempt to find out the background to the original comment.

AM

GJT led the Group on a tour of the core store and then to a lab in which a number of boxes and three wells suggested by AS had been laid out as representing the problems that were expected to be found when moving the core.

Various methods for stabilizing the core ahead of transport were discussed, but the general principles accepted were:

1. Fill voids at core ends or where samples were taken with plastazote foam, cut to length from pre-cut strips.
2. Where cores were soft, cover with flat sheets of acid-free tissue.
3. Fill boxes with “scrunched up” acid-free tissue – or occasionally pre-cut foam strips.
4. Add a length of flat cardboard if required to stop tissue moving when the box was inserted into its sleeve.

It was **agreed** that blocking small gaps between sections of core would be disproportionate to any benefits.

*The minute below has been written from notes taken by GJT over the course of the business meeting and grouped under the headings as per the agenda. As such they do not form an accurate chronological record of the discussion but do cover all topics discussed.*

## **Business Meeting**

### **1. Welcome & Introduction:**

MPAH suggested JF to Chair the meeting, as current Chairman of the independent BGS Collections Advisory Committee. This was **agreed**.

JF introduced himself as Chairman of the BGS Collections Advisory Committee, a post he had held for the past 3 years. The Committee met twice a year and had done so for 10 years; its purpose was to advise BGS in the current best practices in curation and conservation. The Committee is fully independent and does not rubber stamp BGS decisions or policy and scrutinises new and existing procedures. The Committee comprises members with many years experience in managing large, long-term collections.

## 2. **Background:**

MPAH described the BGS core collections, from the early days in London in the 1950s, through Kippax in Leeds, to the 2010 extension at Keyworth.

The purpose of today was to define a recommended set of procedures for the safe transport of core from Gilmerton to Keyworth. If there were issues that were difficult to resolve, these were to be flagged for further investigation and resolution later.

## 3. **Lunch.**

## 4. **Core stabilization & packaging:**

It was necessary to define & explain clearly the procedures to facilitate the training of those staff not fully experienced in core handling.

MPAH said that following the discussions in the core lab, he now appreciated the advantages of “scrunched up” acid-free tissue paper for filling voids above the core, but without any risk of compressing the core. It was suggested that thought be given to the sizes of paper provided as time saved on folding on such a large project could be significant. Sheets should be cut to the length & width of the boxes allowing multiple sheets to be used at a time rather than folding.

The general principles for packaging were as described above in the core lab item and would be included in a revised “*Gilmerton Core Sample Collection: Keyworth Transfer*” procedures document.

## 5. **Core transport**

The safe and quick movement of the core are key to maintaining good relations with industry and other users. The staff and ‘other expenditure’ cost of the move are internal BGS/NERC problems, but any delays or over-runs would have an adverse impact on the user community and reflect negatively on BGS.

A number of trials were planned, including placing different types of foam under pallets, and driving them round the Keyworth site to simulate road journeys, and a similar exercise with boxes of unconsolidated sand. The results of these trials would assist in deciding how best to pack these samples.

As discussed earlier, MPAH noted that each load would include a labelled pallet with a shock monitor. This would encourage careful driving and allow us to flag up core that might have been abnormally shocked. Several core laboratory companies provide similar systems.

The new database recording the core locations in the Keyworth store should include a “Vibration Alert” field to indicate when a core has been subjected to unusual vibration and possible damage during transport. It was also suggested that a “no blame culture” be adopted and it be a requirement to record any noteworthy incidents, including near misses in an incident

log. It was recognised that moving such a large number of boxes may produce occasional accidents.

**6. Core inspection & QC:**

A QC procedure is being developed to specify which pallets and which boxes should be checked on receipt at Keyworth.

The condition of the core will be checked against the photograph taken at Gilmerton to determine what, if any, movement has occurred. A number of photographs, of a lesser quality than at Gilmerton, would be taken of core boxes as they are unpacked for QA/QC examination at Keyworth. The photographs will include the packing provided for the journey and the condition of the core once the packing has been removed. There will be no movement of the core by the unpacking team before the photographs are taken

If there has been movement, this and the possible reason will be reported to the Gilmerton team who will modify the procedures to reduce or eliminate repeats in the future. Typical photographs from before and after the move will be placed on the BGS website.

A greater percentage of fragile cores and unconsolidated sands would be checked; the location of these would be identified by the flags on the boxes.

