

# RESEARCH GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITHIN THE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY WORLD HERITAGE SITE AND ITS DISTINCTIVE LANDSCAPE SETTING

## INTRODUCTION

The World Heritage Site Research Advisory Group welcomes research at the World Heritage Site (WHS) and aims to ensure that research activities support the management and conservation objectives outlined within the Giant's Causeway WHS Management Plan 2021-2027.

The WHS Research Advisory Group has put together this document with relevant information on the designations at the site, the permissions and consents required to undertake research, and important considerations when planning any research at the Giant's Causeway. Researchers are strongly encouraged to follow these guidelines and notify the WHS Research Advisory Group in advance of conducting research at the site.

## ABOUT THE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY WORLD HERITAGE SITE

The Giant's Causeway & Causeway Coast UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) is one of the most important geological sites on Earth and is Northern Ireland's only World Heritage Site. The Site is situated on the north coast of County Antrim and extends approximately 3 kilometres along the coast and is approx 0.5 kilometres in width. The WHS includes terrestrial and marine areas, covering 79 hectares of land and 160 hectares of sea (Figure 1).

The WHS features a distinctive rugged shoreline, rocky outcrops and an array of geological features. This includes the iconic causeway stones made up of 40,000 interlocking, extremely regular, jointed basalt columns, some of which form a distinctive pavement at the foot of basalt cliffs. Geomorphological processes continue to shape and reshape the landscapes of the Site and natural erosion gradually alters the cliff exposures.

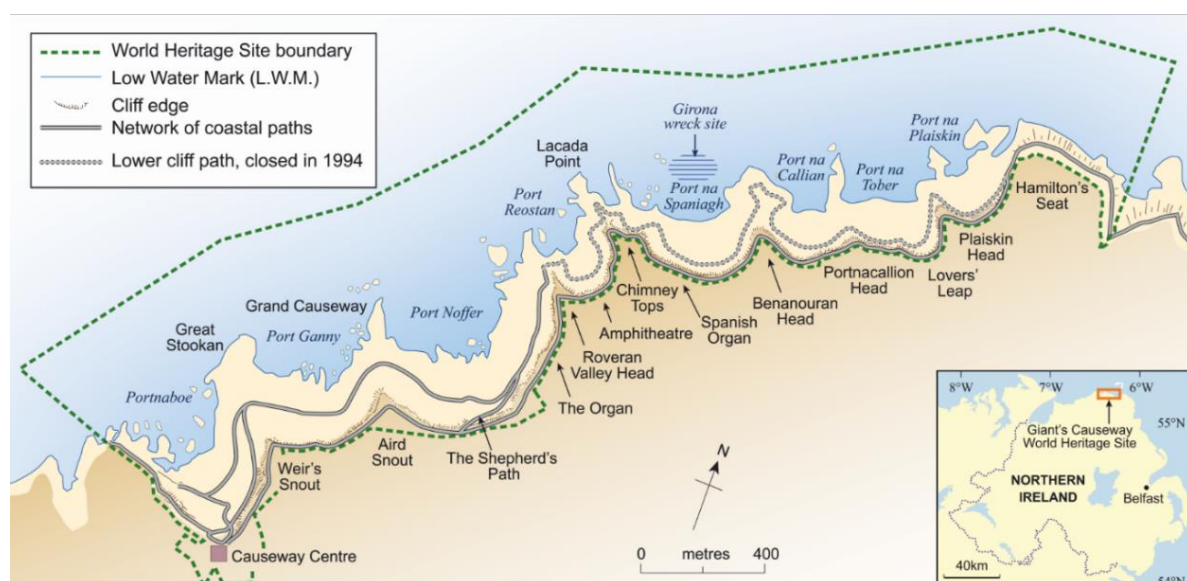


Figure 1: The extent of the World Heritage Site (WHS)

The Giant's Causeway WHS is surrounded by a **Distinctive Landscape Setting (DLS)**. The DLS (Figure 2) supports the WHS as an area of enhanced planning restrictions upheld by current planning policy (Northern Area Plan 2016), helping protect the Site from inappropriate development. There are multiple private landowners within the DLS.

