



B2 Site Selection Proposals

18th September 2013

In order to ensure the Geopark LIFE programme builds on the experience and consultations of previous tourism strategies and programmes in the Burren, the recommendations of previous tourism reports have been revisited and combined with the results of the Burren Connect programme (2007 – 2011). This exercise is used to guide the B2 aspect of the Geopark LIFE project.

We have summarised the literature and policy documents relating to the Burren in a separate document; *Tourism in the Burren: Summary of Literature and Policy Documents* by Joe Saunders.

We are also undertaking a mapping exercise which will build up the character profile of regions within the Burren; see table below:

Map 1	All designations, incl National Park and public lands
2	Electorial divisions
3	CDP development zones
4	Water services and divisions
5	Waste management permits
6	Land/farming usage, including food producers and BFC farms
7	Geological and natural features by category (including Geo sites, quarries).
8	Heritage and cultural features by category
9	Tourism services by category (Visitor centres, accommodation...)
10	Walking and cycling routes
11	Public facilities (parking, toilets, camping)
12	3 zones with text box for each zone key characteristics
13	Main coach routes, car routes, public transport routes, ferries, ecar points (include traffic counts and visitor data)
14	Areas most used by guides/research groups/Burrenbeo/school tours etc
15	Attractions with access issues/pressure points
16	Environmental 'hot spots' as identified by CCC
17	Future plans (Wild Atlantic Way, Burren Signage Plan)
18	Visitor profiles for each zone (Visitor numbers and profiles)
19	Proposed demonstration sites

Experience and research to date have identified three zones of influence attracting three types of visitor. We have used this characteristic as the guiding principle behind the approach being proposed at this meeting. The challenge for the Committee is to find suitable demonstration sites

that address the issues arising out of the varying characteristics of different areas of the Burren, rather than seek a 'one size fits all' solution to visitor management.

The following pages outline the proposed zones, their proposed sites and proposed work programme. Most of the locations were visited by the Committee during the site visits on the 29th of April, the 10th and 20th of May.

We now ask the partners to review the locations, utilising the attached criteria to choose demonstration sites for each zone that will address the issues relating to each zone and providing an overall positive effect in all of the Burren. The demonstration sites should represent a microcosm of the zone, highlight the benefits of the LIFE programme and its approach, act as transferrable models to other locations and provide the data and rationale for leveraging further support and funding in other sites.

Please consider the following criteria when reviewing each location:

Ownership	Is land-owner agreeable to granting access?
Planning	Are there planning issues that could delay or otherwise hinder potential outcomes?
Heritage Impact	Is the site of academic/cultural important locally, nationally, internationally? Would inclusion add knowledge? Is it special, unique? Is the site of interest to visitors, especially international visitors (including holiday-makers and educational/research)?
Tourism Impact	Does the site have the potential to attract international visitors?
Community Impact	Would site conservation/development be supported by most of the community? Would it add value to the local community? Is there a commitment to becoming involved in LIFE?
Conservation Impact	What type of conservation impact will there be? Is the site highly sensitive? Does it have the capacity to absorb extra users? Is it in imminent danger of collapse, destruction, erosion? Can the cost of actions and interventions be accommodated within the LIFE budget? Can the conservation actions be transferrable to other locations?
Access	Is access to site physically easy? Would it be a suitable site for disabled access? Are there any significant costs associated with provision of access? Are there health and safety issues? Would visitors have to be guided?
Visitor Management	Does it help to manage existing visitor flows? Does this help to reduce congestion and over-use in tourism? What may be the future management requirements? Can landowners and local communities get involved?
Visitor Capacity	Does this attract visitors into underutilised areas and possibly reduce pressure points elsewhere?
Facilities	Is there the benefit of existing facilities on site? Would the project capitalise on previous works or investment?
Demonstration effect	An overall criterion that brings much of the others together: will this demonstrate the positive interaction between tourism and conservation? Will it be highly visible? Will there be high added value? Is there a positive linkage with other aspects of the project?



Map showing proposed Zones; Zone 1 in Yellow, Zone 2 in Green, Zone 3 in Pink

Zone 1 R477 and N67

Key Characteristics: Attracting casual tourists passing through the area, including Irish-based coach tours on day or longer visits, many of which include the Cliffs of Moher, Galway Bay and Bunratty. This route runs along the coast of the Burren and is considered one of the top 10 most scenic routes in Europe by the Automobile Association. It is heavily used by International and National tourists, coach operators, and amenity users such as rock climbing and fishing clubs, walkers, cyclists and surfers. The route is earmarked for intensive promotion as a section of the Wild Atlantic Way. The route is located within the Galway Bay Complex Special Area of Conservation SAC (000268) and is also part of the Galway Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Blackhead Poulsallagh Complex SAC (000020). Fanore sand dunes are listed as Annex 1 under the EU Habitat Directives.

