

Correspondence

Anthropocene: keep communication clear

Regarding definitions of an Anthropocene epoch, we disagree with Erle Ellis and colleagues' contention that "Earth sciences long ago moved away from defining precise stratigraphic boundaries to developing records of continuous change" (*Nature* **540**, 192–193; 2016).

Precise boundaries are the basis for defining geological time, a prerequisite for the correlation of abiotic and biotic events and the understanding of the rates and timing of biological and geological processes on our planet. Earth sciences, through the International Commission on Stratigraphy of the International Union of Geological Sciences, continue to this day to define precise global boundaries, which in turn allows scientists to communicate with each other and with the public alike.

Developing records of change (continuous, discontinuous, or one-time-only) in the study of Earth's history neither competes with nor detracts from scientists' key contribution in providing tools for unambiguous communication.

Lucy E. Edwards *US Geological Survey, Reston, Virginia, USA.*

David A. T. Harper *Durham University, UK.*

Philip Gibbard *University of Cambridge, UK.*
leedward@usgs.gov