



**GeoparkLIFE
ACTION B3 CONSERVATION
MANAGEMENT**

Progress Report to Dec 30th 2016

Action B3: Conservation Management – Community Case Studies

Action B3 Overview

There has been a shift in focus from the original idea presented in the Inception report of the module based approach to a more practical application of case studies which focuses on the individual user group needs. This is considered to be a better approach which works with real time groups and activities on the ground in the Burren and is considered to be a better mechanism to inform and influence *actual* outcomes and policy in real terms rather than perceived/artificial terms.

The table below outlines the user groups that have been identified and the case studies that are related to each user group, with the expected/desired outcomes for each. Each case study is then expanded below with details on progress in the past 18 months and notes on preliminary findings as they arise. The case studies are very varied and include community groups ranging from school children to business networks. Each community has a very unique case study and together they cover a wide variety of tasks and activities.

It should be noted from the outset that action B3 is a dynamic component of the GeoparkLIFE project and each case study is completely driven and steered by the community groups it works with. It is each group's vision, enthusiasm and motivation which ultimately determines the outcomes of each activity and our role is to observe and report on them, all the while being sensitive to the needs and wants of each group.

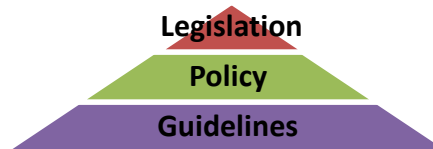
B3 is very much the social aspect of the GeoparkLIFE programme and personalities, relationships and interactions within and between groups hugely influence each project as will be demonstrated through the results of each case study.

User Group	Case Study	Expected Outcomes
Tourism Enterprises	Adopt a Hedgerow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Training: Invasive Species ◇ Checklist for active conservation on public roads
	Meitheal	◇ Checklist for active Conservation on private land
		◇ Partnership model
Tidy Towns Group	Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns	◇ Checklist for Tidy Towns Groups
Local Community Conservation Group	An Cabhail Mór – Kilinaboy History And Heritage Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Toolkit for Community Groups ◇ Best Practice Guidelines ◇ Resource Pack
	Adopt a Monument	◇ Pilot scheme run by Heritage Council: GeoparkLIFE will do a comparative analysis of this scheme with our own community project at An Cabhail Mór
Community Tourism Group	Lisdoonvarna Failte	◇ Learnings on how Local Authority structures influence funding of local initiatives
Schools	Groundwater and Litter Pollution – Lisdoonvarna 1	◇ Transferrable Teaching Package (Train the Trainers)
	Intergrated Catchment Management – Lisdoonvarna 2	
All Stakeholders	Policy Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Policy Recommendations ◇ Model for facilitating communication and integrated management among stakeholders
	ETIS	◇ Raised awareness among partners of the effectiveness of integrated management
	Leave No Trace	◇ Implementation plan for the Burren Code of LNT

Table 1: The B3 Case Studies and User Groups

The Role of Policy

Policy is very much the backbone of the GeoparkLIFE project and many of the case studies, together with the actions of B2, are demonstrating this very nicely. Policy works in a variety of ways and at a variety of levels. We have discovered that there is no shortage of policy but there may be room to align them more closely.



As part of this, the B3 coordinator along with Prof. Gabriel Cooney (UCD) continues to actively work on this wide ranging and complex aspect of the programme. This work is being carried out in a number of discrete stages as well as integrally through the various actions in B1, B2 and B3. The Geopark Steering Committee and Working Group Structure is, in itself, seen as a model for collaboration and partnership of all stakeholders to manage a destination



Policy and Community

It is now widely accepted that the future of our cultural heritage can be ensured only through the active involvement of communities. The community's role in the process of heritage identification and management was anchored in the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, which called for "a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes".

In 2005 the Faro Convention began and recognises a "framework for considering the role of citizens in the definition, decision-making and management processes related to the cultural environment in which communities operate and evolve. Citizen Participation has become an ethical obligation and a political necessity". The Faro Convention emphasizes the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy. It promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society. The Convention encourages us to recognize that objects and places are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural heritage. They are important because of the meanings and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent. While Ireland has not yet ratified the Faro convention, the concepts community-led and partnership approaches to conservation are gradually becoming part of life and can be seen emerging in our programme for government and in local development plans.