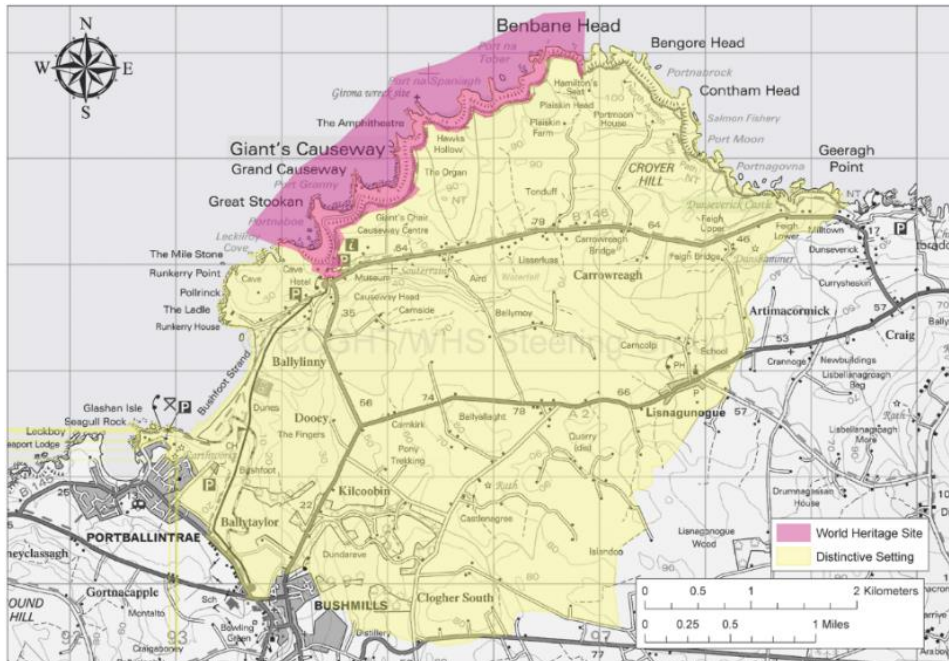


Figure 2: Map showing extent of WHS and DLS © CCGHT.

The **WHS Steering Group** provides a participatory WHS management function. It includes individuals and stakeholders who represent local communities, governmental, non-governmental and private organisations, and landowners who have an interest and involvement in the conservation and management of the Property. This includes the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, National Trust, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Geological Survey Northern Ireland, private landowners and others. Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust act as Secretariat for the Group.

The **WHS Research Advisory Group** provides expert advice to the WHS Steering Group and aims to further programmes which address research priorities and opportunities identified within the WHS Management Plan. The Research Advisory Group includes representatives from Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University, Geological Survey Northern Ireland, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, Tourism Northern Ireland and the National Trust.

## RESEARCH GUIDELINES

### 1. OBTAIN PERMISSION FROM THE LANDOWNER(S)

You must ensure that you obtain permission from the landowner before carrying out on-site research or fieldwork.

**The National Trust** remain property managers of the terrestrial parts of the Site, operating day to day management and providing a variety of visitor facilities and experiences. Please email [NorthCoastBookings@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:NorthCoastBookings@nationaltrust.org.uk) to notify the National Trust of any on-site research within their area of ownership.

**The Crown Estate** is considered the legal owner of all lands between high and low water mark and has rights over the seabed within territorial waters. Licences for survey activities in marine or coastal environments may be required. Please email [consents@thecrownestate.co.uk](mailto:consents@thecrownestate.co.uk) to notify them of any research within their area of ownership.

There are several **private landowners** within the DLS. It is your responsibility to obtain consent for private landowners independently.

