

Reviewing policy towards the integration of Sustainable Tourism and Conservation Management

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GC/JG

1.Executive summary

Something that will also work as a stand alone document to present the report to policy makers.

2. Introduction

Sets out the context, the brief and the approach.

Will also have to set out the shape and objectives of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark LIFE programme. (B1, B2, B3)

The participants, programme structure.

3. Part 1 Mapping the policy framework

Full draft completed (28,000 words). Needs to be edited and updated (e.g. Rural Development Action Plan, Ireland 2040, Traffic and Visitor Management, Burren National Park, Visitor Experience Development Plan) for the final report.

Overview/comment/discussion as an additional section.

4. Part 2 Detailing how policy works on the ground

4. 1 Introduction

"Analysis of government policies is an inexact process wrought with uncertainties. It is, however, an essential segment of social learning and adaptation that brings attention to the complex relationship between decision making and environmental outcomes. Policy analysis is rarely exhaustive and in most cases, cannot be prescriptive. It provides baseline information, points out major linkages between decisions and environmental outcomes, and provides a starting point for consideration of more sustainable policy options"(Pintér *et al.* 2007).

It is clear from Part 1 that the policy framework within which the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and the GeoparkLIFE programme operate is complex with multiple, inter-woven elements. To understand how this framework informs decision making and influences outcomes structured interviews were carried out with all the project partners and other stakeholders. The purpose was to gain different perspectives on how policy works on the ground and an understanding of the sources of potential conflict. A standard approach and set of questions were used in the interviews (Appendix 0). The interviews were recorded and the transcripts agreed with the interviewees. Here an overview is given of the main themes covered in the interviews.

4.2 Different perspectives of partners on policy: explicit and implicit

The implementation of policy depends on institutions, people and decision-making on the ground. It is against this context that the view of policy as an 'inherently political process rather than simply the instrumental execution of rational decisions' (Pintér *et al.* 2007) can be assessed. There is also a perception that the implementation of policy on the ground can be personality driven, hence changes in personnel can bring about changes in policy. A variety of policy actors were interviewed as part of the project's work on policy. This provided a number of different perspectives on both explicit and implicit policies at play in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark.

The policy actors in the Burren can be broadly divided into market, citizen and state actors. The nature of the GeoparkLIFE partnership model with the active involvement of various state agencies, means that the majority of the project partners' fall into the 'State' category, however key insights were obtained from the other sectors through discussions with members of the Burren Ecotourism

Network (BEN), local landowners/farmers and other local interest groups.

The market actors tend to be those managing attractions or providing food or accommodation services to visitors. The biggest player here is undoubtedly the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience (COMVE), which hosts over 1 million visitors annually. As well as its responsibility as a tourism provider, the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience also has a role in conservation management as it is responsible for a Special Protection Area (SPA) and the explicit policy that goes with it in terms of the EU Directives.

"Many people know a lot of little bits about the Burren but very few have the big picture...apart from the farmers working the land and those living in it, however most of the policy comes from outside."

Citizen Actor – GeoparkLIFE partner

The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience is also the largest company in the Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN). BEN operates on the principle of an 'honour' policy between its members, a commitment that all members will obey the laws of the land and specifically those related to conservation management and sustainable tourism. This implicit policy approach appears to be strong enough to build trust and confidence within the network.

The citizen actors see the Burren as a unique area which isn't necessarily managed correctly by external policy and which requires a specific approach, as has been proven by the BurrenLIFE programme (now Burren Farming for Conservation Programme-BFCP). The policy for managing the Burren works best when it is developed locally and is led locally, in the case of the BFCP by farmers, as they are the caretakers of the land. A 'one-size-fits-all' model for activities in the Burren does not work and the assumption that local communities will do damage if policy is not strictly enforced needs to change.

Voluntary groups also play a vital role in conservation management in the Burren. Sometimes they have a sense that there is a lack of joined-up thinking by various state agencies and there a lack of understanding of the linkages that actually exist. The main policy is seen as the tourism and marketing policy, especially the Wild Atlantic Way, and conservation is seen to be playing catch-up most of the time. Complex legislation such as Appropriate Assessment associated with Natura 2000 causes issues and high costs for

communities, yet there is a view that clear guidance on the process is not available for these groups.

"The Burren by its nature is impacted by a lot of policies...It can be all things to all people if it is managed properly"

State Actor – GeoparkLIFE partner

The majority of interviewees belonged to the state actors group. Each of these actors has their own perspective on policy depending on their remit and area of interest. The main policy instruments that came up in discussion were the County Development Plan for Clare and also the EU

Directives for Birds and Habitats.

Some of the project partners have legislative roles and responsibility to implement that legislation as well as being statutory consultees in the planning process. (Indeed, Planning and Development tends to be the arena where many of the policies are brought together, as will be discussed below). The policies contained in the County Development Plan (CDP) are generally reflective of the legislation that needs to be implemented within the County. The principles of the CDP are seen as being based around the concept of sustainable development and to bring together all the facets of development from heritage to housing, environment to economics. The planning policies contained in the CDP can be quite broad but the planning legislation and the consultation process surrounding planning applications are where implementation of these policies occurs. However, this case-by-case or response-based approach leads to a more reactive policy rather than a proactive one and what is seen as lacking is a standard process. On the flip side, some of the statutory consultees see this as an opportunity to look at each case logically and to make decisions based on individual merits of a given development.

