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Radio Hams spread the Global Geopark message across the world during European Geopark Weeks, 24 May – 6 June

Radio – 1

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Radio stations from around the world will be exchanging greetings over the airwaves with the English Riviera Global Geopark next month as amateur radio operators transmit live from Kents Cavern in Torquay, right in the heart of the English Riviera Global Geopark.

Using a special event call sign, **GB6GEO**, radio hams will establish contact with other radio stations around Britain, Europe and around the world from a base set up outside the entrance to Kents Cavern, Devon's internationally famous Stone Age cave and gateway to the English Riviera Global Geopark.

There are now 53 Geoparks around the world but this special radio event is being coordinated from Kents Cavern, Visitors will be able to link up with several other Geoparks by radio over the weekend, including Araripe Geopark in Brazil; Kanawinka Geopark in Australia; Langkawi Geopark in Malaysia; the Petrified Forest of Lesvos Geopark in Greece, and the Copper Coast Geopark in Ireland.

Many Geoparks also have show caves and those participating so far include: Smoo Cave in the North West Highlands Geopark in Scotland, Marble Arch Caves Geopark in Northern Ireland and Unicorn Cave in the Harz Mountains in Germany. With the event now global, the event will run from 13:00 on Saturday 24th May, through the night to 16:00 on Sunday 25th May. “

This international communication event is part of European Geopark Weeks which run from 24 May to 6 June, see <http://www.europeangeoparks.org/bsite/home/1,1,0.asp>.

On Sunday 25th May, Kents Cavern is also hosting its annual “Flint and Fire Day”, when one of Britain's leading prehistoric technologist, Karl Lee, will be back at Kents Cavern turning flint cores into perfect replicas of ancient hand tools. He will also demonstrate the ancient art of making fire.

Dr Patrick McKeever, vice-coordinator for the European Geoparks Network and an advisor for UNESCO's Network of Global Geoparks, commented: ***“I liked this initiative straight away. It is novel and an innovative way to raise the awareness of Geoparks not only at the local level but to a global audience.*”**

More follows

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“This year, UNESCO is celebrating International Year of Planet Earth and the European Geoparks Network is very much involved in this. This event is exactly the kind of event the Global Geoparks Network is keen to encourage. This could develop into an annual event staged across the entire Global Geoparks Network.”

Nick Powe, Chairman of the English Riviera Global Geopark and 5th Generation owner of Kents Cavern added: ***“Interest in the Global Geoparks Network and its Geo-tourism potential is rapidly gaining momentum around the world.***

“Globally, the Geopark designation is recognised as a powerful way to bring economic benefits through the development of Geo-tourism activities and promoting Geo-diversity of the Geopark area.

“I’m delighted that Kents Cavern will be at the heart of this global radio link up which will raise awareness of our fantastic cave system here and of Torbay around the world.”

Martin Foster, known to his colleagues around the world since 1966 by his call sign G3VOF, came up with the idea for this global communication event to promote the English Riviera Geopark after attending a Geopark awareness evening hosted by Torbay Chamber of Trade and Commerce.

He said: ***“It struck me that this would be an interesting event not just for the people we regularly make contact with around the world, but for the general public visiting the English Riviera Global Geopark.***

“Normally only licensed operators can transmit on the radio, but using this special event license, children and adults will be able to send greetings worldwide to other amateur radio operators on the radio under our supervision over the weekend at Kents Cavern.

“It is common practice to exchange contact cards with radio stations we talk to. These are called QSL cards and we have some special souvenir QSL cards for this event, promoting the English Riviera Geopark.

“People visiting us at Kents Cavern who participate and take the microphone will be given a souvenir contact card detailing who they talked to around the world.

“We are hoping to make contact with radio stations transmitting from within other Global Geoparks, hopefully in China and Brazil. I have already noticed there are some operators around the world using a GEO based call sign as part of the International Year of Planet Earth. We hope to establish contact with some of these on the day.”

The event will go on through the night to maximise the global contact potential. Throughout the event, the location of all contacts will be logged and located on a large map of the world.

There will also be an opportunity for Youth Groups to earn their “communication badge” on the day and any leaders interested in participating should contact Martin Foster direct.

More follows

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Derrick Webber, call sign G3LHJ, President of the Torbay Amateur Radio Society added: ***“While the internet and mobile phones are a major communication platform around the world today, there is still something exciting about establishing contact with someone the other side of the planet using a length of wire hung across the garden and a radio set!*”**

“We are always looking to recruit new members and this Global communication event linked to the Geoparks Network is going to be a great way to inspire people to learn more about becoming radio operators.”

A full listing of other Geopark Week activities taking place across the English Riviera Global Geopark between 24th May and 6th June 2008 can be found at www.englishrivierageopark.org.uk

NOTES TO NEWS/PICTURE DESK

- 1) For further information and interview or photography/filming requests at Kents Cavern, please contact Nick Powe on (01803) 215136.
- 2) Martin Foster and his amateur radio colleagues are available on 24th May at Kents Cavern when they will be setting up the equipment and on Sunday 25th May during the event. Please contact Martin Foster at itnld@btinternet.com or via radio using his call sign G3VOF.
- 3) Ahead of the event, Nick Powe will be giving a talk to the Torbay Amateur Radio Society on the Geopark and Kents Cavern at 7.45pm on Friday 23rd May at the Scout HQ Wolborough Street, Newton Abbot, TQ12 1LJ.

Press release issued on behalf of Kents Cavern

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