

Key Transferable Outputs from the Geopark LIFE Programme for Action B1 Tourism Enterprises

The transferable output from Action B1 is the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism. Through its work in the area of engaging with tourism enterprises, the Geopark had been aware of a number of challenges that face destinations and tourism enterprises in achieving sustainable tourism practice. The Geopark LIFE programme set out to address these. The resulting Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism distinguishes itself in the following ways:

- it provides a framework for the destination rather than the individual operator;
- it provides tourism operators within a destination with a common understanding of what sustainable tourism means for their area;
- It is applicable to all business types within a destination - avoiding the complexity and management challenge of different operators working within different third-party frameworks;
- it is mentally accessible and written in plain English; it is tailored to the drivers of the individual destination;
- it balances and combines the resource management aspect of sustainability with the socio cultural aspect;
- it enables tourism enterprises across a destination to **start** on the journey towards sustainability and provides a clear framework for them to progress incrementally. It opens the doors to those who are not yet all the way 'green'.
- it explicitly gives equal weight to the three pillars of sustainability - environmental, economic and social.

In terms of transferability, the following outputs will be available to further destinations:

1. The Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism Online System

This is an integrated online system that enables tourism operators to work through the Code of Practice in a phased and supported way. Tourism operators may submit evidence of adoption of Code and this can be accessed and evaluated through the system. It also has inbuilt measurement and data management functions that will support analysis and reporting by destination managers. The online system will be managed by Clare County Council on an ongoing basis and the method of making it available to further destinations is under consideration.

2. The Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism Handbook

The handbook will comprise a series of recommendations and good practice guidelines that support the effective implementation of the Code of Practice system at destination level. It will

be useful to destination managers and tourism network champions within destinations and will comprise the following sections:

- i. Visioning
- ii. Working with tourism networks
- iii. Building Capacity: Supporting landscape, heritage and environment
- iv. Building Capacity: Strengthening Livelihoods
- v. Financing the system/Achieving financial sustainability

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

Objective 1: Improving Environmental Impact

Review & Development of the Code of Practice	<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 has had a number of delays arising from technical and time challenges at the developer side.</p> <p>A small team of tourism operators within B.E.N. participated in all stages of development of the tools and system referred to above. A new panel of internal trainers and mentors has been formed and, for the first time this Spring, the bulk of training and mentoring has been provided by members and partners of the Burren Ecotourism Network. The creation of the Geopark Trainer & Mentor Panel is a significant development in our overall progress towards ensuring a strong, self-sustaining Network in the After LIFE period.</p> <p>Due to delays in the technical development of the online system, it has not been possible to roll it out to all network members in the off-season. Instead, it has been made available to the 11 new members that joined the Network this year and is being piloted by a further 5 existing members. Once their feedback has been received, the system will enter the phase of refinement, branding and polishing and will be ready for general release by June 2017. It will be rolled out to the remaining members of the Burren Ecotourism Network in Autumn 2017.</p> <p>The GeoparkLIFE awards will take place in Autumn 2017.</p>
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OBJECTIVE 2: IMPROVING ECONOMIC IMPACT

Networking & Referrals Programme	<p>The July 2015 consultations once again highlighted the potential economic benefits of a solid networking and referrals programme. While great progress was made in providing training and raising awareness of key principles and approaches in this regard, further refinement of the model is required in order to make it more effective and transferable. The GeoparkLIFE Tourism Enterprises Co-ordinator facilitated the B.E.N. sub-group to devise its programme and activity plan for 2017 with the view to the group defining for itself the optimal networking and referrals model for the destination. The group is planning a gala networking and season launch event on 5th April 2017. It encourages and supports networking at all B.E.N. events and meetings. Familiarisation trips, whereby members visit each other on set days pre-season, were deemed</p>
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	to be the most effective networking and referrals tool and the group plan to run at least 3 of these each year. The plans of this sub-group represent a GeoparkLIFE legacy.
Marketing & Communications Programme	Consolidating the destination marketing strategy and enabling businesses to effectively harness the overall destination communications is the focus for the marketing and communications programme as it relates to B1. See Communications Update Report.

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, the focus from early 2016 to January 2017 was on strategic planning, capacity building and identifying an exit strategy from the programme for the tourism enterprises.