Most partners are reliant on explicit policy or policies that underpins their roles. For example, the legislative basis on which the National Parks and Wildlife Service operates is the Wildlife Act and also the European conservation legislation in the form of EU Directives. However, the National Park itself does not have any dedicated legislation and does not feature prominently as perhaps might be expected in the CDP (note the additional section on the National Park in the final County Development Plan, January 2017). The National Park is also a Special Area of Conservation and this provides strong protection.

Other partners have developed shared policies with other agencies, not only in Ireland, but also in the UK, which have been formulated as a way of working towards best practice. For example, the Office of Public Works adhere to the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group guidelines (VSCG). This policy document, together with Health and Safety policies guide most of the work of the OPW around visitor management. On the conservation side, OPW policy is governed by adherence to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the DAHRRGA on the conservation of national monuments and the National Monuments Act. There is an implicit policy that good conservation practice will govern all work on monuments. This is considered to be dynamic and in development, with continuous liaison with peers and on-going training.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) is an interesting case study in that it is one of the few agencies that seems to be lacking a strong or specific legislative basis in the form of the designation or protection of relevant sites. However, geological sites tend to gain protection, by default, through European Directives by the fact that geology often underpins the biodiversity which is afforded legislative protection. The Geological Survey of Ireland does not necessarily see this as a weakness and focuses on raising awareness of geology and providing for it through the County Development Plan process (via Heritage Plans), with the recognition of County Geological Sites. The GSI is also a statutory body in the planning process.

Some individual roles in the County Council, such as the Heritage Officer, and the Conservation Officer provide the opportunity to work with multiple stakeholders. This approach indicates valuable linkages, as well as gaps, in the policy framework. Again, the planning legislation comes across as the most coherent and strongest policy on the ground, with a perception of a notable lack of facilitation and technical support for community groups who take part in conservation activities. The complicated and bureaucratic process can create frustration among communities.

Fáilte Ireland's role is to develop tourism products on the ground in tandem with businesses and local government. The relationship between BEN and Fáilte Ireland, for example, is considered to be beneficial by both sides. The organizational structure of Fáilte Ireland is focused on marketing activity, but it does have a core group who are managing heritage and sustainable tourism. Key to this are the new strategic partnerships that are being developed with other agencies such as NPWS, OPW and the Heritage Council. This appears to represent a major policy shift in Fáilte Ireland, and a commitment to investment has provided the space to allow for this increased focus on conservation management aligned with

visitor experience and to build trusting relationships with other stakeholders. There is currently a very significant disparity on the spend for visitor management versus the spend on conservation management, but Fáilte Ireland see an opportunity for other agencies to use and develop the partnership potential and to provide resources for conservation management.

The overarching national Government policy is about economic gain and jobs, within a strategic framework no longer than a government cycle. In relation to tourism this has led to some policy confusion with increasing visitor numbers seen as an indicator of success, while on the other hand there is also a focus on valuing visitor experience and revenue generation rather than 'counting heads'. It is recognised that increasing numbers of visitors, especially coach tourism is having an impact on the tourism asset.

4.3 Recognition of the key policy drivers – are there policy instruments at play?

Key policy drivers reflect the general perceptions and overviews of each of the stakeholders that were interviewed. It was highlighted by some interviewees that what might appear to be minor elements of policy drivers can have direct consequences on the ground have trends which are a response to what is happening on the ground, for example coach tourism.

The most frequently referenced policy instruments throughout the interview process (in order of perceived importance/relevance) were:

1. Clare County Development Plan
2. Planning and Development Acts
3. Appropriate Assessment and Habitats Directive

The CDP was the most referenced policy driver and instrument for Clare and the Burren, not only by County Council officials but also by other state actors. It contains the policies and objectives for the development of the county as a whole. It is the key policy framework document which seeks to achieve compliance with the mass of legislation that exists while managing development within the county. Some partners feel their perspective and interests are well presented in the CDP while others feel they feature very poorly. As one example The Geological Survey of Ireland relies on the CDP to provide protection for the Geological Heritage Areas. Since these areas are not directly afforded any protection or designation under any other mechanism, the inclusion of the list of County Geological

Sites in the CDP is important, for example they may material considerations during the development process.

“Our tourism policy in Ireland is a bit wishy-washy. Looking at the last policy document, sustainability is still not on the radar”

Market Actor – GeoparkLIFE Partner

On the other hand it is perhaps surprising that given its national status and importance as an instrument of conservation management that the National Park is not discussed in more detail in the CDP. For example without the designation of the Park as an SAC, what level of recognition and protection would it have at local level?

The main policy drivers coming reflected through the planning system are EU Directives, Appropriate Assessment and National Monuments legislation. While the CDP is intended to work in alignment with these international and national policies through its development strategies, there is a perception that the regulatory authority with direct responsibility for specific policy sometimes may take a default position of saying ‘no’, with the local authority then being tasked with the job of making planning work on the ground. EU policies, as they are implemented locally, are getting more costly and it is becoming more difficult to achieve compliance. With the implementation of Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Environment Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and Natura Impact Statements, the question was raised whether the bar is set too high in Ireland? This perception comes through in the analysis of policy conflicts and constraints.

Another issue that came across in the interviews is the widespread perception that the national tourism policy is still driven by numbers. While the new policy document (*People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025*) is a step in the right direction in terms of acknowledging sustainability, most partners dealing with the footfall of tourism find that the driver of visitor numbers rather than visitor spend is to the detriment of places like the Burren. Carrying capacity is still not a real consideration at sites, even though places like the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience have exceeded its carrying capacity. The Wild Atlantic Way, despite the reservations that many have about it, is going some way towards spreading the load and extending the season, thus making tourism along the west coast more sustainable.

