



GeoparkLIFE
ACTION B3 CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT
 Date April 2016

The scope of Action B3:

The Aim of B3 is to develop the skills base of all stakeholders in the understanding, management and conservation of natural and cultural heritage and to reinforce the Actions B1 and B2. It will strengthen community support of active conservation and also analyse the current policies that impact on these actions as well as making recommendations for the future.

Supporting Action B1:	
Adopt a Hedgerow	<p>This Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN) conservation and advocacy group are now entering their second year of the Adopt a Hedgerow Scheme. The initiative sees BEN businesses act as an advocate in maintaining a stretch of roadside in their locality, engaging with the local community to collect litter, monitor, reporting dumping and deal with invasive species. The section of road chosen is in direct contact with or enroute to the business which has adopted it.</p> <p>The annual clean-up for 2016 takes place in two parts. The first event is in conjunction with National Spring Clean which will see BEN committee members teaming up with Lisdoonvarna National School to carry out a clean-up as part of the National Spring Clean campaign.</p> <p>The main event for Adopt a Hedgerow is the weekly clean by businesses on an adopted section of road at the start of the peak tourist season. This year it takes place between 12th and 18th April 2016.</p> <p>PR assistance continues to be provided by GeoparkLIFE while CCC provides resources relating to litter-picking and waste disposal.</p> <p>The participants hope to put up temporary signage along the sections of roads being adopted by the various businesses, similar in practice to the initiative known as the Golden Mile in Co. Galway, and discussions/advice with CCC about size and location of these signs is in progress. It is proposed that these signs would be in place over the peak season, (no longer than 6 months), and would hopefully act as a littering deterrent and awareness-raising for passers-by.</p> <p>BEN members also attended a one-day training workshop on Invasive Species on 1st March 2016. This training was conducted by Burren Beo and tailored to the BEN members. The group were given the skills to identify the most common invasive species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 types of Knotweed: The different species can be difficult to tell apart, however the damage caused is the same so all 3 need to be reported. • Cotoneaster which would be seen to occur on the limestone pavement where it causes damage.

	<p>The reporting of invasive species by the BEN members will be directly to the National Biodiversity Data Centre using GPS coordinates. BurrenBeo would also facilitate the reporting if needed.</p>
Meitheal	<p>A second annual Meitheal event has taken place in November 2015. Meitheal is anticipated to be one of the five core events of the Conservation and Advocacy Forum of BEN. The 2015 event took place on Saturday 7th November at Fahee, Nr. Carron. This area of the Burren is of great importance for tourism as well as wildlife. The event was planned to support the farmer by clearing pathways to improve access to his land which is used by tourists, as well as the conservation aspect of maintaining an important area for rare breeding butterflies that many visitors come to the area to see, mainly in the form of hazel clearance.</p> <p>The event was once again led by the Burren Conservation Volunteers with expert guidance from Paul McHale (Regional Butterfly Coordinator for the National Biodiversity Data Centre).</p> <p>The findings from the Meitheal programme are positive and the current structure seems to be working well. There is a good dynamic around the event and its working well in building relationships and creating a networking opportunity with a good work ethic, all pointing towards a successful social event which fulfils the notion of business payback to the community.</p> <p>The BEN group need to address the funding issue around Meitheal in order to improve its sustainability in the future. Currently the biggest cost is the money paid to BurrenBeo. If this can be reduced or eliminated then this activity has a high potential for success into the future.</p>
Community Engagement	
Tidy Towns	<p>A Wildlife Survey was commissioned by the Ballyvaughan Community Development Group (BVCD) funded by the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark as part of their LIFE project, to take place during 2014. The survey was carried out by Phoebe O'Brien to identify habitats and physical features on a 1:2500 map, annotated with habitat descriptions and species lists, indicating notable species and those which are indicative of the health of the habitat. The final report from this study included a Management Plan. The management suggestions are made which comply with the requirements of the Tidy Towns Handbook. Suggestions were also made on how to improve Ballyvaughan's score for Wildlife and Natural Amenities. The 2015 Tidy Towns results showed Ballyvaughan scoring one extra point under 'Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities' compared to 2014 and overall scoring 6 more points in 2015 than 2014. The group are now beginning work aimed towards the 2016 competition, all the while including the wider community where possible.</p> <p>This case study is aimed at developing a template and recommendations on engaging tidy towns groups with appropriate activities to nourish and highlight biodiversity in more urbanised environments. It appears so far that by commissioning a Wildlife Survey then the group become equipped with a comprehensive management plan for their area. The plan produced by Phoebe O'Brien is considered by the Ballyvaughan group as very well written, easily understandable and implementable. It must be noted however, that the Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns group have a number of experts among them when it comes to ecology and</p>