At the B1 Steering Group Meeting of June 2016, it was decided to change the reporting indicator for the Resource Planning strand to “the creation of a viable sustainability plan for B.E.N.” (In the original application, the indicator was the number of businesses preparing business plans which integrated sustainable tourism practice).

Strategic Planning Process	<p>As part of Action B1 Resource Planning, planning processes have been facilitated for B.E.N. since May 2015. An overview of each stage of the planning and consultation process is attached to this document – Attachment 1. In particular, the GeoparkLIFE Co-ordinator facilitated an indepth member consultation process in July 2016 to seek support for a proposal around achieving sustainability. These consultations clearly identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That environmental good practice, as articulated through the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism is a cornerstone of the B.E.N. identity and a framework for its activity - that the marketing strategy and marketing co-ordinator support is the key membership benefit that businesses require from the Network - that the Network needed to be ‘run like a business’ if it is to achieve financial sustainability and that the members would welcome this development. <p>Arising from this process, Tina worked with a dedicated B.E.N. sub-group in late 2016 on the development of a business plan for the Network to effectively ‘commercialise’ it’s model and to produce a solid document that can be used for funding applications and business development. Fáilte Ireland contributed the services of a financial mentor to guide this process. This sub-group completed a concise and generic plan which included detailed revenue and income projections, which was then submitted to the B.E.N. Executive. This is a document which would be readily digestible by members and stakeholders and which can be tailored by the B.E.N. Executive to suit particular needs. For example, in January 2017, Tina worked with a number of Executive members to adapt the basic plan to a proposed application for LEADER funding.</p>
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	<p>This plan is now with the Executive of the Burren Ecotourism Network and will be leveraged by it over the coming year.</p>
<p>Resourcing of personnel to support B.E.N. AfterLIFE</p>	<p>Through the GeoparkLIFE programme, B.E.N. benefitted from the support of two co-ordinators, spending ca. 2.5 days per week each on the areas of marketing, training, co-ordination and facilitation. These positions ceased to be funded through GeoparkLIFE from mid-late January 2017. Important decisions by the B.E.N. arising from the consultation and planning processes above are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - B.E.N. will contract the services of a professional marketing co-ordinator to lead and manage the destination marketing strategy on their behalf and in collaboration with the Geopark. (This is essential to ensure ongoing membership benefit and to retain and attract members). B.E.N. will fund this contract through its membership fees. - B.E.N. will avail of LEADER funding to contract the services of a professional Sustainability Co-ordinator. The overall role of the Network & Funding Officer is to commercialise the Network over the two year period to the point that it can support this type of role and further activity into the future. <p>These developments signal the emergence of an ambitious and forward-looking network. The funding applications and recruitment process are being managed by the Network members themselves as are other projects such as applications for festival funding and operational planning for 2017. GeoparkLIFE has operated an exit strategy since early 2016, the desired outcome of which was exactly this level of ownership and responsibility being assumed by the Network members themselves. There has been an inevitable slowing in momentum during this transition period and GeoparkLIFE is mindful of the need to continue to partner with the B.E.N. in a mutually beneficial manner.</p>
<p>Training to support Capacity Building</p>	<p>B1 Training during 2016 continued to focus on building capacity within the Network to support it in the AfterLIFE period. The Train the Trainer and Train the Mentor programme were completed in October 2016. The 'graduates' of this programme form part of the Geopark Trainer & Mentor Panel and will support the delivery of the Code of Practice programme to future members of the Network between January & March of this year. It is envisaged that the Geopark itself will continue to independently own and support the Code of Practice in the AfterLIFE period and will be able to draw on this panel of experienced mentors and trainers to enable it to support the Code in a targeted and cost-effective manner. See Attachment 3 for full details of training provision during Cycle 4 Autumn 2016.</p>
<p>Measurement & Monitoring</p>	<p>See Attachment 4 for a full report on the measurement and monitoring of the key indicators for Action B1 Tourism Enterprises.</p>