The partners responsible for the marketing of tourism feel that the new policy document, *People, Place and Policy* is an important step in the right direction and is the driver for tourism now in Ireland. In the policy there is an increased focus on visitor experience and conserving the assets of tourism. On the ground some stakeholders within the relevant state agencies are trying to shift the perceived national drivers and indicators for successful tourism away from numbers of people. However at visitor attractions the justification for investment is still often being driven by popularity and numbers of visitors.

Sustainable tourism and Ecotourism are seen as a 'types' of tourism rather than a 'condition' of tourism. While this has been rectified in theory through the new tourism policy at a national level, it has not trickled down to local level or laterally across to other agencies. The Clare County Development plan is the main policy driver. Is sustainable tourism integral to its tourism strategy?

The drivers for conservation of the built heritage come from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA) through the National Monuments Act, which governs activities at monuments, together with conservation management plans where they exist. The legislation surrounding conservation

"The WAW operational programme was based on the VICE model that sustainable tourism was an acronym of visitor, industry, community and environment and the need for a balance in the objectives across those four areas"

State Actor – GeoparkLIFE Partner

can seem cumbersome and excessive at times as it ties in closely with Health and Safety legislation as well as the Planning and Development Acts. Best practice guidelines have been produced by DAHGRRRA along with other useful policy guidelines such as the *Framework and Principles for Excavation*, but ongoing training and experience of what works best for each type of

conservation activity appear to be a key driver of conservation at any given site. The lack of a clear procedural framework allied with complex legislative requirements mean that community groups often find it very difficult to engage in conservation activities at sites and monuments.

4.4 Awareness and sharing of policy

It became very clear through the interviews that partners are often not aware of the policies of other relevant agencies or groups to any great detail. Through the GeoparkLIFE programme there is increasing awareness of the wider knowledge of policy that can be

accrued from other partners. This happens both because of the connections and linkages made through personal contact at Steering Committee level, but more significantly through the working group structure. There is also a marked difference between an **awareness** of policy outside the direct remit of specific partners and legislation and any detailed **understanding** of its implications on their work. This is probably most prominently seen in the field of environmental policy and legislation. Another complication that arises from a lack of legislative knowledge is the possibility that this can lead to non-compliance, particularly when it comes to the general public.

The organizational structure of Government departments into units with different ministers, remits and statutory obligations, which frequently change in detail and in name, does not lend itself very well to awareness of other agencies' roles and responsibilities. In the context of communication a consequence of this somewhat fragmented structure at national level is that there is not so much an unwillingness to share information, but more a lack of opportunities and a framework to do so.

Some departments/agencies have better links than others and this comes down mostly to historical reasons and past organizational structures, for example the OPW and DAHRRGA. These links are based on a formal policy link; a service level agreement (SLA), but in reality and on the ground it is based on personal connections. These are built on the closer organizational ties that existed in the past, but there is a strong possibility that they will be lost going into the future as personnel are replaced. There is certainly considerable confusion about the ownership of national monuments, not necessarily within the Geopark partnership, but more with other stakeholders. In principle the OPW manage and maintain national monuments, but ownership/guardianship rests with the Minister of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. This confusion may not have any real impact as long as sites are being maintained/managed properly, but can be an issue when there is a problem. The key here however, is that there is a general awareness that sites and monuments are protected by legislation. It could also be suggested that the role of the local authority in integrating the roles and activities of national agencies

"The compartmentalization of organisations leads to a lack of communication and awareness of each other's roles and activities"

State Actor – GeoparkLIFE Partner

within the county through the framework of the County Development Plan could be enhanced.

There are some roles within the local government structure which have a broad remit and work across a number of different agencies, such as a Heritage Officer. Individuals in these roles tend to have a broad awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the various units both within the County Council and Government departments, through contacts, work routine and experience. Engagement is the key to finding the common ground between partners and it takes time to communicate the role and importance of a given policy or law which may have implications for a range of actors, but may be the direct remit of one specific partner.

Within the GeoparkLIFE stakeholders who were interviewed, it was clear that the market actors do not actively see it as their role or responsibility to make themselves aware of policy. They comply with policy and legislation through how they conduct their businesses and are concerned only with those policies that affect their businesses.

The citizen actors probably have the greatest challenge when it comes to awareness and understanding of policy. It is really through through community projects that they get an insight into the complex myriad of policies that surround conservation, tourism and development. Unfortunately it is very often with initial failure that they build capacity, knowledge and patience and try again. Successful community projects need accessibility to experts who understand the needs of projects, from Health and Safety to environmental legislation and who will guide them through a process. The implications of this reality on the ground will be more realized more as the notion of communities growing ideas and the 'community-led approach' takes hold on through initiatives such as the Visitor Experience Development Plans along the Wild Atlantic Way and the Rural Development Action Plan.

4.5 Value placed on integrating sustainable tourism and conservation management

Each of the interviewees was asked about the integration of sustainable tourism and conservation management. It quickly became apparent that the term 'sustainable' means different things to different people. The recurring theme in the interviews was the need for management to integrate sustainable tourism and conservation, but also that it is only possible to have both through effective management.

Despite the feeling by some partners that tourism has overtaken conservation as the policy driver, a major player on the ground in Fáilte Ireland, is consciously trying to balance this in its operational programmes. They base their work on the VICE model that sustainable tourism is an acronym of **v**isitor, **i**ndustry, **c**ommunity and **e**nvironment and the need for a balance in the objectives across those four areas. Keeping the balance between happy visitors, happy locals, a clean environment and a profitable business is constantly shifting and very difficult to maintain but all four must be achieved because if one fails, the rest will follow. The quality of the asset is very much part of this sustainable model for tourism with the cultural and natural heritage requiring on-going monitoring and management.