Adopt a Hedgerow

Progress

The Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN) conservation and advocacy group act as an advocate in maintaining a stretch of roadside in their locality, engaging with the local community to:

- collect litter
- monitor dumping
- report dumping
- deal with invasive species

The section of road chosen by each business is in direct contact with or en-route to the business which has adopted it and tends to be proportional to the size of the business and the resources it can afford in relation to man-power for active clean-ups.

The clean-up takes part bi-annually with the spring event occurring in conjunction with National Spring Clean and a second clean-up in autumn at the end of the peak tourist season.



Although a specific week is set aside for each clean-up, since the pilot scheme in 2015, many businesses have worked throughout the year, picking litter on a monthly basis or more often with a view that 'a little more often' makes the task easier.

The 2016 spring event noted a definite decrease in litter quantity and range, particularly around places like Kilfenora. This was considered due to the initial large volume collected in 2015 which was a cumulative amount over a number of years, together with the ongoing maintenance reducing the overall accumulation of litter. Because of the reduced effort involved, many businesses also extended their area to take in even more hedgerow. The sections of road are currently being mapped to provide a visual representation for the scheme.

Participants underwent training for the identification and reporting of invasive species in March 2016. This was a one-day training workshop on Invasive Species conducted by Burren Beo and tailored to the BEN members. The group were given the skills to identify the most common invasive species:

- 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

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.

Monitoring & Measuring Progress

If we take the quantity of rubbish as an indicator of success, then it would seem that Adopt a Hedgerow is a successful case study in terms of conservation impact. GeoparkLIFE is keen to gather measurable data for this and is encouraging the participants to weigh the rubbish they collect. Some data is available from the bulk collection and deposition at the centre in Inagh but difficulties arise where businesses dispose of the collections with their own waste on a more ad hoc arrangement.

GeoparkLIFE acted as a facilitator for discussions between BEN ConAd and Clare County Council to explore the prospect of erecting temporary signage as part of the scheme. The group felt that signage would raise awareness and act as a deterrent for dumping, with the added benefit of small scale advertisement for each business through the sign. Unfortunately, the process to apply for signage became very cumbersome and it was decided by the group not to proceed with this. There are discussions about a dedicated page on the Council Website which would advertise the scheme instead. These discussions are ongoing.

Actions	Recording the case study	Designing and Developing the Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Compiling a list of participants •Assisting with PR & Resources •Facilitating discussion on signage •Invasive species training •Creating a map for the scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Emails, phone calls and meetings with B3 Coordinator •Map for the scheme - a visual representation •Visual recording through photographs •Methodology form devised and completed by GeoparkLIFE •GeoparkLIFE encouraging participants to record in a quantitative way •Media and Press releases - see GeoparkLIFE Action D 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Willing participants/Actors •Local Authority support •Resources •Training

The Policy Perspective

The Adopt a Hedgerow scheme is co-ordinated by a member of BEN’s Conservation Advocacy group with each participant looks after their own section of road. The scheme is supported by GeoparkLIFE and Clare County Council (CCC). From a policy perspective, Adopt a Hedgerow participants are striving to build a partnership between local businesses in the Burren and the local authority. There have been some issues identified throughout this scheme, including lack of council support for signage and rubbish collection, but so far these have not demotivated the group. However, if this partnership is to succeed beyond LIFE then the businesses need to feel that their active participation

in conservation, by means of litter collection and invasive species monitoring, is valued by CCC. These participants are volunteering their time and resources for the benefit of the area in general and this should be rewarded in kind through support from CCC. A suggestion is that the council would take the lead on this awareness initiative and see support on the ground through BEN and Adopt a Hedgerow participants.

Further Work

GeoparkLIFE will continue to facilitate partnership-building throughout 2017 as well as monitoring the progress of the scheme through measurable^s such as waste weights and number of invasive species reports.

Meitheal

Progress

The Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN) conservation and advocacy group work with the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers (BCV), under the old Irish tradition of 'Giving Back'/Meitheal, which facilitates a system whereby the local tourism businesses, who benefit from the recreational walking routes offered in the region, to give back and repair damage to farmlands on these routes. An annual event, which is decided in advance, takes place at the end of the tourist season in November and sees hands-on repair/maintenance tasks being carried out on farmland. The GeoparkLIFE project has facilitated this event on two occasions to date.