## 2. FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH THE DESIGNATIONS

This World Heritage Site landscape is one of the most designated areas in Northern Ireland (Figure 3). Please familiarise with the various terrestrial and marine designations when planning your research. The following designations are in place with the landscape:

- [Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(AONB\)](#)
- [Area of Special Scientific Interest \(ASSI\)](#)
- [Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\)](#)
- [National Nature Reserve](#)
- [Historic Wreck Site](#)

Information on SAC and ASSI designations can also be found on the [Natural Environment Map Viewer](#).

Several scheduled monuments (historic environment designations) are also within the WHS and DLS. Please review the Department for Communities' [Historic Environment Map Viewer](#) to identify the location of any scheduled monuments close to your research area.

### Types of natural environment designations at the Giant's Causeway



Figure 3: Designations at the WHS

### 3. OBTAIN NECESSARY CONSENTS AND LICENCES

Certain activities conducted within a designated area may require statutory consent from the relevant government authority. This is in addition to (not in place of) landowner consent. The requirement for consent is determined by the nature of the activities proposed and if they have the potential to impact upon or damage designated features or attributes.

- **ASSI Consent**

The [ASSI citation document for the Giant's Causeway](#) lists activities and operations within the **Area of Special Scientific Interest** that require ASSI consent. An ASSI consent application can be completed and submitted [online](#).

- **Seabed Survey licences and Coastal Survey licences**

For offshore research, such as geotechnical, geophysical, ecological and meteorological studies, as well as larger scale archaeological projects, you will need to obtain a **seabed survey licence** from the Crown Estate. For research within Crown Estate ownership that physically interacts with the nearshore you will require a **coastal survey licence**. More information on seabed survey licences, coastal survey licences and the application process can be found [here](#). Any further questions can be directed to [consents@thecrownestate.co.uk](mailto:consents@thecrownestate.co.uk)

- **Historic Wreck Consent**

The designation order on the **Girona Historic Wreck Site** requires that any diver wishing to visit the wreck must apply for a licence. Application forms are available on request from [marineconservation@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:marineconservation@daera-ni.gov.uk)

- **Scheduled Monument Consent**

If your research could impact a [scheduled historic monument](#), you will require **scheduled monument consent** in advance of any work. A scheduled monument consent application can be downloaded [here](#), however it is strongly advised that you contact the Department for Communities: Historic Environment Division for an informal discussion in advance of any application. Call 028 9081 9336 or email [scheduling@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:scheduling@communities-ni.gov.uk).

**PLEASE NOTE: Failure to obtain consent before engaging in notifiable operations within a designated area is a criminal offense.** If you are unsure whether you require consent for research within a designated area then it is strongly recommended that you contact the relevant public body for guidance.

### 4. NOTIFY THE RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP

The WHS Research Advisory Group requests that researchers notify them of any on-site research activities proposed within the vicinity of the WHS. This will assist with important management and conservation activities and also ensure that you as a researcher are put in contact with relevant persons and made aware of existing data which may aid your research.

Please notify the WHS Research Advisory Group of your research using the [Research Notification Google Form](#).

## **5. COMPLETE YOUR RESEARCH SAFELY AND ETHICALLY**

While conducting research at the WHS you are responsible for your personal safety. Complete a Risk Assessment in advance of carrying out any fieldwork and update as necessary. Ensure that your research activities do not put any members of public or staff and volunteers operating on site at risk. Do not take any unnecessary risk. If your research involves lone working ensure you 'check-in' at the end of each day with a colleague, friend, landowner or a member of staff working at the site. You should also consider any ethical implications of your research.

## **6. SHARE YOUR RESEARCH FINDINGS**

On completion of your research, we ask that you share a summary of your findings with the Research Advisory Group. This information will be shared on the Giants Causeway WHS website <https://giantscauseway.ccght.org/research/> which will allow fellow researchers to understand what research has already been carried out at the WHS. You can email a short summary (approx. 250 words) or a link to any of your published findings to [info@ccght.org](mailto:info@ccght.org).