

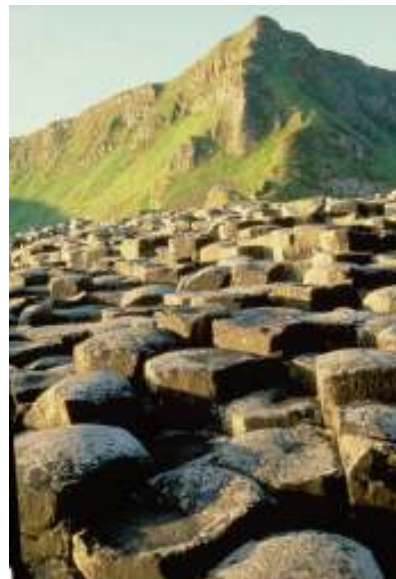


CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS HERITAGE TRUST

A range of international, national and local nature conservation and landscape designations exist in the UK in order to protect and manage these areas sustainably. Some of these designations include Areas of Outstanding Beauty (AONBs), Ramsar sites, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs) to name a few.

Every week the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust will be explaining some of the designations within Northern Ireland. This week we look at The Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage site.

The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO (The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 1972. The convention has been adopted by over 170 countries and provides for the protection of those cultural and natural properties deemed to be of 'outstanding universal value from an international viewpoint'. The Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage site was designated in 1986 on the grounds of its earth science and natural heritage importance.



An area made up of approximately 40,000 interlocking basalt columns, The Giant's Causeway is the result of an ancient volcanic eruption. The tops of the columns form stepping stones that lead from the cliff foot and disappear under the sea. Most of the columns are hexagonal, although there are also some with four,

five, seven and eight sides. The tallest are about 12 metres (39 ft) high, and the solidified lava in the cliffs is 28 metres thick in places.

As well as being a World Heritage site, the Giants Causeway was also declared a National Nature Reserve in 1987, being home to species such as the narrow-mouthed whorl snail. The Giants Causeway is home to the only known population of the endangered snail in Northern Ireland.



The Giant's Causeway acts as an important habitat to many other plants and animals. The site includes flower rich grasslands and heaths as well as shoreline species such as the rare oyster plant and the cliff-dwelling Scots lovage. Chough birds also breed on the north facing cliffs as well as other notable species, including twite.

Don't miss next week's featured designation... **National Nature Reserves (NNRs)!**