The first Meitheal event took place in November 2014 where BEN members undertook repair to walls on the Casey and Burke family lands at Fanore/Blackhead under the supervision of the Burren Conservation Volunteers. Approximately 30 participants organised in a general clean-up of the area and wall repairs including stile construction. A second annual Meitheal event took place in November 2015 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.

Monitoring and Measuring Progress

The 2014 and 2015 Meitheal events were very well received among the tourism businesses, local farmers/landowners and local conservation volunteers. With over 30 participants in the event, the conjoined efforts of each group was felt to have a real impact. There were also anecdotal references that this event provided networking opportunities for businesses and communities that would not otherwise come together. The timing of the event is mutually beneficial for the businesses and the conservation volunteers. Overall 2014 and 2015 Meitheal events point towards a successful social event which fulfils the notion of business payback to the community.

No Meitheal event ran in 2016. There were various reasons for this; some were due to personal and business commitments of the lead coordinator in BEN ConAd which restricted the time he could devote to arranging the event; other reasons may be the result of tensions among the group regarding the overall model for the event. This will be discussed below.

Actions	Recording the case study	Designing and Developing the Checklists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Meitheal 2014 •Meitheal 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Channels of communication largely personal conversation among the BEN community •Emails with local volunteers organisation - Burren Beo •Photographic record during events •GeoparkLIFE methodology form completed •Event communicated via Burren Beo media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Choosing the sites - where and what? •The organisational structures needed •Resources needed? •Training? Health and Safety •Facilitating the partnership between business and local conservation group

The Policy perspective

While on the surface, the two Meitheal events which have taken place have shown to be successful in their own right, there are larger questions to be asked around the sustainability of the model used to date for the organisation of this conservation activity. The structure of the event to date has seen the activity led by local conservation volunteers, BurrenBeo. The GeoparkLIFE has facilitated the organisation of this event and to date has paid the fee for Burren Beo's participation in Meitheal. This means that Burren Beo is essentially *employed* to be part of Meitheal, which does not fit in with the ethos devised by BEN – the envisaged a *partnership model* where both BEN members and Burren Beo would volunteer their time to pay back to the farmers impacted on by tourism activities. If one party is being paid for input and another party is not, then this does not represent an equal partnership. On the flip side, Burren Beo, as a charitable organisation, rely on income from many sources, including the employment of their expertise for conservation training. These policy/relationship conflicts need to be worked on throughout 2017 to see if a sustainable model for Meitheal can be achieved.

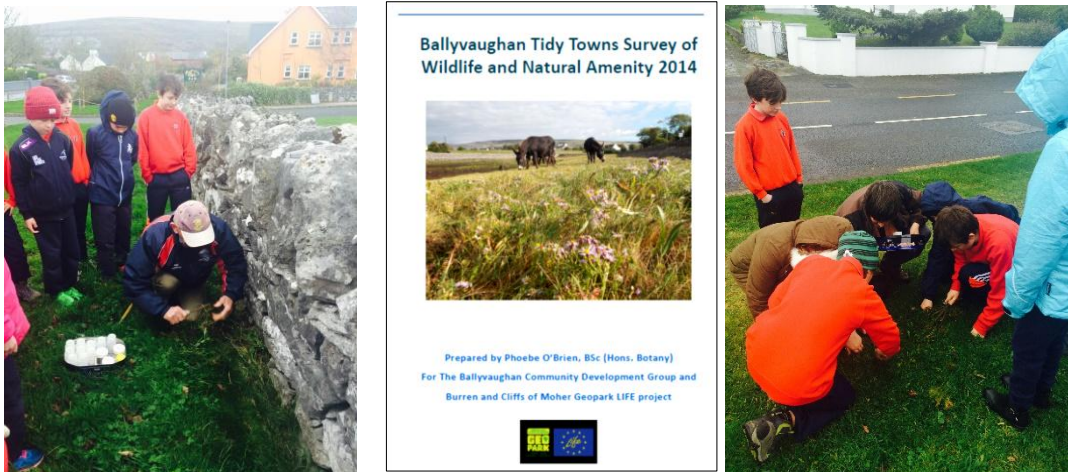
Further Work

~~It is hoped that a~~BEN did not take part in a Meitheal event ~~will run~~ in November 2016 ~~for various reasons~~. It is hoped that any issues can be resolved so that the event will run in 2017. This will be at the very end of the GeoparkLIFE programme, but will be just in time to determine if we manage to resolve the current tensions among the group and achieve a partnership model which will work for the future beyond LIFE.