**7. Core photography:**

There was discussion on the contents of the image, including layout and labelling. The well number, core number and top & bottom depths should be included, possibly on a digital screen included in the photograph. Ideally, the data should also be captured in the EXIF element of the image. PH agreed there was no confidentiality reason why the core box number could not be shown on the web image, provided that the well had been released.

In the interest of speed and collection integrity, the external boxes should never be separated from the internal and therefore should travel with the internal ones on the photography/packing conveyor.

The expectations of the captured images should be managed and users informed that the primary function of these is to provide a curatorial record of the core and not an examination tool, although they could provide some geological information. They are not intended to cut across any existing or proposed initiatives.

A CDA Focus Group has written to members to determine what core photographs currently exist. This will not be a complete list as not all operators are members of CDA.

**8. General logistics:**

The order in which to move the material was discussed; sequential, basin or block/quad order. It was **agreed** that moving the material in sequential order was the quickest method, with the least opportunity for error.

GJT stated that once the move was underway, material could be either held back or fast-tracked to allow visitors to only attend one store.

It was **agreed** that BGS would develop and publish procedures to minimise the impact of the move on core store visitors. These would include the ability for visitors to view nominated material at a single site, with material being held back or moved “out of sequence” if so required. Core and samples subject to active and continued academic research would remain as long as possible in Edinburgh. Visitors could not expect to have material made available at short notice, but the normal 3-4 weeks booking period should be adequate, provided that the sample list was submitted when the booking was made.

It was **agreed** that BGS should inform users through the website as to how they will move the core, and that users should advise BGS if they have **specific** reasons for suggesting another method.

There was discussion on project time management: BGS needed to adhere to the published timetable as closely as possible and a full timetable should only be published when reasonably certain. Any delays would be potentially damaging to BGS. It would be better to build in a period for contingency and complete the project early rather than have to extend it. In reply to a question from AS, BGS confirmed that they could not yet perform detailed “time and motion” trials until the conveyor system and camera apparatus was available. GJT had done some timing trials for retrieval of the material from racking at Gilmerton.

MPAH stated the current timing had been calculated using a 7 hour day and a 212 working day year (the BGS standard year to account for annual leave & sick leave) so some contingency was included. Overtime could also be worked to ensure the schedule is maintained. The project staff costings were conservative and could include some overtime. A group bonus, based on quality and productivity, was also being considered. AS stated that it was vital that the move did not begin unless BGS could guarantee that funds were available to complete the project to the required standard and within a reasonable timescale.

Although it was recognised that maintaining the schedule was important, it was stressed that the primary objectives were to secure the integrity of the core and maintain availability. Quality and careful planning are therefore key to the success of the project.

**9. Further development required:**

Ways to improve the future transparency of the project to the user community were discussed. AS stated that it was still not 100% clear if the move would happen. It was suggested that including a clear statement from NERC Chief Executive on the BGS website would clarify this. This might cause some “discussion” which BGS should be prepared to field in a positive manner.

Universities using Gilmerton for teaching will have a problem managing their curriculum after the move. These universities are important because they provide a significant number of good geoscientists.

The Group were informed of the possibility of building a *Scottish Teaching Collection* to be retained in the Edinburgh area which, it is hoped, would provide material to allow the universities to continue their vital work.

The procedures for access during the move need to be published on the BGS website, in good time to allow users to become acquainted with them. Updates should also be provided to professional journals (e.g. PESGB). BGS needed to provide details of what it was doing, how it was doing it, and invite constructive suggestions, but BGS considered that a further public debate on areas where a decision had already been made was counterproductive.

It was suggested the manner in which the decision had been taken and the perceived lack of consultation running up to it had been a missed opportunity for BGS/PESGB/Geol Soc etc. to form a united voice.

The methodology for designing the procedures and the success thereof should be written up in professional journals, for example the GCG.

#### 10. Any other business:

The Group were of the opinion that the procedures for the move must be transparent. JRAG **agreed** the procedures should be published for comment on the BGS web site as soon as the document was completed.

JRAG

JF to write to PESGB and the Geol Soc inviting them to nominate a member for the BGS Corporate Collections Advisory Committee.

JF

The minutes of this meeting to be made available within 10 days and when agreed by those present, would be available for general circulation.

GJT