"All actions will have a positive and negative aspect. If you can accept that the negative impacts can be lived with because the benefits far outweigh them then they are not significant enough to counteract the positives in the overall conservation management context"

State Actor – GeoparkLIFE Partner

Sustainable tourism for businesses in the Burren is seen as responsible tourism that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. The Burren Ecotourism Network's objective is to ensure the future economic and social growth and sustainable development of its communities, environment and heritage through continued training, mentoring and accreditation. In order to achieve this, continual monitoring and management is needed and this requires a strong commitment by the members. BEN places a very high value on integrating sustainable tourism and conservation with the view that it can still be achieved with economic gain, otherwise the business incentive would not be there.

One of the challenges of balancing the two aspects is the establishment of carrying capacity at locations, be it at discrete visitor attractions or destinations in general. As revealed in the Coach Tourism study (2014) the capacity line at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience is on occasion being exceeded beyond what is sustainable. There are also clear capacity issues at places like Doolin, where there are breaches of policy and legislation which are having an adverse effect on the area from both a tourism and conservation point of view. The general feeling is that with the

Good visitor
Management = Good
Visitor Behaviour

State Actor - GeoparkLIFE

exception of one or two sites (e.g. Newgrange), Ireland seems reluctant to set capacity at sites and turn away visitors. The irony is that setting capacity actually increases the value and visitor experience. Carrying capacity indicators need to be implemented in the immediate future if sustainable tourism is to be achieved in the Burren. Increasing visitor numbers is seen as a good thing only if they can be managed and dispersed properly. Increased footfall can have positive economic effect on a rural area, but good monitoring is needed to devise good management practices. Caution is needed though and it is recognised as an issue that not everyone appears to be committed to measuring and controlling capacity.

"The ability to influence visitor behaviour is not as difficult as anticipated"

State Actor – GeoparkLIFE Partner

By contrast to the businesses, some stakeholders feel that in order to balance tourism and built heritage, for example, then economics should not be the primary factor and the value of place is the most important thing. In relation to natural heritage and ecology, the notion of sustainable tourism and conservation can be compatible as there is a view that the ecology of the Burren is resilient and that tourism related issues may possibly be more visual or economic.

The County Development Plan is meant to have sustainability at its core and all the related documentation refers to this principle. However, by its very nature, the CDP is also about development and change. The CDP is the correct mechanism to integrate sustainable tourism and conservation management, however it is a plan for the next 5 years and not really a plan for the long term approach of integrating the two.

The real value of integrating sustainable tourism and conservation is probably felt most at citizen level by the local community and farmers. These are the people who have to live in and on the resource which is used as the tourism asset. Farmers have pride of place and in places like the Burren, they are more than willing to play an active and central role in achieving this balance.

4.6 Arenas and impacts of policy conflicts (real/perceived)

The responses from interviewees tend to revolve around policy constraints and mis-alignment to some degree, but there appear to be very few explicit examples of real policy conflict. Issues seem to arise when people operate in isolation or with different aims, but

where people are working towards a common goal then no serious problems occur.

Constraints rather than conflict usually occurs when individuals or agencies do not cross check with policies in other areas and work within the confines of their own unit and direct policy concern. Key issues are usually around communication and implementation as opposed to specific pieces of legislation.

The market actors in the tourism businesses find difficulty with the certification model as there is no 'one size fits all' and there is a gap when it comes to sustainable tourism certification. This sector also questions the tourism policy contained within the Clare County Development Plan because there still seems to be a drive towards coach tourism and the promotion of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience, which has been proven to be at capacity.

The big conflict that came up across the board was the lack of resources in all agencies and the imbalance between investment in tourism versus investment in heritage and conservation. This poor investment in capital resources outside of tourism can fuel a perceived conflict between heritage and tourism, when in reality tourism policy and conservation policy work together to result in better tourism experiences. For an example outside the Burren, the lack of a properly managed walk at Loop Head means that people get out of their cars and go everywhere, leading to the damage being spread across the area. The lack of resources is felt on the ground in the day to day management of the sites where a reduced work force is now tasked for example with increased Health and Safety responsibilities, which although accepted as part of the job, are quite time consuming and can eat into the limited resources that are available. This also has to be juggled with the fact that targets and indicators of success at sites are still numbers-driven, which can be difficult to balance that with good conservation practice.

The state agencies and voluntary groups tasked with managing the natural and cultural landscape all refer to the restrictions imposed by the strict EU Directives and Wildlife Act, where again a 'one size fits all' model applies, which may not always be the most practical solution to issues on the ground. These policies are seen to be interpreted very rigidly in Ireland, which can leave the impression that there is very little scope for any landscape change or development in the Burren or the possibility of 'local solutions to local problems'.

One perceived conflict which interviewees seem to be aware as a more pressing issue than other elements of conservation policy is

the protection of monuments and archaeology. When analysed, the problem seems to lie with the structure of the NMS application system. It is not necessarily a legislative issue but more down to a lack of clarity. The legislation protecting buildings is actually stronger than that which protects archaeology, yet the National Monuments Acts is perceived as being more stringent. This can cause frustration when there is a lack of progress on practical issues.

In response to that, those looking after monuments feel that the perception that the policy is to say 'no' has been ingrained and these habits are hard to break. The issue is that protection has been provided through functions set up as a response system with resources provided accordingly, it is very much a reactive rather than proactive policy [NOTE: This difference in systems can be demonstrated when the personnel ratio of NMS and NPWS are compared. Both units are within the same department yet there is a 1:6 ratio of NMS:NPWS staff].