Tidy Towns

Progress

Ballyvaughan approached the GeoparkLIFE in 2014 to assist with a Wildlife and Habitats Survey in the hope that it would help improve their score for ‘*Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities*’ in the Tidy Towns competition, while at the same time improve their overall biodiversity for the town which is part of a wider ethos they are trying to develop in Ballyvaughan. 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 with suggestions on how to improve the score in the competition in compliance with the Tidy Towns Handbook.



Monitoring and Measuring Progress

The monitoring and measuring of progress and success for the wildlife survey is simply being done through the monitoring of the TidyTown results for the ‘*Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities*’ category in the report card for Ballyvaughan. In 2015 the score was 34 points while in 2016 the score was 35 points. There has been a steady 1-point increase for the past 3 years which is seen as a direct indicator of improved biodiversity in the town. The comments from the adjudication panel in 2016 commended the “collection of native wildflower seeds, for subsequent replanting” as a “superb initiative”. The 2015 adjudication report made special reference to the Wildlife survey commissioned by GeoparkLIFE and was seen as an important step in directing action to benefit Ballyvaughan’s biodiversity. The Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns also won a bronze medal award and €400 in 2016 and is now in joint first place for its category in Co. Clare. This has hugely motivated the group for 2017.

Actions	Recording the case study	Designing and Developing the Checklists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife Survey Completed in 2014/2015 • Management plan for Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns Group • Wildflower planting with local school children • Anticipated wider biodiversity study around the impact of the competition on local biodiversity • Make recommendations to the Tidy Town organisation on how the competition can be a driver for enhanced urban biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal meetings with Tidy Towns Group Coordinator and notes taken by GeoparkLIFE coordinator on progress and ambitions • Photographic record during public events • Monitoring the Tidy Towns results for Ballyvaughan through the annual report cards (tracking BALLYvaughans improvement in score - measuring success?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tidy Towns score as an indicator for biodiversity • Appropriate activities for Tidy Towns groups to improve biodiversity • Toolkit to test the competition as a driver for enhancing urban biodiversity

The Policy Perspective

The GeoparkLIFE project is looking at how national competitions can act as a driver for active conservation, with the Tidy Towns competition focusing on biodiversity in particular. A broader look at the competition regionally and nationally, in conjunction with NUIG, will help inform the role that the competition plays in improving biodiversity in urban centres. The Tidy Towns Competition is traditionally seen as ‘colourful hanging baskets’ and ‘picture perfect’ scenes, many of which in reality contradict what is needed to encourage increased biodiversity. The encouragement of wild flowers and manage grass verges need to be encouraged and awarded accordingly in the competition. The GeoparkLIFE will look at making appropriate recommendations to Tidy Towns about how the competition can play an active role in biodiversity policy in Ireland by developing a toolkit based on the experience with Ballyvaughan.

Further Work

The overall outcome of 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. This is conceived to take the form of a checklist for Tidy Towns groups. Ballyvaughan is somewhat exceptional with the group profile containing a number of experts in the area of habitats and biodiversity, but the GeoparkLIFE needs to consider Tidy Towns groups which may not have such abundant knowledge to hand.

The Geopark will work with NUIG to test a toolkit which will examine the success of the Tidy Towns competition as a driver for enhancing urban biodiversity. This work will include a desktop analysis of the extent at which Wildlife/Habitat surveys are undertaken by Tidy Towns groups. This study will examine:

- ◇ how effective these survey are considered to be in improving scores in the competition
- ◇ the influence local biodiversity plans have on improving biodiversity by encouraging local groups such as Tidy Towns to undertake positive actions to improve biodiversity

An Cabhail Mor

Progress

An initial proposal for a training programme which would involve the repair and repointing of the 17th Century building currently in a bad state of disrepair in Kilinaboy, was to involve H&S training, lime preparation and training in use of lime. 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.



A huge amount of consultations with the relevant state agencies, a series of public meetings and a vision strategy from the local group all contributed to this project. At all times there was determination to follow best practice for monument conservation and be conscious of transferability of the methodology for community groups in order to create a model (like Adopt a Monument, which has since been piloted by the Heritage Council) that could be employed as we work towards community led conservation projects.