A number of locations on this route have been identified as visitor pressure points, though with varying characteristics; Flaggy Shore, Black Head, Fanore Dunes and Ballyreen Commonage. Apart from a section of Fanore Dunes, owned and managed by Clare County Council, all land affected is in private ownership. Background research and some planning (and a visitor management programme at Fanore Dunes) have been carried out at all areas, including a Traffic Management Strategy in 2008. Recent discoveries have unearthed evidence of coastal habitation dating to the Mesolithic Period. These discoveries are under imminent threat from coastal erosion. Coastal erosion is also affecting some access infrastructure.

Demonstration value: Management of increased visitor numbers and addressing impacts on and access to natural and cultural monuments and sites, local landowners, amenity users, provision of universal access and issues surrounding coastal erosion.

Proposed Sites

Flaggy Shore: Universal access to beach, parking areas, mitigation measures for coastal erosion to path and road, access to Martello Tower, signage, management of litter & illegal camping

Blackhead/Fanore: Access points for livestock, roadside verge/hedge cutting, speed limits, signage (including location of signage) universal access to beach, designated parking areas, management of and access to archaeological sites, installation of interpretative signage. Coastal erosion mitigation measures.

Ballyreen Commonage: Provision of water services for commonage owners (as gesture of good will). Rebuilding of stone walls, provision of access points for livestock, improvement of parking areas, provision of access routes/viewing areas, speed limits, signage (including location of signage) universal access to beach, installation of interpretative signage.

Work programme:

1. Collation of baseline information: Traffic/transport surveys, visitor surveys, heritage surveys, water quality data, GSI/NUIG INFOMAR data, environmental impacts assessments
2. Development of recording and analysis methodologies to measure progress
3. Landowner, community and business consultation
4. Infrastructural work programme; AA required for any proposed developments
5. Integrated management and monitoring programme (including traffic/visitor management); feeding into policy and overall Burren tourism management plan
6. Report and evaluation

Zone 2 : R480 & R476

Key Characteristics: Attracting more informed tourists taking an active interest in aspects of the area, including some Continental-based coach tours. The R480 runs through the centre of the Burren and has an array of prominent attractions and natural/cultural locations adjacent to it; Leamaneh Castle, Sheshymore Pavement, Carran Church and Meggah Depression, Poulawack Cairn, Caherconnel Fort, Poulnabrone Dolmen, Ballyallaban viewing point, Cahermore, Aillwee caves and An Rath. A number of the sites are located within Moneen Mountain SAC 000054. The route is mainly used by coach operators and individual travellers curious about the history and culture of the Burren. The route then branches into the R476 to Kilfenora or towards Corrofin and Dysert O’Dea. The areas identified for consideration are Dysert O’Dea complex of monuments, Kilnaboy community groups active in conservation and Roughan Hill archaeological complex.

Some of these locations are well managed, others have issues with access, conservation and interpretation. They are a mix of public and private ownership. Interpretation, universal access and car parking has been provided at Poulnabrone. Background research and some planning have been done on car parking for An Rath/Cahermore, conservation/access issues on Carran Church, and the use of Sheshymore as a learning environment. Issues over access to Leamaneh Castle are under review.

Demonstration value: Route development with a variety of sites of interest robust enough to absorb the type of visitor to this zone, showing best practice in dispersal of visitors, universal access and traffic management, mitigation of environmental impacts.

Proposed Sites

Aillwee Cave: Visitor surveys, waste water and energy management analysis, environmental monitoring of impacts on Cave and surrounding landscape.

An Rath/Cahermore: Development of parking and universal access routes to the sites, interpretation, management and monitoring. Analysis of the economic return for the landowner and the wider community.

Ballyallaban: Development of universal access and outdoor interpretation on the landscape of the Burren, utilising the space to full advantage

Poulnabrone: Resolving issues relating to the provision of toilet facilities, security of the monument and safety of parked vehicles, prevention of visitor falls/accidents, overnight camping, erosion of the surrounding pavement, overall visitor management and environmental impacts at a site attracting 2,000 visitors a day in high season and 1500 per day at shoulder season.

Caherconnell Fort: Installation of public toilets to service Poulnabrone?

Poulawack Cairn: Resolution on signage and advertising; if signed, provision of adequate parking and access route.

Carran Church: Consolidation of the building, provision of adequate parking, access path and interpretative signage

Sheshymore Pavement: Analysis of the site as a ‘learning environment’ and potential provision of adequate access and management (in co-operation with BFC programme and landowner)

Leamaneh Castle: Resolution of access issues with landowner and development of strategic plan for the extended site to include as many estate features as possible.

Roughan Hill: Provision of a plan for providing access and interpretation to a complex archaeological landscape (B3 Case Study?)

Kilnaboy: Provision of a plan for the most effective way for local communities to collaborate with agencies on local conservation programmes, using An Cabhail Mor and a number of local holy wells as examples (B3 Case Study?)

Dysert O’Dea: Provision of detailed plans for improved signage, improved access to monuments and improved interpretation in the Castle.

