

The Russell Society Guidance for Organised 'Digs' on Spoil Heaps 2026

Background

Over time spoil heaps tend to become overgrown and their value as a mineralogical resource is diminished. In other cases material may simply be quarried away to be used as hard core or for track maintenance by farmers or landowners.

The value of such sites may be enhanced by periodic 'turning over' by mechanical excavator to expose fresh material, particularly after the surface has been 'washed' by rainfall. The beneficial consequences of such excavations are of value to members of the public and non-Russell Society members just as much as to Society members, and therefore Council considers that sponsorship of such ventures is in accordance with the stated aims of the Society – to encourage the study, recording and conservation of mineralogical sites and material.

General Considerations

All necessary permissions from landowners, conservation bodies and any other applicable authorities **MUST** be in place prior to commencement of any 'dig'. Material collected is for private study / personal use **ONLY** and **MUST NOT** be offered for sale for commercial gain.

The opportunity to participate in any such 'dig' shall be offered to all members on a first come first served basis, either via the normal Field Trip list in the Newsletter, or if arranged at relatively short notice, by placing an announcement on the Russell Society website

Organisers should be sensitive to the potential for disappointment amongst the membership due to limited numbers of places and seek to allocate places in an open and equitable manner. Where 'repeat visits' may be applicable, a 'waiting list' of interested members should be maintained.

Safety

All 'digs' involving the use of an excavator must adhere to the Health and Safety requirements as specified in other RS documents and also include the additional requirements as set out in the document, 'Russell Society Guidance for the use of excavators on site digs'.

Funding

Council considers that it is reasonable for the Society to provide supporting funding up to a maximum of 50% of the cost of the excavator hire (as a guide a digger and driver would cost about £250 per day at 2018 rates). The dig and associated costs should be agreed **IN ADVANCE** with the Society Council, who once it has been approved will arrange payment by bank transfer against an invoice.

Research and Specimen Potential

Any material of particular interest should be brought to the attention of the 'dig' organiser so that it may be included in the project report, and if appropriate subject to expert examination. Note also that some site owners in the SW state that they retain ownership of minerals collected, although in practice this is unlikely to present a problem (the specimens being essentially on 'long term loan' to the collector).