The various units within the County Council can have differing views on policy-related matters and the preparation of the CDP provides the opportunity to identify these and work towards resolving them. Relevant issues include the compatibility of Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport with environmental policy.

From a citizen point of view, where policy language and procedure is not part of everyday life, there is a perception that there is a lack of policy alignment with community needs, with some degree of policy conflict. An anecdotal case study demonstrates some of the issues.

Case Study: A mapping group had recorded the names of all the people that lived in the houses of a nineteenth century deserted village in Killinaboy. There was an idea to develop a short walk through this deserted village (known locally as the 'famine village', which was situated in woodland, but the old 'right of way' needed scrub removal to make it accessible. A Heritage Council grant was sought and granted for the work but the relevant permissions were not sought in time/in the right order and the Heritage Council grant ran out before all the licences were granted. Throughout the process there was consultation with an archaeologist who was happy with the proposed works, the NPWS had no issues but the problem was with the application for the felling licence which required approval of the Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry. A protection order was placed on the scrub (delivered by Gardai, which caused its own degree of upset) prior to granting the felling licence. The felling licence came through but it was beyond the timeframe for the Heritage Council grant which could not be availed of.

The bottom line is that landscapes are dynamic and need conservation rather than preservation, with policies to reflect the sensitivity of the landscape and the type of change it can sustain.

4.7 Approaches to resolving conflicts

The partners were asked how they felt policy conflicts are best resolved. There was a noticeable trend in the answers that came back with common vocabulary:

- communication
- collaboration
- flexibility

"A collaborative framework (that extends beyond a partnership) needs to have layers and be embedded at a local level"

State Actor - GeoparkLIFE

There was a general consensus that policy conflict is best addressed at local level rather than needing or benefiting from top-down change. While environmental policy can be perceived as being very restrictive and costly to consider, there seems to be general acceptance of its importance and value of the EU policy framework. However some examples of conflict of European level policy were pointed out such as the treatment of Red Valerian at Aillwee. It is considered an invasive species but the removal of it would damage the limestone pavement and the spraying of it would impact on water quality, demonstrating the potential for direct conflict between the European Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive. Generally, however, policy conflicts tend to be at a local level and around the implementation of policy.

The most readily identified constraint is lack of resources in state agencies and local authorities, and the need for increased staffing across the board. The severe cuts made during the recent recession are now having a significant impact and although the recovery is evident, there has not been a replenishment of staff losses. With additional staff, improved resources would allow for more engagement rather than employing a reactive enforcement of policy.

The policy issues at local level can often be about opinions and personalities rather than involving any significant policy conflict or legislative restriction. If there is the scope to engage at local level then these difficulties can often be resolved to the satisfaction of parties involved. A common goal and the desire for a common good, as is usually the case in the Burren, means that while frictions occur, at the end of the day everyone makes the effort to make it work. The letter of the law and the spirit of the law can be reconciled with a pragmatic approach.

The structure of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee (i.e. a partnership of national and local agencies and bodies working in groups with different foci) is also

something that was seen as a way of resolving conflict. This was stated explicitly by some and implied, although not specifically stated, by others. The notion of a collaborative and integrated approach to management has been accepted by all the partners as crucial if sustainable tourism and conservation management are to sit side by side. Friction can occur when only two partners are involved, but when three or more parties come together, the dynamic changes and the structure can be much more successful.

The example of Adopt a Monument scheme in Scotland and now being developed in Ireland by the Heritage Council was given as a demonstration of how people interacting on the ground in community archaeology can be successful and how the Irish system needs to acknowledge and accept that this is the way forward and adjust accordingly. It also needs to be borne in mind that the success of this type of approach very much depends on the personalities around the table and the need to adopt a 'can-do' attitude as opposed to using policy to say 'no'. This structure of agencies working with local communities, which brings together expertise and knowledge at a local level, is a good way of creating collective responsibility and an ability to address local needs first (as demonstrated in the Burren Farming for Conservation Project). This could in turn work towards remedying national policy appropriately.

Of course, consultation and an integrated approach at policy development stage would reduce conflicts and lead to a better understanding around issues on the ground. It is at the implementation of policy where difficulties occur but better communication would assist with this. One example is the facilitation role of the field monuments advisor in the BFCP who is available to farmers in the scheme and can advise and assist with issues around archaeological monuments on farmland. This role bridges a gap that currently exists between communities and agencies, particularly in the area of cultural heritage, so a service which could provide awareness and clarity as well as act as the buffer would be a valuable investment. The National Monument Service struggles with very limited resources, so a visible presence on the ground, similar in nature to the NPWS ranger, is not a possibility at the moment. If this were to change, the current difficulties that are experienced around the conservation of monuments could be improved. The National Monuments legislation needs to be strengthened with a clear policy around the conservation of monuments and landscape. OPW resolve conflicts on a site-by-site basis and experience indicates that round-table discussions can resolve issues at sites, as at Poul nabrone.

Overall, the feeling at community level is that a more joined-up thinking at Government department and County Council level, together with a type of 'one-stop-shop' as a point of contact for community groups to help them work through difficult processes involving state agencies would be extremely useful. An experienced, skilled person capable of juggling the complexities of both the relevant policies and the agencies could facilitate community groups, improve communication and develop a feeling of involvement and inclusion.

Once again, the simplicity of the BFCP is seen as its success and its ability to act as the buffer between the farmer and the agencies. There also needs to be respect for communities as the caretakers of the land, there and carrying out this role long before any agencies were in control. A degree of flexibility and a better interface with the public would help establish better working relationships.

