



**GeoparkLIFE**  
**ACTION B1 TOURISM ENTERPRISES**

Date: April 2016

**Key Objectives of Action B1 Tourism Enterprises**

Action B1 relates to tourism enterprises and aims to strengthen the capability of enterprises in the use of natural resources, resource efficiency, use of renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste reduction, reduction of the carbon footprint. The action is planned to be implemented by four steps:

1. Improving environmental impact
2. Improving economic impact
3. Resource planning for the enterprise
4. Implementing the plan

2012-early 2015 focused on Steps 1 and 2. These two elements are ongoing throughout the programme. Work is now progressing in Steps 3 and 4.

**Objective 1: Improving Environmental Impact**

<p><b>Review &amp; Development of the Code of Practice</b></p>	<p>The evaluation process in early 2015 identified the following objectives in relation to the Code of Practice: Refine the toolkit, reporting and evaluation system; create a user-friendly, intuitive support manual; investigate opportunities for technology-based reporting and evaluation. This project is now underway:</p> <p>Phase 1: Review Code, criteria &amp; toolkit (Feb-March 2016).  Phase 2: Develop training specification and training manual (April 2016).  Phase 3: Develop user manual and step-by-step guide for business (March-June 2016). Test toolkit and guide.  Phase 4: Develop self-evaluation tool as well as evaluator guidelines and evaluation sheet. Investigate online options. (March-June 2016)  Phase 5: Develop internal panel of trainers and mentors (March-June 2016 and October 2016).  Phase 6: Run Code of Practice programme using new resources (Nov 16-Jan 17) (fewer workshops and more one-to-one mentoring)  Phase 7: Externally assess 2017 submissions (Jan-Feb 17).  Phase 8: Review and evaluate Code experience; Develop recommendations for transferable toolkit (March 2017).</p> <p>A small team of business representatives who have already completed the Code of Practice are working with Tina on Phases 1 and 2 and on developing content for Phase 3. An RFTs has been prepared for design of manual, guide and online evaluation too.</p>
<p><b>Code of Practice Refresher Workshop</b></p>	<p>A refresher workshop for B.E.N. businesses took place on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016. Clare County Council Environment Section helped facilitate this workshop and invited members of the LAPN (Local Authority Prevention Workshop) to also participate. It was a constructive and informative event both for businesses and agency representatives.</p>
<p><b>Sharing Best Practice: GeoparkLIFE Awards 2016</b></p>	<p>In order to stimulate the sharing of Best Practice Geopark LIFE will again run the Geopark LIFE Awards on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016. This year, businesses will be asked to submit their nominations using the case study template designed for last year's award winners. We will also encourage</p>

	businesses to submit a video, created by themselves, that showcases their best practice. (Training in both content writing and producing short, home-made videos has been provided to businesses this year).
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**OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVING ECONOMIC IMPACT**

<p><b>Networking &amp; Referrals Programme</b></p>	<p>In 2015, GeoparkLIFE facilitated the development of a model for recording and generating referrals within the B.E.N.. The B.E.N. Referrals sub-group has now taken ownership of this strand, which augurs well for it enduring into the future. The group will host 3 evening networking events per year. The first event took place in the Burren Storehouse Lisdoonvarna on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2016. Further events are planned for June and September 2016. The model will be documented as a best practice case study, outlining learnings and challenges encountered, which should lend itself to ready adoption by other destinations.</p> <p>To support networking, referrals and relationship-building, GeoparkLIFE will facilitate 2-3 Familiarisation Trips between April and May 2016. These FAM trips were exceptionally well received last year and we are hoping for similar levels of participation in 2016. The dates of the FAM trips are 19<sup>th</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> May.</p>
<p><b>Marketing &amp; Communications Programme</b></p>	<p>See Communications Update Report.</p>
<p><b>Training Programme 2015-16</b></p>	<p>The economic strand of training focuses on consolidating the new products developed and launched in the preceding 3 year period, moving the Network towards a more mature marketing and communications strategy. Fáilte Ireland has contributed training supports to enhance economic impact over the coming period, in the follow areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital Content Creation</li> <li>• Mobile Readiness</li> <li>• Contracting for International Business on the WAW</li> <li>• Marketing for Accommodation Providers</li> </ul> <p>These training programmes have been very well received, regarded by the businesses as highly relevant and practical.</p>

### OBJECTIVE 3: RESOURCE PLANNING

An objective of the Geopark LIFE programme is that the Burren Ecotourism Network (B.E.N.) will emerge as an independent, self-sustaining organisation that will continue to implement key elements of the GeoparkLIFE programme for sustainable tourism.

With clear successes recorded to date in the areas of environmental impact and economic impact as a result of the training and networking programme, focus is now on strategic planning, capacity building and identifying an exit strategy from the programme for the tourism enterprises.

<p><b>Strategic Planning Process</b></p>	<p>As per the last progress report, the strategic planning process comprises 3 elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development of a 3 year strategic plan for B.E.N.</li> <li>2. Development of a 3-5 year strategic plan/management plan for Geopark.</li> <li>3. Once the two independent plans are in place, facilitation of a 3 year planning process between the Geopark and the B.E.N. (cultivating a situation where Geopark and B.E.N. engage as independent organisations who can co-operate on areas of common interest in a purposeful and deliberate fashion. This will yield a defined Partner Work Programme).</li> </ol> <p>GeoparkLIFE facilitated the strategic planning process for B.E.N. in Autumn 2015 and a strategic plan was presented to the B.E.N. membership in November 2015.</p> <p>The Geopark plan will emerge from the MAP process which is currently underway. It is expected that the joint planning process will commence to some extent over the summer and will complete in October/November 2015.</p> <p>The important question of an exit strategy from the programme for tourism enterprises and the future financial sustainability of B.E.N. will be a key consideration in the joint planning process.</p>
<p><b>Training to support Capacity Building</b></p>	<p>Aware of the need to have a comprehensive exit strategy, training in the period October 2015-April 2016 focused on building capacity within the membership of the B.E.N. in the areas of management, leadership, training, mentoring, planning, conservation best practice, marketing and product development. Specifically, the following training was delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Geopark Heritage Interpretation Programme</li> <li>- Invasive Species Training</li> <li>- Universal Access/Universal Design</li> <li>- Economic themes: marketing for accommodation providers, contracting for international business, digital content creation and mobile readiness.</li> </ul> <p>Train the Trainer and Train the Mentor programme will take place in Autumn 2016. The 'graduates' of this programme will support the delivery of the Code of Practice programme to future members of the Network</p> <p>It is proposed to deliver the Geopark Heritage Interpretation programme again in Spring 2017.</p>
<p><b>ETIS</b></p>	<p>An outcome of the last Steering Group meeting was to communicate to the members what would precisely would be involved if the GeoparkLIFE</p>

	Steering Group adopted the collaborative planning and decision-making process proposed by ETIS. It was agreed to outline this process for two indicators only – transport and access. Please see attachments to the minutes for this outline. This item is included for discussion at the next Steering Group meeting.
<b>Measurement &amp; Monitoring</b>	<p>The annual survey of BEN enterprises will take place in May/June 2016.</p> <p>A Resident Survey is under consideration and is included for discussion at the next Steering Group meeting.</p> <p>We are discussing the potential of conducting a Visitor Survey with a company called MAC, who led the Smart Open Data project.</p>

#### **OBJECTIVE 4: IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN**

Actions to be undertaken under this strand of Action B1 Tourism Enterprises can only be determined once the B.E.N. Strategic Plan and the B.E.N./Geopark Partnership Programme have been finalised. Evaluation and reporting on this element is expected to take place throughout 2017.