The Burren Ecotourism Network

About the B.E.N.

The Burren Ecotourism Network (B.E.N.) is a network of tourism enterprises with the objective of establishing the Burren as a premier internationally-recognised sustainable tourism region ensuring the future economic and social growth and sustainable development of its communities, environment and heritage. It seeks to support continued training, mentoring and accreditation in sustainable tourism for its members and for businesses interested in joining the Network.

The Network aims to be a recognisable network of enterprises in the Burren, who have achieved independent accreditation, demonstrate ecotourism ‘best practice’, positively discriminate in each other’s favour, provide ‘one voice’ representation on issues impacting the Burren (where appropriate), and inspire conservation activism.

For more details visit www.burrenecotourism.com

About GeoparkLIFE.

The Burren & Cliffs of Moher region has achieved UNESCO-supported Global Geopark Status in recognition of the region’s significant geological, ecological and cultural value, as well as its sustainable tourism practices.

Global Geoparks focus on developing their regions as sustainable tourism destinations.

The Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark (formerly the Burren Connect Project) has attracted EU Life funding and a partnership between conservation and tourism interests in the region to develop policies, models and standards in sustainable tourism destination development.

This programme is known as GeoparkLIFE and will run from 2013-2017.

For more details visit www.burren.ie

The Burren Ecotourism Network and the Geopark have enjoyed a special relationship since 2008, when the Burren Connect Project first instigated the establishment of the Network. The two organisations now work in partnership, having agreed in late 2012 to pool their resources in pursuit of their common objective. Both organisations are committed to the promotion of responsible tourism that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. They work together to promote ‘The Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark’ as a leading sustainable visitor destination, celebrated for high standards in visitor experience, conservation and learning.

www.burrenecotourism.com
Avail of focused networking opportunities with like-minded tourism enterprises in the region — generate mutual referrals, develop innovative visitor experiences and packages, share knowledge and ideas and build relationships and friendships.

Become part of conservation and advocacy activities that serve to protect and conserve our natural and cultural heritage, as well as to build knowledge and understanding of the unique landscape in which we live and work.

   a. Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Training Programme: gain the practical skills and tools to make your business ‘greener’, more sustainable and more cost-effective.
   b. Geopark Enterprise Support Programme: enhance your marketing and networking capacity, develop your business planning and which will ultimately improve your marketing effectiveness and overall competitiveness.

Under the umbrella brand “Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark”, businesses can work together to truly differentiate this destination by making sustainability a driver of competitive advantage. Key benefits of this strategy are:
   a. Tourism Partner of the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark: achieve official Tourism Partner status, and have the right to display the Geopark logo on your marketing and promotional materials.
   b. Access to co-ordination and strategic development support: through the GeoparkLIFE programme, personnel and resources are made available to co-ordinate and drive destination visitor experiences and projects.
   c. Business Profile on visitor website www.burrenecotourism.com: get a full business profile; list full details of any packages and events you have; promote your business on the news section, special offer section and events calendar.
   e. Social Media Activity: leverage the social media activity of both the Burren Ecotourism Network and the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark.
   f. Trade Relationship: have your visitor experiences included in sample itineraries and holiday plans for the region which will be presented on your behalf to relevant trade partners.
   g. Media Profile: The Network and Geopark actively works on securing national and international public relations and media coverage, with significant success in this area to date.

**BENEFITS OF NETWORK MEMBERSHIP**

To be eligible for membership of the Network, a tourism enterprise must:
1. Be located in the catchment area.
2. Commit to the Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice for Tourism.

Achieving sustainable standards in tourism is a key principle of the Network. It is vital that businesses can demonstrate a fundamental level of sustainable practices before accessing the benefits of membership. This level is defined in the Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice for Tourism.

This Code requires tourism enterprises to develop an Environmental Policy and Environmental Action Plan for their business and to implement certain practices in the areas of energy consumption, waste management, water conservation and protection.

It also addresses areas such as responsible marketing, visitor interpretation, green purchasing, and sustainable transport. Importantly it requires all businesses to complete Geopark Leave No Trace Awareness Training and to observe Leave No Trace principles at all times (specialised Leave No Trace training is provided).

A highly practical training programme will provide you with a step-by-step guide towards achieving the Code.
WHAT CONTRIBUTION WOULD I HAVE TO MAKE?

While membership of the Network brings considerable benefits, network members are also expected to contribute to the success of the Network. A genuine commitment to the principles of sustainable tourism and to continuous improvement in this area is essential.

Members are invited to participate in one of the sub-committees which work on marketing, networking or conservation and advocacy projects. A spirit of sharing and collaboration is essential if the Network is to thrive and it is therefore important that members participate in a certain amount of the available training and networking events.

The Network invites businesses to achieve the Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice for Tourism as an entry point for membership. It asks members to work towards achieving a network-recognised third party certification label within 24 months. To maximise marketing and business opportunities, members are expected to correctly use and display logos and related materials, to link to the visitor website, and to actively promote and support Network initiatives.

All members are expected to attend the annual Sustainable Destination Vision Day on 30th September 2013.

HOW MUCH DOES MEMBERSHIP COST?

The Network reviews its membership fees annually. Fees for 2014 will be set in Autumn 2013. As an indicator, the fee structure for 2013 is as follows:

- 1-5 Employees: €350
- 6-24 Employees: €500
- 25+ Employees: €750

This annual fee entitles members and/or their staff to access more than 20 different training and networking events, as well as inclusion in all marketing and promotional activities. No further fees will be requested during the year.

WHEN CAN I BECOME A MEMBER?

The Network will welcome up to 30 new enterprises in January of each year. Through the GeoparkLIFE programme, interested businesses will be able to complete the Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Training programme between October and January of each year and thereby satisfy the eligibility requirements for membership in time for the January intake. Businesses who engage in the Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice training programme are asked to make a nominal contribution of €50 towards the cost of training.

HOW CAN I APPLY?

For full information on the training programme and to obtain an application form, please contact Tina O’Dwyer, Sustainable Tourism Co-ordinator, Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark on todwyer@burren.ie or on 065 707 2297.

Supported by the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark. For further information visit www.burren.ie