	<p>biodiversity. This may not always be the case so it is important that we fully evaluate the comprehensibility of the Wildlife Survey if we are to truly look at transferability.</p> <p>The Geopark will continue to follow the Tidy Towns group and see if there are other ways we can enhance their biodiversity throughout the lifetime of the project. We will also begin to consult with TidyTowns.org on biodiversity scoring in the competition and ways in which we can work on a transferrable toolkit.</p>
Kilinaboy/An Cabhail Mor	<p>A training initiative proposed by Dick Cronin of CCC to repair and repaint the 17th Century building in a bad state of disrepair in Kilinaboy. The programme was to involve H&S training, lime preparation and training in use of lime. The 17thC structure at Kilinaboy was selected as a suitable candidate for such a scheme, with an enthusiastic local group, good accessibility and facilities nearby. In order for this work to happen, a number of pieces of work were considered necessary in order to comply with legislation and best practice. The following surveys/reports and steps were taken:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A conservation inspection and risk assessment 2. A section 57 Declaration 3. Notification was submitted to NMS (granted with T&Cs) 4. An ecology report/wildlife survey 5. Mortar samples were taken by OPW for analysis 6. The Kilinaboy History and Heritage Group completed a draft 'Vision' Document which contained their conservation plan for the monument. 7. A request for tender was circulated for a conservation engineers report (as per Dept. guidelines), however this was not commissioned. 8. Some ivy removal has taken place. <p>The training scheme presented challenges when it came to the Project Supervisor Design Process (PSDP) who must be an individual or corporate body, i.e. it could not be the Geopark. PSDP is needed for any construction project exceeding 500 person days or 30 working days. It quickly became apparent that the proposed training scheme was beyond the capabilities of the local community group at this time.</p> <p>The KHHG applied for Adopt a Monument in partnership with the Burren Conservation Volunteers, with support from GeoparkLIFE. However the Adopt a Monument application was unsuccessful.</p> <p>The Geopark will look at how the process over the last year informs policy and look at what recommendation can be made for the future. This will be relevant as the DAHG work on developing guidelines for community groups undertaking conservation projects. PSDP may be a real issue for community groups in the future, especially with LEADER funding.</p>
Lisdoonvarna Failte	<p>The Lisdoonvarna Failte case study is a local tourism and community project taking place at Lisdoonvarna Spa Wells with the community owners of the property there. It began with several meetings between a range of agencies, including the Geopark, Failte Ireland, Clare County Council, and Lisdoonvarna Failte on the development of the Spa Wells as a tourism and community resource. This led to the decision to carry out a feasibility study on the development of the site to properly interpret</p>