7.8 Success of the LIFE programme in the area of policy objectives

The GeoparkLIFE programme has played a significant role in supporting businesses through training promotion of local produce and activities. Important linkages have been made locally because of this. If BEN manages to become self-sufficient and manage itself, this is seen by some as an important measurement of success and something which is transferrable.

However, BEN is just one of a series of partners working to sustain the destination, and the benefits of BEN go beyond the businesses. Each partner plays a part in working towards a sustainable destination, with sustainable business being just one indicator. While sustainability in the trade, and the training provided, are recognized by the state actors, the market actors see the need for all agencies to play their role in integrating tourism and conservation.

"There is an element of learning involved for community groups and the problem is they have lives other than their community involvement so if processes involve such a steep learning curve for them and the need to essentially repeat the process due to lack of flexibility on the part of the agencies before anything can be achieved, then where should the change take place?"

Citizen Actor – GeoparkLIFE Partner

A key success of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE programme has been the collaboration of partners and the holistic approach to the management of a Geopark and a destination. The

GeoparkLIFE model has had the benefit of working at multiple levels with each partner having an opportunity to see where they fit in to the bigger picture. This is developing a sense of collective responsibility for the area. A successful outcome would be the continuation of this partnership model beyond the LIFE programme.

The project has collected a lot of valuable data about the demonstration sites which are of importance to partners such as NPWS, OPW and Fáilte Ireland and are key to informing visitor management into the future. The figures on visitor numbers and effects/impacts will have wider long-term implications in terms of the preservation of the fabric of the sites. Local conservation groups would see success as 'Leaving No Trace', removing the negative trace of visitors altogether. The project has achieved success in raising awareness of the need to achieve sustainable tourism, including raising awareness among the tourism community and also the local community and it has highlighted that everyone has a role in that.

As Clare County Council (working with Galway County Council) works towards World Heritage Status for the Burren, it is important to reflect that the GeoparkLIFE programme has developed models for successful community-level partnerships with various agencies. A revision of the Burren Charter would be useful at this point to examine the status of the proposed actions. Could the actions of the charter be aligned with the future development, - the afterlife of the GeoparkLIFE programme? These actions might also be useful in satisfying some of the requirements for the process of the nomination of the Burren for the World Heritage List.

From a community perspective, a successful outcome would see the appointment of community group liaison officer type person, perhaps within the local authority. This would build on the hidden strengths of the project, which are the connections that have been made and the relationships that have built up over the past few years.

4.9 Overview and concluding comment?

5. Part 3 Assessing policy and moving to a more coherent framework

5.1 Introduction

Part 1 of the report provided an overview of the range of legislation and policies that are relevant to conservation management and sustainable tourism within the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. In relation to heritage there are at least 40 distinct and relevant legislative instruments at international, specifically European Union and Council of Europe, national, regional and local level. Part 2 explored how this policy framework influences work on the ground as we engaged with partners on the GeoparkLIFE programme to understand their perspective on the implementation of policy.

It is clear from Part 2 that in the context of the implementation of policy on the ground the Clare County Development Plan can be considered to provide a key framework. The plan for the period 2017-2023 is currently being finalized. Two of the goals of the plan are that it will result in:

A County Clare which protects and enhances the county's unique and natural heritage and biodiversity and recognizes the potential for sustainable green infrastructure development, while promoting and developing its cultural, educational and eco-tourism potential in a sustainable manner.

A County Clare in which tourism continues to play a major role in the future development of the county, adapting to the challenges of competing markets by maximizing the development of a high quality, diverse tourism product.

Directly relevant to the issue of policy the stated aim of the core strategy of the County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023 is to demonstrate **how the plan is consistent with national and regional planning strategies, guidelines and policies** including national and regional population targets. The strategy of the plan is informed by and in compliance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA). The requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive have been incorporated into the plan. This is the basis for the statement in the draft County Development Plan (2016, 36) that there is 'full integration of environmental issues throughout the plan-making process'.

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, and the GeoparkLIFE programme, are run under the auspices of Clare County Council. The integration of the Geopark into the draft County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023 further emphasizes the importance of the Development Plan as a integrating policy instrument. In Chapter 14 (3.19.3) of the draft development plan it is stated that:

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 landuse. 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.

Specifically there is a Development Plan Objective (CDP 14.22) in relation to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. This states that:

It is an objective of Clare County Council

a) To continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing 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.

The commitment as an objective of the County Clare Development to support the work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark and to secure the retention of the Geopark status into the future is an explicit policy commitment to the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Geoparks (0000) which provide the criteria for the evaluation of applications for this designation and its retention.

In the context of this policy review it is relevant to look at three criteria of the eight criteria in the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks. These specify that:

(i) UNESCO Global Geoparks must be a single, unified geographical area where sites and landscapes of international significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education, research and sustainable development. A UNESCO Global Geopark must have a clearly defined border, be of adequate size to fulfill its functions and contain geological heritage of international significance as independently verified by scientific professionals.

(iii) UNESCO Global Geoparks should be areas with a management body having legal existence recognised under national legislation. The management bodies should be appropriately equipped to address the area of the UNESCO Global Geopark in its entirety.

(v) UNESCO Global Geoparks should actively involve local communities and indigenous people as key stakeholders in the Geopark. In partnership with local communities a co-management plan needs to be drafted and implemented that provides for the social and economic needs of local populations, protects the landscape in which they live and conserves their cultural identity. It is recommended that all relevant local actors and authorities should be represented in the management of a UNESCO Global Geopark. Local and indigenous knowledge, practice and management systems should be included, alongside science, in the planning and management of the area.