Attachment 1: Overview of Planning & Consultation Process B.E.N. & GeoparkLIFE

Date	Stage	Participation	Outcome
May 2015	Burren Ecotourism Network Review	9 sessions facilitated by consultant commissioned by B.E.N. and funded by Geopark LIFE. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 28 members at 7 different Locations - B1 Working Group - GeoparkLIFE Management Team 	Detailed Report
September 2015	Sub-groups Planning Process	8 sessions with 8 different sub-groups within B.E.N. facilitated and documented by GeoparkLIFE Co-ordinator.	Mini activity plans for each sub-group which identified group purpose, group contribution, activity plan and resources required. Key information for strategic plan.
October 2015	Vision Day 1	GeoparkLIFE invited wider membership came together for update on planning processes and to consider key strategic questions for B.E.N.. Group divided into 3 to consider these questions, identified solutions and fed back to wider group.	Agreed recommendations from members for finalising a B.E.N. Strategy Document.
November 2015	Vision Day 2	Strategy document and presentation completed and presented to membership by GeoparkLIFE Co-ordinator. The one item that the strategy document and the consultations had not addressed to this point was how to actually achieve financial sustainability.	Strategy Document & Strategy Presentation.
July 2016	Member Consultations on topic of financial sustainability and implications for B.E.N.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 meetings - 7 locations - 33 businesses participated. 	Summary Report
Oct-Dec 2016	Business Planning Process	A specially-convened business plan group comprising 6 members with expertise/experience in business planning and financial planning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 facilitated round-table sessions. - E-mail discussions. 	A brief, readable business plan with detailed income and expenditure projections prepared and submitted to B.E.N. Executive.
Jan 2017	Business Plan to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 facilitated session 	Advanced Draft of

	support LEADER application.	- Focused on adapting business plan to specific requirements of LEADER	Plan. Being finalised by B.E.N. Executive.
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Attachment 2: B.E.N. Business Planning Process

B.E.N. Business Plan Group – Log of Meetings & Outcomes Oct 16-Jan 17

Members: Janet Cavanagh (e-whizz), Cathleen Connole (Burren Fine Wine & Food), Frances Connole (The Burren Centre), Ralph Doyle (Burren Perfumery), Niall Hughes (Seaview House), George Quinn (Hylands Burren Hotel)

Facilitator: Tina O’Dwyer, Tourism Enterprises Co-ordinator (External Expert)

Summary:

- 3 round-table sessions facilitated by GeoparkLIFE Co-ordinator.
- 10 B.E.N. members involved.
- 6 draft versions circulated to date.
- LEADER Plan being finalised at present by B.E.N. Executive members.
- Tina to complete the original core business plan after this with all relevant appendices attached.

Detail:

Date	Event Details	Actions Agreed
31.10.2016	<p>Tina circulated a first draft business plan in skeleton form for review and input by sub-group members and as a basis for discussion at the first meeting.</p> <p>The draft plan based on the outcome of consultations with members over the previous year, with the overall direction of the document signed off by the Executive. The clear brief for the business plan sub group was to now support the strategic plan by drafting a business plan with particular emphasis on including solid financials. This aspect is something that had not been addressed in any other planning document to date.</p>	<p>Initial reaction was that the document was too long and detailed to be a business plan. Some concerns were raised around the prominence of the brand ‘Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark’ and the lack of clarity around the organisation that the plan was being written for.</p> <p>Via email correspondence and telephone conversation, it was agreed that the group should aim to significantly reduce the length of the first draft (ca 38 pages) to a 3-4 page document. This was in order to make it easily readable by any member or any third party. It was agreed that while a lot of supplemental information would be variously required for applications to LEADER, Fáilte Ireland and other bodies, this would be collated in a set of appendices to support the top-line plan.</p>
24.11.2016	<p>Round-table facilitated planning sessions at The Burren Centre.</p>	<p>Group agreed that the main value of the business plan lay in the process itself, whereby the group raised and addressed key questions that had not to date not been considered by B.E.N.</p> <p>Key Actions arising:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Niall: Complete the income and expenditure spreadsheets, including the 3-4 year forecasts. 2. Janet: List of businesses in the region (i.e. potential customer base for BEN).