Monitoring and Measuring Progress

The following surveys/reports and steps were taken:

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.

At each stage in the process, the community group were consulted and numerous meetings were held to discuss the various actions and the reason for each one. Frustrations were inevitable as KHHG consider progress to be slow and the process to be unnecessarily cumbersome. [GeoparkLIFE](#)

~~tried to facilitate as much as possible and guide the community group through the process. However, when it came to the issue of PSDP (Project Supervisor Design Process), the community group were faced with the dilemma of fulfilling the criteria required for this process and it became apparent that the group were not advanced enough to act as a corporate body, putting the proposed training scheme beyond their reach at this time. Pursuit of the training scheme initiative was not possible with the current structure of the community group so other avenues need to be considered. The difficulties associated with this particular structure are making this a complex project.~~

The group subsequently pursued the call for the newly announced Adopt a Monument Scheme in November 2015 in partnership with Burren Conservation Volunteers, supported by GeoparkLIFE. Their application was not successful. The group seem to be in a phase of disillusionment with the conservation process but GeoparkLIFE has provided clear and concise guidance at all times.

Actions	Recording the case study	Designing and Developing Checklists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A conservation inspection and risk assessment • A section 57 Declaration • Notification was submitted to NMS (granted with T&Cs) • An ecology report/wildlife survey • Mortar samples were taken by OPW for analysis • 'Vision' Document compiled by the community group with assistance from GeoparkLIFE • A request for tender was circulated for a conservation engineers report (as per Dept. guidelines) • Some ivy removal has taken place by the local group • Support for application to Adopt a Monument Pilot Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compilation of the various reports commissioned as part of the project • Multiple meetings with the local group, recorded and minuted • Site visits • Photographic record • Email correspondence with local group and local conservation volunteers • Email log kept of all correspondence with various partners • Progress log kept throughout the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realising the capabilities of community groups in participating in active conservation on buildings • Managing the expectations of community groups • Best practice guidelines for community conservation projects • Profiling the group/group structure • Toolkit for community groups wishing to engage in active conservation on buildings and monuments • Resource pack for community groups containing all the information the need before setting out

The Policy Perspective

The outcomes from our case study at An Cabhail Mór have been hugely informative with regards policy and will provide very important and relative information as we shift towards a community-led approach to conservation of cultural heritage (Faro Convention). Our findings with the KHHG are also relevant in terms of new heritage guidelines being just published by National Monuments Service which are designed to aid communities in projects affecting heritage (LEADER). GeoparkLIFE has ~~acted almost as mentors for KHHG through this process and it has shown the~~ highlighted the potential need for a mentoring role within the relevant agencies/partners if there is to be a genuine drive towards empowering communities to actively engage in conservation management.

Future Work

The GeoparkLIFE will now bring together the learnings from the process over the last 18 months, how it informs policy and look at what recommendation can be made for the future. We will liaise

with the Heritage Council in relation to their Adopt a Monument Scheme to devise guidelines and resource packs for community groups. [The KHHG were approached about other survey work around the monument, however they are clear that it would only be undertaken if it ran alongside active conservation on the stone structure, particularly the doorway. The group want assistance to carry out a Statement of Needs for the building - GeoparkLIFE will see how they can help with this.](#)

Lisdoonvarna Secondary School 1 – Groundwater Pollution & Litter Pollution

Progress

An initial programme undertaken with the Transition Year students at Lisdoonvarna Secondary School during the 2014/15 academic year, focussed on developing a program that would allow information about groundwater and pollution in the Burren to percolate from 'Experts' (university academics and other experts) through secondary school children (Transition Year) and on to the youngest school children in National schools in the Burren.



Actions	Recording the case study	Outcomes*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures for TY Students from University academics • Informal talks for students by local conservation advocate • Distribution of publication '<i>what to do and what not to do in the Burren</i>' • Presentation of information by TY students to primary students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerpoint presentations that the students prepared • Photographs and short videos • Student artwork • GeoparkLIFE methodology form completed • Meeting by GeoparkLIFE Coordinator with An Tasice to discuss Green Schools - meeting notes recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication and dissemination internally - the transfer of information between peer groups • Identifying gaps in the curriculum • How this project complies with the objectives of the WFD • Working towards a transferrable model

*This case study was critically assessed by the GeoparkLIFE team for its suitability and sustainability as a transferrable model. This in turn gave rise to the ICM Programme below.

