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Geography Southwest Newsbites October 2026



Welcome to the first Newsbites of the academic year 2026-2027. We have made changes to the layout of the Geography Southwest website to help navigation, and our innovative Guest Blogs now appear as a separate section making it easier to find previous guest blog articles. You can find careers in geography under secondary section. Do read the very relevant and informative guest blog by Daisy Scanes featuring **coastal fieldwork investigations with examples from North Devon.**

We are delighted to announce that the 2027 Geography Southwest Conference will take place on Monday 21 June 2027 at the University of West of England (UWE), Bristol.

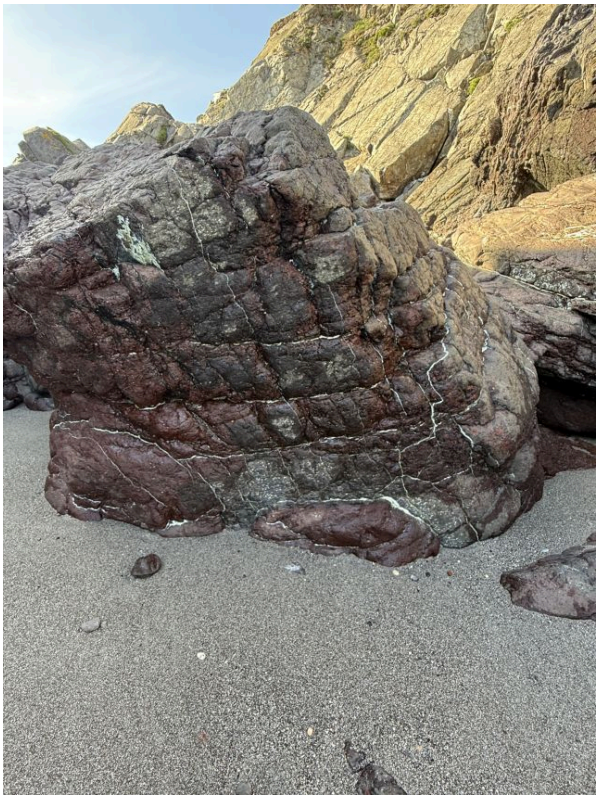
The outline programme will be published by December. Selected presentations from the 2026 conference can be found on the website **here**

The Geography South East conference will be on Friday 25 June. Please note these dates in your diary.



Paul Berry continues to places to visit and walk in the west country to the website. His articles provide geographical and geological details and excellent maps. His latest **places to visit** include Millock Haven, Kennack Sands and Sandymouth Cove.

Image: Paul Berry.



Geography in the News



Proposals for massive data centre near Great Torrington, Devon

Image © Copyright David Martin from geograph.org-https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/7471340

The company Xlinks plans to build a data campus near Great Torrington on 3.4 sq km of farmland. The site will contain large warehouses housing the powerful computers required to run AI and other digital services.

An estimated 650 to 1200 jobs could be created and up to £3.6bn contributed to the economy.
Opponents have raised concerns about noise, water supplies, energy use and the effect on the landscape.
Many existing data centres require substantial quantities of water for cooling and water restrictions were imposed across North Devon in dry summer 2026.
The government said data centres were “critical to nearly all economic activity and public services”.
The site near Great Torrington was chosen by Xlinks for its access to the wind and solar power needed to operate the centre, as well as the area’s mild climate. Further discussions are taking place with the local community.

Plans for a new desalination plant at Par in Cornwall delayed following environmental objections. A local desalination plant is part of South West Water's drought resilience strategy, following several very dry summers in the west country. The Desalination Information Group (DIG) raised concerns about the effect of pipelines on seagrass and maerl, a rare pink calcified seaweed which is home to many species of marine animals and plants.

UK's largest sea grass project set to go ahead.
A £1.8 million project has been launched to restore 10 hectares of Cornwall’s marine habitats, native oysters and underwater ecosystems in Falmouth Bay.
The UK’s largest seagrass restoration project, Mor Nature, led by Cornwall Wildlife Trust (CWT) and the Ocean Conservation Trust (OCT), aims to revive key habitats, reverse biodiversity loss, improve water quality and strengthen coastal resilience.



Image credit: Photo by Benjamin L. Jones on Unsplash

New geography resources

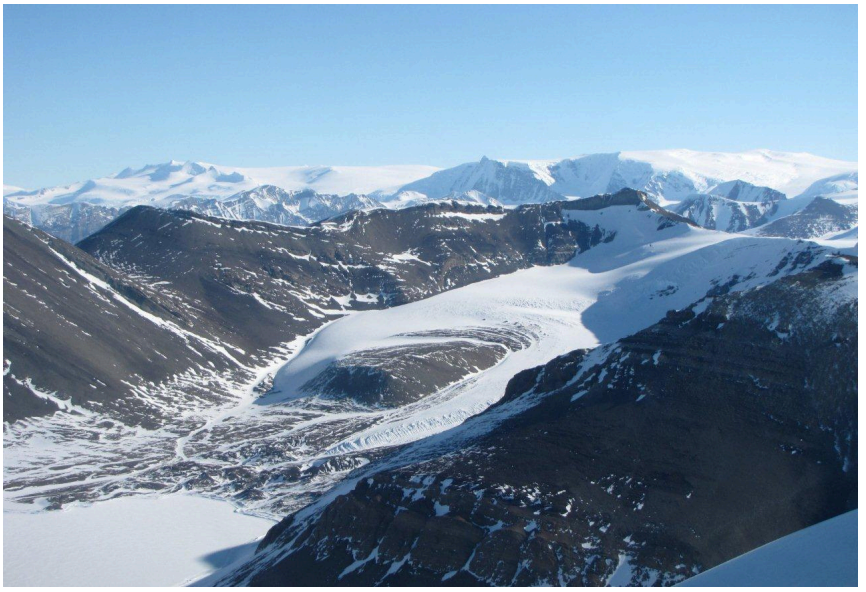


Image: Ablation valley, Alexander Island: **Antarctic Glaciers website**

Studying Antarctica for KS3, GCSE or A Level? Do look at the website **Antarctic Glaciers** which has a wealth of topical resources for both teachers and students including interactive GIS activities, videos, a glossary and wide range of images for use in teaching. A particular feature is the StoryMap collection designed to be used by both school children and teachers (age