		<p>3. George: List of potential sponsorship partners - for B.E.N. and/or Burren Food Trail.</p> <p>4. Tina: List of grant and funding opportunities; List of actions/activities that happen within BEN (for which member contribution is needed).</p> <p>5. Tina: Circulate a revised 4-page business plan document based on meeting discussions by Wednesday 30th November. Others to review and return comment by Friday 2nd December.</p>
30.11.2016	A revised draft plan consisting of 4 pages circulated to the group for consideration in advance of next meeting.	Information requested above was delivered in advance of meeting, with the exception of the list of potential businesses. This proved difficult to establish and further work will be required in this area.
08.12.2016	Round-table facilitated planning session at The Burren Centre.	<p>Group worked through the revised plan, adding and amending as appropriate. Most attention given to the financial aspect and the ways to ensure sustainability into the future. Group focused strongly on the business case and business outcomes in pursuit of the goal of financial self-sustainability. It documented what it plans to achieve and noted it as an ambitious and progressive approach. Significant decisions or goals included at this point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A goal to significantly increase the membership contribution being made by the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience from 2018 onwards in recognition of the brand value pertaining to it, the scale of the business relative to all other members and as a mitigation for impacts caused by its mass tourism appeal. - A doubling of membership by 2019 - The introduction of a Preferred Suppliers Programme - A goal of attaining significant sponsorship on an incremental basis. <p>Outcomes agreed: The main work of this group was now complete and should be accepted by wider membership without much debate (in order to move forward). An updated draft to be prepared in time for the B.E.N. Executive meeting that evening where Janet (a member of both groups) would brief the Executive and ask for feedback. This group felt that if B.E.N. Executive could finalise the plan then it was for them to a) send to Carol Gleeson for review, b) alert the Cliffs of Moher of proposals around membership fees and c) thereafter, send to wider membership for input.</p>
08.12.2016	Janet Cavanagh shared updated	One Executive members gave comprehensive

	<p>draft plan with fellow B.E.N. Executive members and asked them to feedback within a week.</p>	<p>feedback via email on the document and overall found it wasn't really fit-for-purpose as a business plan. Many amendments were suggested. The Executive collectively discussed the business plan at their meeting of 04.01.2017 and agreed that the work done to date was excellent, that the document was not yet fully formed and required some further work, that sensitive information and proposals therein needed to be handled with care, and that a version of the plan should be written into the template for the LEADER funding application as this was the most urgent item that it was needed for. It further suggested that a member of Executive sit with the business plan group to progress it further.</p> <p>After email correspondence between Exec and Tina, it was agreed that it was not necessary to re-convene business plan group and that 3 Executive members would come together with Tina to complete the plan.</p>
04.01.2017	<p>Session with members of B.E.N. Executive (Deborah, Christy & Janet) with the aim of concluding and finalising the business plan, facilitated by Tina.</p>	<p>The group chose to use the time to focus on completing a business plan for the LEADER application, rather than the general business plan. The group revised some information on the financial tables and also edited the document to remove material that would be considered confidential and not for potential sharing to LEADER or other third parties.</p>
11.01.2017	<p>An updated draft was returned to the Executive sub-group for them to finalise</p>	<p>A number of items remained to be addressed by the Executive at this stage:</p>

Attachment 3: Overview of Training Geopark LIFE training Autumn 2016

Enterprise Training & Networking Programme – Autumn 2016

Date	Topic	Eligible Participants	Actual Attendance	%
Friday 30 th September	B.E.N. Information Event	Open invitation	2	n/a
Monday 10 th October	B.E.N. Information Event	Open Invitation	6	n/a
Tuesday 11 th October	Train the Trainer	14	14	100%
Wednesday 12 th October	Train the Trainer	14	12	86%
Wednesday 19 th October	Vision 2016 Structured Networking	42	28	66%
Tuesday 27 th October	Train the Trainer	14	12	86%
Wednesday 28 th October	Train the Trainer	14	13	93%
Wednesday 9 th November	Introduction to the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism – Online System & Submission	22	11	50%
Thursday 10 th November	Introduction to the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism – Online System & Submission (Repeat)	22	13	59%
Monday 14 th November	Setting Up a Sustainable Environmental Management System	44	10	23%
Tuesday 22 nd November	Visitor Management Using Leave No Trace	12	7	58%
Tuesday 29 th November	Ask me about the Geopark for Outdoor Providers and Visitor Centres	21	17	81%
TOTALS		219	148	66%

Events: 12

Days: 219 training days. 66% average attendance.