	<p>heritage and conservation values for locals and visitors.</p> <p>A tender document was circulated at the end July 2015 seeking a directional feasibility study for the development of the Lisdoonvarna Spa Wells Complex as a Health and Wellness Visitor Experience, with an appeal to domestic and international visitor markets.</p> <p>The central output of the feasibility study will be the production of an actionable report which is comprehensive and publishable. A draft study is currently available with the final study forthcoming. Clare County Council has approved funding of €5,000 towards the study. GeoparkLIFE will continue to be a mentor for the project at the Spa Wells.</p>
<p>Lisdoonvarna Secondary School – Hydrology Project with NUIG</p>	<p>Discussions began in early December 2015 with Tiernan Henry of NUIG about a new partnership and the prospect of running an Hydrology Programme for schools. This came at the same time that it became apparent that NUIG were not in a position to develop a partnership for the purpose of providing archaeological services to the project.</p> <p>Dr. Tiernan Henry had already been involved with the Lisdoonvarna TY programme and provided expertise last year. Now Dr. Henry has teamed up with Dr. Gesche Kindermann (also of NUIG) and together they have put together a proposal for a participatory educational programme for TY students which will centre on the idea of integrated catchment management, educating young people on their local water resources and encouraging community participation in knowledge building and a better understanding and management of the water resource in the Burren. The project will include teaching the students basic GIS skills and will encourage them to build maps in layers, adding detail all the time and creating a resource for the community while the Geopark LIFE will work towards an educational toolkit for Integrated Catchment Management with second level students.</p> <p>This project will be overseen by Dr. Henry and Dr. Kindermann through the employment of a research Masters student who will deliver outputs for the Geopark LIFE in tandem with the MSc. This pilot scheme will run for one academic year from Sept 2016 to June 2017.</p> <p>The project will be run by a research MSc student who will commence on June 1st 2016. All necessary timetabling and work plans will be in place by then.</p>
<p>Policy Review</p>	<p>The work on analysing policy is on-going. The final interviews with project partners are in progress at the moment. What is clear from this interview process is that there is a need for dialogue with partner agencies at senior management level, i.e. the policy makers.</p> <p>A submission was made by Prof. Gabriel Cooney/UCD as a project partner on the Draft County Development Plan. A copy of this submission is attached in Appendix 1 at the end of this report. The UNESCO designation for the Geopark is significant and there should be commitment from the Council to take on the responsibility that goes with that commitment. To that effect, the submission statement to Clare County Council felt the UNESCO Geopark status is under-represented in the current draft CDP and its potential is not being fully realised. It is hoped that the integration of the GeoparkLIFE project objectives and initiatives into the next Development Plan would work towards sustainability for the region. We will continue to liaise with senior</p>

	planning on this matter.
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Appendix 1



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To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Draft County Clare Development Plan during the public consultation phase. UCD School of Archaeology is involved as project partner on the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark LIFE programme. Our particular remit is to assess and analyse current policies that impact on the relationship of sustainable tourism and conservation management, and the proposal of recommendations on the integration of policies, making a contribution to the wider discussion at European level of the challenge of developing sustainable tourism strategies which have the conservation and management of natural and cultural heritage at their core.

As the economic, social, cultural and environmental blueprint for the future planning, growth and development of County Clare the County Development Plan is the critical policy document to achieve a sustainable tourism strategy within the county. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark (managed by the County Council) as a validated member of the Global Geoparks Network provides a globally recognised, best practice approach and brand to sustainable development and policy integration.

One key development that has happened over the course of the current County Clare Development Plan 2011-2017 is that in November 2015 the Member States of UNESCO ratified the creation of a new label, the UNESCO Global Geoparks. UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Hence the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark now has a UNESCO designation.

Against this background and the national and international recognition of the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher Geopark as providing a successful management model (for example in being recently shortlisted for the an Aontas Star award for its work on Universal Access and the 2016 National Geographic World Legacy Awards), it is somewhat surprising that there is currently very limited reference to the Geopark in the current draft of the Development Plan.

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark appears to be mentioned *only 3 times* in this draft. While the natural and built heritage of the county and specifically of the Burren is referred to frequently the only specific references to the Geopark are:

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9.3.8 Educational Tourism

County Clare is a highly attractive location for educational tourism. Each year large numbers visit County Clare to study the geology, natural heritage, coastal environments, cultural and built heritage of the county. This is a growing sector that offers opportunity for further expansion. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark attracts large number of visitors for educational purposes each year. In addition potential exists to expand tourism based on geological education in the Kilkee/Loop Head areas and tourism based on maritime/marine renewable energy education in the Doonbeg area.