Taking criterion (iii) firstly it is clear that Clare County Council constitutes the management body having legal existence recognised under national legislation and is equipped to address the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark in its entirety.

It is in the context of criterion (v), the development of best practice governance and the active management process of the Geopark that the GeoparkLIFE programme is reviewing sustainable tourism and conservation management policies with the specific objective of the social and economic needs of local populations, protection of the landscape in which they live and conservation of their cultural identity.

The Steering Committee of the GeoparkLIFE programme is composed of all the relevant actors and authorities that should be represented in the management of a UNESCO Global Geopark. One of the key strengths of the GeoparkLIFE programme is this wide range and diversity of partners and a partnership approach to decision making based on the ETIS model of collective decision making. The partners in the programme encompass all the key actors and stakeholders on the ground: national agencies, both in tourism and conservation management, the local authority, local communities, businesses, the farming community and voluntary

organisations dedicated to the conservation of the Burren landscape.

The detailed focus of the GeoparkLIFE programme is on working with the Burren Ecotourism Network to balance sustainable tourism with conservation (B1), a series of demonstration sites and monuments to develop best practice models of management and presentation (B2) and working with local communities on a range of projects relevant to the aims of the programme (B3). These work packages have illustrated the impact of the array and diversity of relevant legislation and policy in the area of heritage protection, environmental conservation and tourism on decision making and outcomes. They have also brought to light areas of potential conflict between policies. This can have a negative impact on the overall goal of reconciling conservation management, landscape protection, the economic and social needs of communities and sustainable tourism.

A key element of the policy review was to actively engage with the actors on the Geopark Steering Committee and other stakeholders to explore and understand the linkages between policy, decision-making and outcomes on the ground. This was considered as an essential starting point for consideration of more sustainable policy options.

This engagement was the focus of Part 2 of the review. The methodology and results are presented in detail there. However, it is worth emphasizing here that the purpose was to understand how policies, both explicit or formal (for example those driven by legislative statements, regulations and laws) and implicit or informal (practice and perception on the ground) create 'the rules of the game.' Policies can be deeply ingrained and/or institutionally supported and are difficult to change unless we understand how they influence actors on the ground and motivate the decision-making process.

This process has been very helpful in understanding the organizational and individual contexts in which policies, both explicit and implicit, underpin practice on the ground.

The approach in Part 3 of the review is to build on the perspectives of the partners and other stakeholders that emerged from Part 2 to and to focus on the policy needs. These are indicated using case studies from the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE programme and comparison with the management approach with areas or properties that share similarities with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. On the basis of this analysis a number of policy

choices are discussed. Finally a series of indicators of the successful integration of policy in management are suggested.

5.2 Policy Need

5.2.1 Policy Gaps and Coherence

Policy gaps could be said to occur where it can be recognised that relevant policies are not being implemented, if a policy type is under-represented, and if policies are not focused on the relevant drivers or pressure points. These issues are all relevant to understanding gaps of government, regional and local policy. The challenge is to develop a more coherent approach to the implementation of policy based on the analysis and identification of policy gaps.

A case study which demonstrates the value of this approach is the Burren Farming for Conservation Project (BFCP). Research conducted by Teagasc, University College Dublin and the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the 1990s highlighted a policy need to identify the important role that traditional farming practices, specifically winterage, plays in supporting the rich biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Burren. The Burren LIFE programme developed the first major farming for conservation project in Ireland which placed farmers at the centre of the conservation agenda. It provided a pilot study for the development of a specific, targeted agri-environmental scheme that is funded through the Department of Agriculture, supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (DAHRRGA) and managed by the BFCP which works with 160 farmers (CHECK) applying the lessons of the policy gap analysis going back to the 1990s to support and incentivize farmers to maintain and enhance the habitats of the Burren.

To address how the partnership governance model adopted by the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE programme is identifying and addressing policy gaps it seems appropriate to discuss three case studies that illustrate the broad range both of the programme and of relevant policy issues.

5.2.2 Case studies

Context within the GeoparkLIFE programme

Action B1 of the programme 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 and the reduction of the carbon

footprint. In the context of the overall focus of the review on sustainable tourism and conservation management **transport policy** is examined as a case study. This issue has been recognised by the Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN) that has major implications for tourism enterprises and is directly relevant to the focus of the review.

The key objective of Action B2 of the programme is to develop transferable toolkits for the monitoring and visitor management of sites and monuments through the development of a suite of integrated actions. Perhaps not surprisingly given the complexities site management and presentation there is a regard for the policy implications of actions under B2. This is the aspect of the GeoparkLIFE programme that deals most directly with conservation management and the policy context of one of the demonstration sites, **Slieve Carran (St MacDuagh's hermitage)**, has been chosen as a case study.

The aim of Action B3 is to develop the skills base of all the stakeholders in the understanding, management and conservation of natural and cultural heritage and reinforces Actions B1 and B2. In strengthening community support and capacity the approach is to work with groups and activities on the ground in a series of case studies. These are focused on needs identified by communities and also seek to inform policies and influence actual outcomes on the ground. **An Cabhail Mór, Killinaboy** is considered in detail here as a case study illustrating the challenges in achieving these aims.

A. Transport Policy

What are the issues?

The conundrum and challenge is to define what is a sustainable transport policy. On the one hand there is the principle as articulated by Fáilte Ireland in its submission to the draft County Development Plan that while recognizing that many visitors travel throughout the county by car, public transport should be at the core of a tourism specific policy and that this accords with the move towards more sustainable forms of travel.