Attachment 4 : Overview of performance against key indicators 2014-16

1. Summary of Action B1 Aims

1. To improve the environmental impact of enterprises
2. To improve the economic impact of enterprises
3. To improve resource planning for the enterprise
4. To facilitate implementation of new activities by enterprises

2. Overall Indicator for Action B1 – Training Programme

OVERALL INDICATOR FOR B1: 100 enterprises to complete a training programme of 2000 training days.

Training Cycle	Dates	Number of Training Events	Total Training Day Provision	Approximate Expenditure	Number of Businesses involved in training
1	Oct 2013-May 2014	23	512	10100	52
2	Oct 2014-May 2015	26	727	16700	57
3	Oct 2015-May 2016	18	355	11000	42
4	Oct 2016-Dec 2016	12	219	9000 (approx)	44
	OVERALL TOTALS	75	1757	46800	49 average

Note: Since GeoparkLIFE decided at an early stage to concentrate Action B1 on the Burren Ecotourism Network, several members of the Network have participated in training across all four cycles.

While there was an average of 49 enterprises participating in training in any given year, the overall total number of enterprises in the Burren Region who participated in the Geopark LIFE training and support programme to date is exactly 100. The direct reach of the programme is however much wider for the following reasons:

- 3 Farmers Markets have been involved. While each counted as one member, each one comprises approximately 20 micro food enterprises who benefitted from the comprehensive food development programme.
- 2 enterprises from another destination in Co. Clare, Loop Head, participated in the 2013 programme. These two enterprises took learnings from the programme and adapted the Burren Ecotourism Network model to create Loop Head Tourism. That network in turn has gone on to become a strong representative voice and marketing tool for that sustainable tourism destination and thereby strengthening the overall sustainable tourism drive in the County.
- A cohort of members of the Doolin region of the Geopark came together at their own local level in 2015 and used the GeoparkLIFE partnership model and the Burren Ecotourism

Network template to re-launch Doolin Tourism. There are up to 200 enterprises in Doolin Tourism.

Cycle 1: Focus on the Environmental Strand (Code)

GeoparkLIFE ran two training strands in Cycle 1: one for new applicants to the Burren Ecotourism Network (22 enterprises) and one for existing members and partners of the Network (30). The existing members and partners had all previously completed intensive training leading to ecotourism/sustainable tourism certification between 2010 and 2012. Following the training of both groups, a public launch event of the enlarged ecotourism network was held in March 2014.

Cycle 2: Focus on the Environmental Strand (Code) + Economic Strand (Capacity Building)

Building on Cycle 1, GeoparkLIFE developed and co-ordinated the delivery of two parallel training strands:

- Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice for Tourism training (targeted primarily at a cohort of 12 enterprises wishing to join the B.E.N., but also open to existing members)
- Structured Networking & Referrals Training/Facilitation (targeted primarily at a cohort of 45 existing B.E.N. members who had completed Code of Practice Training in 2013-14, but open also to aspiring members)

Of the 12 businesses that commenced the Code of Practice training programme, 8 (66%) submitted Code of Practice documentation for external review and returned a signed Declaration of Compliance with the Code of Practice. Of the 4 businesses that did not complete the Code submission, 3 enterprises cited general business and time pressures while the fourth was subject to unexpected sale. While this cohort represented a much smaller group of businesses than in Cycle 1, they were largely businesses who welcome large numbers of visitors and who are important players in the tourism landscape. They therefore have high potential visitor influence and also high resource usage.

Cycle 3: Focus on the Economic Strand (Capacity Building) + Resource Planning Strand

There was no recruitment drive in advance of Cycle 3 and this cycle concentrated on building the capacity of existing members of the Burren Ecotourism Network. With clear successes recorded by this time in the areas of environmental impact and economic impact as a result of the training and networking programme, focus was now shifting to strategic planning, capacity building and identifying an exit strategy from the programme for the tourism enterprises.

On the one hand, the aim of the training programme in Cycle 3 was to enhance member skills and understanding in the area of marketing, product development, networking and conservation management in order to enable them to continue the GeoparkLIFE legacy into the future.

