



PRESS RELEASE

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What's under your street?

Discover if you live on rocks from an extinct volcano, in the middle of an ancient river or deep under a Caribbean-like sea teeming with exotic creatures. This is now possible with the British Geological Survey's (BGS) release of OpenGeoscience.

OpenGeoscience is a new web service that provides geological maps for the whole of Great Britain, images from its extensive collection of photographs and a wide range of other digital information – all for free.

The BGS has been making geological maps of the UK for 175 years and this is the first time maps of such detail will be made freely available using the internet. These maps are based on the standard BGS geological map at a scale of 1:50,000. This enables resolution of geological details to about 50 metres on the ground – essentially street-level - a world first in terms of releasing country-wide information at street-level scale.

Since 1891 the BGS have been collecting images of geological interest from around the UK and further afield. Up to 50,000 of these images, now part of the BGS National Geological Photographic Database, will be freely available to download via the GeoScenic web portal as part of OpenGeoscience.

These include photographs of recent floods in Britain, erupting volcanoes overseas, cave exploration in Yorkshire in the 1930s and the British Science Association's major historical collection of earth science photographs, as well as many pictures of classic geological localities and landscapes.

Dr Keith Westhead, Head of Information Delivery, BGS said "OpenGeoscience provides the public with a wealth of geological information including maps, photos and digital data, which they can combine with other environmental information to help understand the world around them."

OpenGeoscience is free for teaching, research and other non-commercial activities. Dr Steve Drury, Senior Lecturer in Remote Sensing at the Open University said "It is a world first and, in my opinion, a development of major public interest by literally putting geosciences 'on the map'. It will become a kind of 'GoogleRock' for a great many people."

Search for your own local area to find out more:

- Edinburgh lies on an extinct volcano.
- Luton and Stevenage sit on the same rocks as the White Cliffs of Dover. These formed when much of Britain was covered by a shallow sea that was full of tiny animals which accumulated on the sea floor to form chalk.



- Spectacular examples of rocks which formed when lava entered the ocean can be seen on the tidal island of Llanddwyn.
- Glasgow is built on the remains of an ancient tropical forest.
- Nottingham's Castle Rock was formed on a wide plain with seasonal rivers much like the Colorado River basin today.
- The Lizard peninsula in Cornwall is made of a slice of ancient ocean floor.

In its first release, OpenGeoscience includes the release of the BGS Digital Geological Map of Great Britain at the 1:50,000 scale (DiGMapGB-50) for free viewing and access via a web map service (WMS). It also includes the free provision of 1:625,000 scale geological map for the UK onshore and offshore, earthquake location information and samples of ground stability hazard maps. Not only this but OpenGeoscience provides software downloads to help geological mapping, free educational resources and access to the wealth of digital geological information and reports held by the BGS.

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."

www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience

For GeoScenic sample images go to:

ftp://ftp.bgs.ac.uk/pubload/OpenGeoscience_images

Ends

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Notes for Editors

The British Geological Survey

The British Geological Survey (BGS), a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), is the nation's principal supplier of objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise and information for decision making for governmental, commercial and individual users. The BGS maintains and develops the nation's understanding of its geology to improve policy making, enhance national wealth and reduce risk. It also collaborates with the national and international scientific community in carrying out research in strategic areas, including energy and natural resources, our vulnerability to environmental change and hazards, and our general knowledge of the Earth system. More about the BGS can be found at www.bgs.ac.uk.

OpenGeoscience

OpenGeoscience is a **free** service where you can view maps, download photographs and other information. Use OpenGeoscience material free-of-charge for non-commercial private study, research and educational activities.

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 for full download to the GB higher education sector through the EDINA Digimap service (www.edina.ac.uk/digimap) in support of teaching and research. The BGS also produces a free bespoke university package, GeoScholar, which offers a wide range of digital teaching materials for classic geological areas of Britain. Re-use of BGS materials in the business sector is also served through a range of highly successful fee-paying services, such as, the BGS GeoRecords, GeoReports and Digital Data Licensing services.