13/14 upwards) studying Geography and learning about Extreme Environments, Polar ice and Antarctica. It
There is also a **feedback survey** open until November and if you use the site, please help Dr Bethan Davies by completing the short questionnaire. The evidence from the survey will help with competitive funding applications and further development of the website.

GA National Geography Olympiad

The GA has been developing a National Geography Olympiad designed for Post-16 geographers. The first Olympiad will be held during a special fortnight: **Monday 9 November – Friday 20 November 2026,** and will be **free** to enter. Details from the GA soon.

Try a new geography classroom starter

Could your pupils identify a UK place from just four clues? Ben Shackell has designed a free daily game
Four to Find covering places across the UK, and considers how its clues could get pupils discussing, questioning and locating places on a map.

Teaching coastal defences to GCSE or A level?

Following severe storm damage which washed away part of the A379 coastal road causing major problems for the village of Torcross, the Environment Agency committed £19.8 million to strengthen coastal defences with rock armour using 55,000 tonnes of rock.
This **3 minute video** shows the damage caused by the storms, the stories of people affected and the planned response. It provides a useful introduction to the issues of coastal defence at a time when sea levels are rising and severe storms are increasing in frequency.

Teaching the true size of Africa

It is impossible to accurately represent the surface of a globe on a two-dimensional map which is why geography classrooms have solid or inflatable globes. The Flemish cartographer

Gerardus Mercator designed his map in 1569 to help European explorers navigate across the world. It has been widely used to depict the world ever since, even though it shows Africa as being of similar in size to Greenland when the continent is actually 14 times larger. This has resulted in countries near the equator to be minimised. Geographers have used atlases with equal area projections for many years, and now the UN has voted to adopt the 2018 Equal Earth projection. The BBC article shows the key differences between the Mercator world map and the equal area projection.

Portreath Flood Resilience Scheme

The Environment Agency has summarised proposals for the new flood resilience scheme on their the Environment Agency. Currently the Portreath stream flows through a 1 km tunnel protecting the Cornish village, but during floods, lack of tunnel capacity causes excess flood water to flow into Portreath and flood properties. This provides a local case study of the issues with local flood resilience.

Environment Agency updates and briefings

Teachers can register with the Environment Agency to receive free bulletins, updates and other information on projects around the country.



Forthcoming events for geography teachers

Slapton Ley Research Seminar day: Image credit- Field Studies Council. Saturday 14 November 0930-1600: Free:
Slapton Ley Field Studies Council and National Nature Reserve will host its annual Research Seminar which will showcase the incredible research and work conducted in and around Slapton Ley.

RGS courses and events this autumn:

Tuesday 3 November: 1600-1700: Free. Online.
How to choose the right university geography course.

Tuesday 10 November: 1630-1830: Online:
Glaciers, landscapes and climate change: concepts for A level teaching.
Delivered by David Anderson author of the A Level textbook *Glacial and Periglacial Environments* (Hodder).

Wednesday 11 November: 1600-1700: Free: online
Careers in ecosystems and conservation.
This webinar is aimed at secondary school students and teachers to showcase how Ecosystems units taught at KS3, GCSE and A Level link to real-world jobs for geographers.

Friday 13 November: 1000-1600: London
Getting started with ArcGIS
This CPD event is for school teachers with little or no previous GIS experience.

Wednesday 18 November: 1000-1600: London
Going further with ArcGIS
This event is for school teachers who have previously attended 'Getting started with ArcGIS' or acquired equivalent experience

in another way.

Wednesday 18 November: 1700-1800: Free: London
How can biogeomorphology contribute to a nature positive future?
In this school member lecture, Professor Gemma Harvey will share insights from projects on rewilding, restoration and natural flood management to explore how working with natural processes can support nature recovery and the delivery of ecosystem services including the mitigation of floods and droughts.

Wednesday 25 November 1000-1230. London, repeated in the afternoon
A level study day.
This half day course, repeated in the afternoon will consist of a series of three 35-minute subject knowledge-focused lectures: changing places, global governance and carbon and water cycle (topics are subject to change if speakers change).

Wednesday 2 December: 170-1830: Free: Online
Preparing and planning for the NEA
The Field Studies Council will support teachers to prepare students for their independent investigation by building a toolkit of fieldwork opportunities, planning considerations and showcasing how to tackle generation of titles.

GA courses:
Wednesday 14 October to Wednesday 2 December: Online
Geography for non-specialists - secondary
This course is designed to support those new to the subject, non-specialist teachers and Teaching Assistants who wants to better support their geography colleagues.

Look out for the next Newsletter in November 2026. If you have not already signed up to receive this newsletter direct to

you by email, please click on the **Sign-Up box** and complete the short form below.

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