On the other hand, a process of extensive consultation and deliberation began during Cycle 3 which included B.E.N. Members, Geopark Management and the B1 Working Group of the GeoparkLIFE programme. More information on the resource planning component is contained in Section 3 below.

Cycle 4: Focus on the Environmental Strand + Resource Planning Strand

During 2016, a large focus of Action B1 centred on revising and refining the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism (clear recommendations for same arose from the consultation process in

May 2015). The new Code of Practice System (comprising online portal, resource library and tools) reduces the number of face-to-face workshops required (thereby reducing cost and business time commitment). The Burren Ecotourism Network accepted 9 new members this year. They are being supported in their journey towards sustainability by a combination of workshops, peer mentoring and the online resources.

The Train the Trainer and Train the Mentor programme were completed in October 2016 as part of Cycle 4. The 'graduates' of this programme will provide the peer mentoring to new members of the network and they now comprise the Geopark Training & Mentoring Panel. It is envisaged that the Geopark itself will continue to independently own and support the Code of Practice in the AfterLIFE period and will be able to draw on this panel of experience mentors and trainers to enable it to support the Code in a targeted and cost-effective manner.

Component Indicator – Environmental Impact

Environmental Indicator:	the use of environmental management techniques by the tourism enterprises, comparing pre-training to post-training.
Measurement Tool:	Enterprise Survey
Frequency:	Enterprises were surveyed after each of two cycles of environmental training.

Question/Indicator	Cycle 1 2013-14	Cycle 2 2014- 15	Cycle 3 2015-16
Are you interested in obtaining/renewing certification?	89%	100%	76%
Did you find independent evaluation and feedback useful?	81%	67%	N/A
In your view, is the Code of Practice a useful and effective standard of environmental good practice in the Geopark?	92%	100%	N/A
The programme significantly enhanced my awareness of environmental management techniques and resources	44%	100%	N/A
Do you feel your business has lessened its environmental impact as a result of your participation in the programme?	Yes: 87%	Yes: 100%	N/A
Do you feel your business has been generally strengthened as a result of your participation in the programme?	Yes: 80%	Yes: 100%	

In terms of environmental indicators, the performance in Cycle 2 of the Code of Practice programme seems to be higher than that of Cycle 1. There are a number of possible reasons for this:

- A more efficient and effective training programme that has benefitted from the experience gained in 2014-15
- A highly motivated group of businesses who were keen to join the Burren Ecotourism Network and to prove themselves eligible to do so.
- Greater trainer understanding and empathy with challenges facing businesses in completing the Code of Practice programme.
- A smaller cohort of businesses which resulted in greater individual attention.

Cycle 2 group reported changes and improvements in every aspect of their business and environmental management systems, as well as how they engage with visitors. In addition, this group completed the programme very efficiently within a 12 week period and made good submissions for external validation. It would seem that efficiency of delivery and improved communications around the purpose and desired outcomes contributed to this. This greater efficiency and clarity arise from the experiences gained over the last number of years and from being responsive in fine-tuning and adapting the programme.

While GeoparkLIFE did not run Code of Practice Training in Cycle 3, the Enterprise Survey from June 2016 continued to ask respondents about their environmental practice. At the time of completing the survey, it had been between 1 and 2 years since the respondent had participated in the Code of

Practice training programme. The survey outcomes are encouraging with 100% of respondents continuing to observe the Code of Practice 88% continuing to set targets for improvement. High numbers of respondents continue to record improvements in various aspects of the Code.

Question/Indicator	
Does your business continue to observe the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism?	Yes: 100%
In general, do you feel your business has lessened its environmental impact since your last Code of Practice submission?	Yes: 82%
Did you attend the Geopark Code of Practice Refresher Workshop in 2016?	Yes: 40%
Have you set targets for improvement in 2016?	Yes: 88%
If yes, did you record improvements over the last 18 months in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How you manage your resources? - How you communicate with your staff? - The information you provide to visitors? - How you communicate with visitors when they are with you? - How you manage visitors when they are with you? - How you plan for your business? - Your bottom-line costs? - Your contribution to community? 	Yes Responses: 74% 77% 87% 84% 83% 79% 81% 88%
In the future, it is proposed that member businesses would make a Code of Practice submission every two years. Do you agree with this proposal?	Yes: 84%
It is proposed that, in the future, Code of Practice submissions will be independently verified by means of random spot-check. This would mean that approximately 10% of all member submissions in any given year would be subject to independent review by an external assessor as a verification that submissions made by the membership as a whole are credible. Do you agree with this proposal?	Yes: 90%