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9.4.4 Tourism in North Clare

North Clare is well located in terms of tourism and has a diverse range of tourism resources, especially the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and the Atlantic coastline. Tourism is well established in the area. However, the potential exists to encourage a larger proportion of tourism traffic to stop in the North Clare area for longer periods of time to avail of the numerous rural and town-based visitor attractions. Any significant tourism project in North Clare should be accompanied by an ecological impact assessment to inform an Appropriate Assessment wherever required.

Development Plan Objective: Tourism in North Clare and The Burren

CDP9.23 It is an objective of Clare County Council:

...c) To consolidate and improve the Burren as a vibrant, sustainable, world-class destination in order to retain its Geopark status and support its World Heritage Site status;

d) To promote the development of ecotourism and agri-tourism and support the work of the Burren Ecotourism Network;....

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14.3.21 Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark is a designated UNESCO Global Geopark and, as such, forms part of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. It also forms part of the European Geoparks Network. A Geopark is a unified area with geological heritage of international significance which is used to promote awareness of key issues facing society in the context of the dynamic planet we all live on. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark supports greater interpretation of the geological landscape, climate change awareness and the achievement of sustainable tourism and land use. It works towards

scientifically-sound and sustainable visitor management and monitoring practices at key natural sites and cultural monuments in the Burren. The Burren Ecotourism Network comprises businesses that adhere to the Geopark Code of Practice. Heritage trails are also being developed in collaboration with local communities and landowners in the area.

Development Plan Objective: Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark

CDP14.22

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

- a) To continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to support the on-going work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and to secure the retention of the 'Geopark' status into the future;
- b) To seek, on an on-going basis, new funding mechanisms for the work of the Geopark e.g. from national and EU sources.

We recognise that Section 14.3.21 and the associated Development Plan Objective 14.22 are an important recognition in the draft County Development Plan of the importance of the work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. However we would like to raise the question of whether in its current draft the Development Plan gives sufficient recognition to the Geopark as a UNESCO designated Global Geopark and as a major resource and asset for the county.

One issue that is important to raise is the lack of any reference in the draft County Development Plan to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher management plan. Management is defined as one of the fundamental features of a UNESCO Global Geopark and a management plan is required. This is agreed by all the partners, provides for the social and economic needs of the local population, protects the landscape in which they live and conserves their cultural identity. The plan must be comprehensive, incorporating the governance, development, communication, protection, infrastructure, finances and partnerships of the Geopark. We would suggest that the Burren and Cliffs of Moher management plan be integrated into the Development Plan as an appendix.

Specific chapters in the draft Development Plan where recognition of the approach and work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark would be valuable include Chapter 9 -Tourism. In this chapter there is discussion of 'integrated tourism products' but the objectives are quite broad. It is clear from its work and achievements to the date that the Geopark could very usefully feature in this chapter of the County Development Plan as the platform to integrate tourism in

North Clare. In its specific role in integrating sustainable tourism and conservation management the Geopark has a role to play in ensuring that the Wild Atlantic Way be 'developed and managed to ensure increased and sustained number of visitors and benefits to the wider rural community'.

The work and approach of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark would also be useful to include in Chapter 13 – Landscape. The Geopark could be very usefully discussed in this chapter as providing a successful model in managing the Burren landscape and more broadly in sustaining heritage landscapes. Another chapter that would benefit from direct reference to the Geopark would be Chapter 14 – Biodiversity, Natural Heritage and Green Infrastructure. This chapter has a section on geological heritage (14.3.5), which recognises its importance but curiously does not currently make any mention to the Geopark.

More broadly we would suggest that the partnership model that underpins the approach and success of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark provides one important mechanism to achieve the goals (Section 1.6) of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2013 and that as a UNESCO designated Global Geopark the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark merits greater recognition and discussion in the County Development Plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gabriel Cooney', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Professor Gabriel Cooney