Monitoring and Measuring Progress

The programme was coordinated by the Geopark geologist with assistance from Dr. Tiernan Henry (NUIG), John Simms (Lisdoonvarna Secondary School) and Sonja O'Brien (Boghill Centre). The Geopark/Burren Outdoor Education Centre annual school quiz was considered as a possible way of measuring the success of the programme by dedicating a section of the quiz to the project. Art

projects were also completed by students and each school completed a feedback form. All of this documentation can be used to evaluate the success of the project.

The Policy Perspective

It quickly became apparent that the school children were very knowledgeable about litter and waste through the current environmental education programmes in schools and the fact that there is already raised awareness in national schools about recycling through the Green Flag programme. It was clear, however, that there are gaps when it comes to the hydrology aspect of the programme. Therefore, it was decided that this would be the focus of our attention from here. Following meetings with An Taisce and the Green Schools Office, the most fitting place for us to focus our efforts was at second level education. It was also essential to build a transferrable model which would not rely on the specific input of a university academic, but could be sustained with the current school system and available resources within the community. The Integrated Catchment Management Programme was designed and this is considered a replacement for the Litter and Groundwater Programme (see below).

Lisdoonvarna Secondary School 2 – Integrated Catchment Management

Progress

Dr. Tiernan Henry (NUIG) has been involved with the Lisdoonvarna TY programme since the outset of the GeoparkLIFE programme and in December 2015 a new and exciting project was developed which proposed a participatory educational programme for TY students which would 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. The project will run throughout the 2016/17 academic year by Grainne Barron who is an NUIG MSc.



Actions

- Background preparation including ICM best practice literature review and participation in BurrenBeo's Wild Child programme
- Curriculum/lesson preparation and meeting with teacher
- YEA registration
- Weekly classes with TY students
- Fieldtrips
- Visiting experts to give class talks

Recording the case study

- Baseline assessment with students
- Progress reports and communication strategy compiled by ICM project coordinator (Grainne Barron)
- Photographic record
- Email correspondence with GeoparkLIFE coordinator
- Catchment map created by participants

Developing a toolkit

- Transferrable model for trainers (i.e. second level teachers)
- Resource pack for teachers
- System requirements: GIS Software
- Student engagement
- Achieving the objectives of the WFD through partnership, participation and communication

Monitoring and Measuring Progress

This project began on in June 2016 and will continue until August 2017. The principal researcher and coordinator on the ground is a research MSc Student at NUIG, Grainne Barron. Grainne will meet the

deliverables for this programme in tandem with her research Masters ~~project~~Project. Interaction with the students is on a weekly basis through classes with the Transition Year Students of Mary Immaculate College, Lisdoonvarna. The classes ~~run~~run from Sept 2016 to March 2017, each Tuesday, and cover a range of topics from GIS training and map building to ~~field~~fieldtrips and seminars covering topics such as hydrological assessments, riparian habitat assessment, biological, hydrological and chemical surveying techniques, data gathering and assessment of environmental conditions. Guest speakers ~~we~~are invited to talk to the group; ~~these include~~including the Geopark geologist, ~~Dr. Tiernan Henry (NUIG)~~ and Tracy Duffy (Environmental Officer, CCC) who spoke to them about her role in Clare County Council and the problems and solutions she encounters with regard to farm management in the catchment.

The students ~~are actively working on a mapping~~have mapped their catchment from a number of perspectives, including data which the group have chosen themselves from their own research. They ~~are also~~have also enrolled in the UNESCO YEA awards.

Grainne submits progress reports to the GeoparkLIFE coordinators which outline her progress very clearly through the timetabled classes.

The Policy Perspective

As rural areas come under increasing social and economic pressures, we want to highlight the connection between water and the population using and dependent upon it - in the past, present and future. The project fits with the aims and ethos of the Burren GeoPark: it is participatory, it is educational, it is emancipatory, it is based in and of the community, and the outcomes will be replicable and transferable (Barron, 2016).