3. Component Indicator – Economic Impact

Economic Indicator:	attitudes and beliefs of enterprise managers and owners as to whether or not their business has been strengthened as a result of the programme.
Measurement Tool:	Enterprise Survey
Frequency:	After each training cycle and covering both economic and environmental strands

Question/Indicator	Cycle 1 2013-14	Cycle 2 2014-15	Cycle 3 2015-16
Do you feel your business has been generally strengthened as a result of your participation in B.E.N. and the GeoparkLIFE programme?	Yes: 80%	Yes: 100%	Yes: 97%
In your view, has general awareness of the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark region as a visitor destination increased as a result of the joint marketing programme executed by B.E.N. and the GEopark	Yes: 93%	Yes: 100%	Yes: 97%
Do you feel that LOCAL awareness of your business has increased as a result of your participation in the B.E.N. over the last year?	Yes: 77%	Yes: 67%	Yes: 78%
Do you feel that NATIONAL or INTERNATIONAL awareness of your business has increased as a result of your participation in the B.E.N. over the last year?	Yes: 63%	Yes: 50%	Yes: 75%
Did you engage in any new commercial activity in the last year as a result of your participation in the B.E.N. and the GeoparkLIFE programme	Yes: 44%	Yes: 50%	Yes: 56%
Do you have a documented business plan for your tourism enterprise?	Yes: 55%	Yes: 20%	Yes: 44%

How would you describe your level of business activity in the past year?

Option	Cycle 1 2013-14	Cycle 2 2014-15	Cycle 3 2015-16
Up on previous year	73%	100%	84%
Unchanged versus previous year	19%	0%	6%
Down on previous year	8%	0%	10%

What are your expectations for your business performance in the coming year?

Option	Cycle 1 2013-14	Cycle 2 2014-15	Cycle 3 2015-16
We expect an increase in business versus last year.	67%	73%	85%
We expect a decrease in business versus last year.		5%	6%
We expect approximately the same level of business as last year.		10%	3%
We are unable to assess this at this point in time.	33%	12%	6%

At this time, how confident are you in the long-term sustainability of your tourism enterprise?

Option	Cycle 1 2013-14	Cycle 2 2014-15	Cycle 3 2015-16
Very confident	45%	67%	66%
Fairly confident	33%	33%	19%
Find it difficult to gauge at the present time	17%		13%
Not very confident	3%		3%
Not at all confident	2%		0%

4. Component Indicator – Resource Planning

Resource Planning Indicator: the creation of a viable sustainability plan for the Burren Ecotourism Network.

At the B1 Steering Group Meeting of June 2016, it was decided to change the reporting indicator for the Resource Planning strand from the “number of enterprises preparing new business plans and the extent to which the environmental themes are integrated into those plans” to “the creation of a viable sustainability plan for B.E.N.” Following the extensive consultation and deliberation process during 2016, the key indicators for the resource planning strand have been met:

1. Burren Ecotourism Network Strategy Document 2015-18
2. Burren Ecotourism Network Business Plan 2017-2020

The Executive of the Burren Ecotourism Network will use the contents of these documents to support the soon-to-be appointed Marketing Co-ordinator and Business Sustainability Animator. The key building blocks towards sustainability have been put in place and the responsibility for implementing the plans and retaining the services of contract consultants has now been taken over by the Executive of the Burren Ecotourism Network.

5. Component Indicator – Implementation

Given that the natural outcome of the Resource Planning Component of Action B1 is that the Burren Ecotourism Network assumes ownership of and responsibility for its own business plan and future, the implementation of the plan now rests with the Burren Ecotourism Network itself. The plan has Key Performance Indicators built in so that the Network Executive can monitor progress over time. GeoparkLIFE will continue to liaise with the Burren Ecotourism Network during 2017 to observe progress on the plan implementation.

The Tourism Enterprises Report arising from Action B1 will document observations and findings in this area.