



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
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ENVIRONMENT
Directorate E - Global & Regional Challenges, LIFE
ENV.E.4 - LIFE – Environment
Head of Unit

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Clare County Council
Ms Carol GLEESON
County Hall,
Ennis, County Clare
Ireland

Email:
cgleeson@burren.ie

**Subject: LIFE11 ENV/IE/000922 Burren Tourism
Progress Report**

Dear Ms GLEESON,

Thank you for the submission of the first Progress Report for the above project which I received on 3rd November 2014. It is largely presented in accordance with the Commission's guidelines but lacks detail concerning progress on some actions during the second year of the project. Specifically there is a lack of information concerning Action D4, which deals with targeted communications.

However, I am pleased to see that the project is making good progress in most respects and that the appropriate actions are now well underway. The first project conference appears to have been both well attended and well received by a large audience of interested stakeholders. The site selection process appears to have been very robust and I am satisfied that the locations chosen for B2 actions are appropriate as demonstration sites.

Thank you also for providing the policy framework document as an annex to the report, I do appreciate the effort that you have made to make this happen and, although only in draft form, it is clear that this is a thorough review which can be improved on in subsequent reports.

I have a few additional comments arising from the Report which are indicated in the Annex to this letter. I would be grateful if you could pay attention to these issues before submitting your next report.

In the meantime I wish you every success in the taking the project forward into the next stage.

Yours sincerely,

Hervé MARTIN

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Annexes

Technical

1. General: The report lacks detail in some sections. The report suggests that progress is being made on all actions but there is little hard evidence to back it up. While this is possibly a function of the fact that there are very few deliverables it is most important that sufficient evidence is provided to allow me to evaluate both the quality and quantity of the work undertaken. An example of this is Action D4: Targeted communications. This action is poorly reported and even the conference information is best obtained from the website. There is no mention of successful publications in the media or about the schools liaison programme. Similarly there is no reporting of the action-level measures which should reflect the workshops, training and seminars that are targeted towards the local community. It is evident from the website that events and activities are taking place and so communication must be both operational and effective. While some activities can be tracked from Annex 6 of the report it is essential that key activities are distilled into the text of the report. Please ensure that all necessary details to allow me to track progress against the activities set out in the approved application are presented in the next report and, equally importantly, are illustrated with suitable support material e.g. media articles, workshop details and attendees, seminars, schools programme. Please improve the level of detail and support material for the next report and follow the reporting guidance provided on the LIFE website.

2. In relation to the above point I note that you have prepared a Communications Plan for 2015 Geopark LIFE as stated in the Management Report to the Steering Committee (Annex 6 of the Progress Report). Although this is not a deliverable it is a most important document and it should be mentioned in the main text and provided as an annex. Please ensure that this is included in the next report.

3. I understand that the baseline surveys of the monuments and habitats are being undertaken by an external expert and that the work should have culminated in the development of the work programme in December 2014. Please include this work programme with the next report (even though it is not a deliverable) so I can assess progress on the ground against the workplan.

4. For Action C, Monitoring, the lack of detail concerning the proposed monitoring methods is not of immediate concern, however, I would like to see more information included in the next report.

5. The Draft policy report (Annex 4) is comprehensive but is clearly a draft and the final version should be submitted in the next report.

6. I appreciate that there have been difficulties in implementing certain actions and that this has led to a delay in implementing activities under Actions B2 and B3 with a necessary knock-on effect for action C. While you are confident that, despite the delay, you can deliver the objectives of the project within the original timeframe, please ensure that no further delays are encountered as this could result in a problematic delay that could impact negatively on the overall project timetable and delivery.

Financial

1. The project timetable submitted with the report has several gaps and cannot be effectively evaluated. I see from the text that you have made some clarifications and alterations to the milestone and deliverables schedules and these are not properly recorded in the timetable. Please revisit the timetable and ensure that subsequent versions are complete in every detail. Please rectify this in time for the next report.
2. There is a statement in your report that says all beneficiaries are public bodies and have appropriate VAT status under Irish legislation. This requires further clarification as I am aware that some public bodies can recover VAT, and some cannot, depending on the activity. It is assumed from this statement that all bodies are able to recover VAT and that no VAT will be charged to the project. I would be grateful if you could confirm the VAT status of each beneficiary in the next report.
3. I note that some of the Associated Beneficiaries are slow to submit their timesheets. Please ensure that the Associated Beneficiaries are aware of their responsibilities to provide you, the Coordinating Beneficiary, with financial and administrative information on a timely basis and that failure to do so may harm their claim.