Work programme:

1. Collation of baseline information: Traffic/transport surveys, visitor surveys, heritage surveys, water quality data, GSI/NUIG data, environmental impacts assessments
2. Development of recording and analysis methodologies to measure progress
3. Landowner, community and business consultation
4. Infrastructural work programme; AA required for any proposed developments
5. Integrated management and monitoring programme (including traffic/visitor management); feeding into policy and overall Burren tourism management plan
6. Report and evaluation

Zone 3; East Burren

Key Characteristics: Attracting specialist and academic tourists taking an in-depth interest in the area or pursuing a particular activity. Lying within the East Burren Complex SAC (001926), this area is characterised by stunning landscape, narrow roads, unspoilt upland regions, the National Park, a wide range of natural and cultural sites with little or no visitor facilities and a few tourist attractions and services, mainly located close to the village of Carran. A number of walking trails have been developed recently in the National Park and around Carran and Cahercommaun.

Demonstration Value: To develop strategic management plans around the use and monitoring of the locations identified as intensive immersion experiences, usually guided (by Burrenbeo, guides, Farm tours, national parks staff) and to develop a traffic management along smaller roads and access into the Burren from Gort, addressing issues relating to Lough Bunny parking and access. Possible baseline indicator for other undeveloped areas, measuring the impacts on local communities, land owners, and businesses from a start-up position.

Proposed Sites

Slieve Carron Nature Reserve: Assessing, monitoring and managing erosion to paths and sites and increasing visitor numbers.

Lough Bunny: Addressing parking issues at the Lough and investigating options for the development of visitor amenities in an undeveloped location of high natural and heritage value.

National Park: Opportunity to address access and visitor management issues

Work programme:

1. Collation of baseline information: Traffic/transport surveys, visitor surveys, heritage surveys, water quality data, GSI/NUIG data, environmental impacts assessments
2. Development of recording and analysis methodologies to measure progress
3. Landowner, community and business consultation
4. Infrastructural work programme; AA required for any proposed developments
5. Integrated management and monitoring programme (including traffic/visitor management); feeding into policy and overall Burren tourism management plan
6. Report and evaluation

Budget Details for Action B2 Monuments and Habitats

	Personnel	T&S	External Assistance	Consumables	Other	TOTAL
Overall	360,500	33,000	340,310	10,000	10,000	753,810
CCC	99,500	9,000	115,310		10,000	
HC	49,920	5,000	35,000	5,000		
NMS	37,080	11,000	40,000	5,000		
OPW	96,000	8,000	150,000			
NUIG	78,000					

Please consider the following criteria when reviewing each location:

Ownership	Is land-owner agreeable to granting access?
Planning	Are there planning issues that could delay or otherwise hinder potential outcomes?
Heritage Impact	Is the site of academic/cultural important locally, nationally, internationally? Would inclusion add knowledge? Is it special, unique? Is the site of interest to visitors, especially international visitors (including holiday-makers and educational/research)?
Tourism Impact	Does the site have the potential to attract international visitors?
Community Impact	Would site conservation/development be supported by most of the community? Would it add value to the local community? Is there a commitment to becoming involved in LIFE?
Conservation Impact	What type of conservation impact will there be? Is the site highly sensitive? Does it have the capacity to absorb extra users? Is it in imminent danger of collapse, destruction, erosion? Can the cost of actions and interventions be accommodated within the LIFE budget? Can the conservation actions be transferrable to other locations?
Access	Is access to site physically easy? Would it be a suitable site for disabled access? Are there any significant costs associated with provision of access? Are there health and safety issues? Would visitors have to be guided?
Visitor Management	Does it help to manage existing visitor flows? Does this help to reduce congestion and over-use in tourism? What may be the future management requirements? Can landowners and local communities get involved?
Visitor Capacity	Does this attract visitors into underutilised areas and possibly reduce pressure points elsewhere?
Facilities	Is there the benefit of existing facilities on site? Would the project capitalise on previous works or investment?
Demonstration effect	An overall criterion that brings much of the others together: will this demonstrate the positive interaction between tourism and conservation? Will it be highly visible? Will there be high added value? Is there a positive linkage with other aspects of the project?

High

Very positive possibilities, such as: land owner will give access; of strong interest to locals and tourists; positive conservation outcomes; physical access is easy; good visitor management in heavily used location; will attract visitors to an under-used location; existing facilities present; overall strong demonstration effect.

Low

Not so positive possibilities, such as: land owner will not easily give access; not such strong interest to tourists; conservation outcomes not so positive; physical access not easy; not managing existing visitors; not attracting visitors to under-used location; no existing facilities; not as strong a demonstration effect as other sites.

Medium

Intermediate outcomes

Location	Ownership	Planning	Heritage Impact	Tourism Impact	Community Impact	Conservation Impact	Access	Visitor Mgt	Visitor Capacity	Facilities	Demonstration effect	Shortlist
ZONE 1												
Flaggy Shore												
Blackhead /Fanore												
Ballyreen Commonage												
ZONE 2												
Aillwee Cave												
An Rath /Cahermore												
Ballyallaban												
Poul nabrone /Caherconnell												
Poulawack Cairn												
Carran Church												
Sheshymore Pavement												
Leamaneh Castle												
Roughan Hill												
Kilnaboy												
Dysert O’Dea												
ZONE 3												
Slieve Carron												
Lough Bunny												
National Park												

Please use High (H) Medium (M) or Low (L) as values against each criteria.