We see this project achieving objectives in the Water Framework Directive by following many of the steps as adopted by the US EPA model. It will:

- Build partnerships with key stakeholders and contain a public outreach aspect
- Be at an appropriate scale to ensure that people who live in the area can easily relate to their catchment
- Begin to characterise the catchment through gathering of data for the GIS

Future Work

The students continue to build the map for their catchment. They are also enrolled in the UNESCO YEA awards. These two topics will be their focus in the coming months.

A resource pack is being prepared as part of the programme which will allow a transferrable training pack to be adopted by other schools with the minimum amount of external resources needed. This should enable any second level school to run an ICM programme based on our model.

Lisdoonvarna Failte

Progress

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 in early 2015, including the Geopark, Failte Ireland, Clare County Council and Lisdoonvarna Failte on the development of the Spa Wells as a tourism and community resource. The group prepared a vision document which set out their ideas and ambitions “to restore Lisdoonvarna to its former glory as a premier holiday destination in Ireland by creating a unique, immersive and multi-dimensional visitor experience. The realisation of this vision would:

- i. Restore the character of the town.
- ii. Generate revenue for Lisdoonvarna Fáilte and for businesses in the town.
- iii. Be a catalyst for further entrepreneurship (complementary visitor experiences and general services) and therefore economic regeneration in the town and surrounding areas”.

This led to the decision to carry out a feasibility study on the development of the site to properly interpret heritage and conservation values for locals and visitors. GeoparkLIFE were to part fund a feasibility study for Lisdoonvarna Failte



Monitoring Progress:

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.

A draft study was completed in March 2016 by W2 Consulting Ltd. Clare County Council approved funding of €5,000 towards the study.

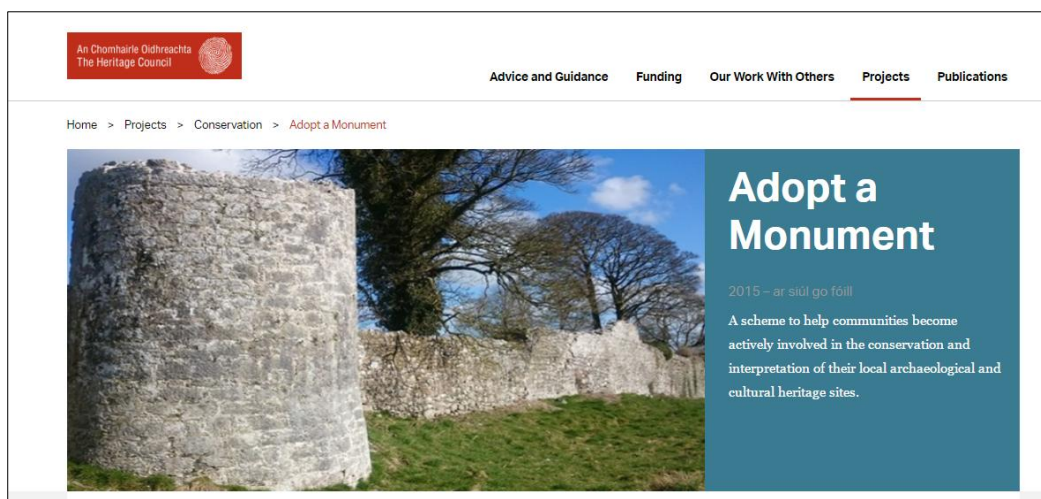
Outcomes:

Management decisions at local government level were taken which forced the GeoparkLIFE contribution to be withdrawn.

Adopt a Monument

Progress

This action originated to see if the Scottish model of Adopt a Monument could be rolled out to include Burren Farmers, BEN and Burren Conservation Volunteers. Advice was sought from the Heritage Council who were also looking at the model in detail and considering how to bring this to fruition. Adopt a Monument would see landowners take responsibility for supporting the care and maintenance of a monument or habitat together with help from groups such as the Burren Conservation Volunteers. The focus was intended be around the B2 demonstration sites and would link closely or overlap with events such as Meitheal. The Heritage Council ran with a pilot scheme for Adopt a Monument in September 2015 in partnership with Abarta Heritage. The GeoparkLIFE also saw its Cabhail Mór Project as being a direct parallel for this and many of the outcomes from Adopt a Monument could be compared and measured against the Cabhail Mór project. Indeed it was felt that our work with the Kilinaboy History and Heritage Group was going above and beyond what would be explored during any pilot phase of Adopt a Monument (as was evidenced when the KHHG applied for the Heritage Council Scheme with the Burren Conservation Volunteers – their application was not accepted).



Further Work

Rather than duplicating the work that the Heritage Council is undertaking, our intention now is to consult with the Heritage Council, as project partners in GeoparkLIFE, to compare and contrast their findings from Adopt a Monument to those that we have learned through the Cabhail Mór project. It is hoped that both experiences will compliment and inform each other and together we will work towards a manageable and achievable model for community groups to actively participate in conservation at monuments.

European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS)

Progress

The European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) framework could be incorporated across all three components of the GeoparkLIFE programme; B1, B2 and B3. ETIS is an EU Commission initiative and is presented as a framework for sustainable destination management and for that reason is considered appropriate to the aims and objectives of this project. Inherent in its criteria is the desire to balance tourism and conservation. It also requires an engaged and integrated stakeholder approach to management. This system has been considered in the B1 Tourism Enterprises programme, and it has been acknowledged that the adoption of all the criteria is beyond the scope of this project. However, it is proposed for the next period that the ETIS model will be adopted and tested by the GeoparkLIFE partners and stakeholders on two criteria; transport/travel and universal access. This system has the potential to provide a conservation management tool for all of the project partners.

Monitoring and Measuring Progress

At the Steering Committee meeting in April 2016, a presentation was given on transport and coach tourism in the Burren. It was agreed that a sub group be formed to further the research on this topic and to use the ETIS model of collective decision making by agreeing indicators and targets for sustainable transport. Representatives of BEN, CCC, COMVE, FI and the Geopark volunteered for the group.

A meeting was held in August 2016 with the Roads Department in Clare County Council and a number of relevant Stakeholders, members of BEN and Geopark personnel. The points of discussion focused mainly around the following items:

- The need for the long term future policy and planning around coach tourism in the region.
- The need to agree targets for future growth or containment, licensing policy that supports the plan, infrastructural requirements and capacity issues.
- The long term economic impacts, health and safety impacts, the effect on visitor experience and the subsequent reputational damage the region may suffer if a long term management plan is not soon put in place.

The NPWS have commissioned that a visitor and traffic management plan be undertaken for the National Park. This is currently underway and the company are eager to receive input from individuals, businesses, communities and organisations into this plan. Data collection on traffic in and around the National Park was collected in August, with funding support from GeoparkLIFE, as part of the B2 and C1 programmes.

The Policy Perspective - Transport

There are challenges with licensing in the absence of a clear policy and the process so far has demonstrated the need for such a policy. There needs to be a robust assessment carried out of the current situation and the upcoming Experience Development Plan for the destination, being undertaken by Failte Ireland under the WAW programme could be the best platform for this assessment. This has been agreed in principal with Failte Ireland. Should the Development Plan,

developed by the National Authority on tourism, provide clear recommendations on a Transport Policy, this will help Clare County Council develop policy and procedures that will support the plan.

Through the LIFE programme GeoparkLIFE has made a submission to the County Development Plan requesting that all tourism policy relating to the Burren should be underpinned by sustainable criteria.

Leave No Trace

Progress

Leave No Trace Ireland is an educational message that encourages tourism businesses and visitors to understand the consequences of their actions, and challenges them to make good choices when conducting activities in the outdoors. GeoparkLIFE has established a partnership with Leave No Trace Ireland. Under this partnership the following is being undertaken:

- Set up a small group of operators within the Burren which will be trained up on the Leave No Trace programme
- This group will provide training in Leave No Trace to the B1 Code of Practice participants
- This group will carry out a review of how the programme is working for them and others from a Burren Specific viewpoint and its overall effectiveness – targeting specific Burren problems such as building mini-dolmens, votive offerings, littering etc
- Identify how best the message can be got across to all visitors and recreational users of the landscape, particularly to Coach Drivers
- Develop a new area specific code with the Leave No Trace group which incorporates the elements of the Burren Code based on their findings

This partnership is working to disseminate a basic conservation principle of Leave No Trace. The adoption of the ethic and its implementation in practice assists conservation management across a broad spectrum of stakeholders and actively engages the visitor and incoming operators, such as tour guides and coach drivers.