On the other hand the reality is that the Burren has a finite capacity for tourism and that the current level of coach visitors is becoming problematic. As one indicator of this the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience reaches capacity at certain times during the peak visitor season. Over 1 million people visit the Cliffs of Moher per year. As indicated in the study carried out by the BCOM GeoparkLIFE programme in 2014 over 52% were fully independent travellers

(FITS) and almost 48% travelled by coach, hence bus passengers who predominantly come on a day tour from Dublin or Galway comprise almost half of all visitors to COMVE. From 2011-14 bus passenger numbers increased by 53% at COMVE. Over 86% of coach traffic goes to the Cliffs. Analysis suggests that the coaches follow a route which includes a lunch stop in Doolin and focuses on visits to 'free' sites such as Alladie on the R477 on the coast north of Doolin and Poul nabrone and An Rath on the R480.

Analysis of the 2014 study and other statistics by a BEN working group indicates that the average spend by a coach visitor in the Geopark is €12 (compared with the average overall spend of overseas visitors who spend a night in Clare of €228). Hence there is a weak economic impact, with the majority of bus visitor spend taking place outside the region. By contrast there is a strong and increasingly negative impact on the environment and the quality of the visitor experience. Safety, access and capacity issues need to be addressed at Alladie, COMVE, An Rath and Poul nabrone,. As one example, the latter iconic archaeological site receives over 100,000 visitors per year but there are no toilet or other facilities at the site. There are growing traffic management issues at Doolin, Ballyvaughan and the R447 (Coast Road), R476 and R480 loop which are impacting on the quality of life of local communities. In the context of a goal of sustainable tourism and an exceptional quality of experience the heavy concentration of visitors brings potential for reputational damage.

If present trends continue and there is the same balance of FIT and coach visitors, even a modest increase will breach capacity at several locations in the Geopark. Continuation of the current trend would lead to peak attendances of over 200 buses daily at the COMVE, over 150,000 visitors to Poul nabrone and over 300,000 at Alladie, which is on private land with no staffing, signage or facilities.

The overall conclusion of the 2014 study was that:

As bus numbers are on a consistent upward trend and as capacity at a number of locations is close to being breached, a do-nothing scenario is no longer justified.

Update on the figures to 2016

How are the issues being addressed?

The immediate policy context for this issue is that the National Transport Authority provides route licenses for Public Day tours. Those licences are conditional on stop permissions being granted by the Clare County Council.

Mention any relevant section in the County Clare Development Plan

Number of operators involved?

GeoparkLIFE Steering Group: Not surprisingly this issue and its impact on sustainable tourism and conservation management has been a persistent concern of the GeoparkLIFE Steering Group. Arising from the 2014 coach tourism study a Sustainable Tourism group was formed in 2016, to conduct further research, push for action and to support this using the ETIS model of decision making by agreeing indicators and targets for sustainable transport. On the Sustainable Transport Group are representatives of BEN, CCC, COMVE, FI and the Geopark.

A meeting was held in August 2016 with the Roads Department of Clare County Council as the competent licensing (stop permissions) authority. The meeting focused on the need for a long term policy and planning around coach tourism. The view of Clare County Council was that this required a robust assessment of the current situation which could be carried out in the context of the Visitor Experience Development Plan being developed by Fáilte Ireland. If the VEDP provide clear recommendations on transport policy, this will help Clare County Council develop policy and procedures that will support the plan.

GeoparkLIFE made a submission to the draft County Development Plan requesting that all tourism policy relating to the Burren be underpinned by sustainable criteria.

Clare County Council: Specific policy initiatives undertaken by Clare County Council include the commission of a management plan for Doolin Pier and consultation on the proposal to reduce the speed limit from 100km to 60km on the N67 for health and safety reasons.

National Parks and Wildlife Service: With funding support from the GeoparkLIFE programme NPWS are conducting a visitor and traffic management plan for the National Park. In this regard it should be noted that it is an objective of the County Development Plan (CDP 14.20) to advocate the preparation by NPWS of a management plan for the Burren National Park, incorporating traffic management

Burren Ecotourism Network: BEN has established a sub-committee to discuss and make recommendations on Sustainable Tourism Management within North Clare. This recognizes the good match between fully independent travellers (FITs) and the small scale,

geographically distributed nature of tourism attractions and businesses that make up the sector and the strong economic impact of FITs. Analysing the poor economic benefit of coach visitors to the region outlined above and their significant impact on the environment, traffic congestion and quality of life and experience, the sub-committee recommends that conditions and incentives should be created that encourages a change in the ratio of FIT : coach tourism. The primary mechanism they suggest is a combination of the use of stop permissions and pricing at COMVE to encourage more economic benefits from coach tourism (for example coaches which stay overnight in Clare) and to reduce the environmental impact of coach traffic (for example promoting an agreed single direction of movement of coaches with the region). They suggest that coach tourism should be capped at its current level and that a full review should be carried out with strategies developed to mitigate the impact of coach traffic.

Comment on policy gaps:

It is clear that there is a major problem in relation to coach tourism in the Geopark and the wider region. It is worth repeating the conclusion of the *Study of Bus/Coach Tourism* (2014) that a do nothing scenario is no longer justified. Indeed the indications are that the number of coach visitors has actually increased over the last two years.

As a national policy background to this there has been a clear change in focus from increasing visitor numbers to increasing visitor revenue in *People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025* (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport 2015). The ministerial statement at the beginning of this policy explicitly states that:

The focus of tourism policy must be therefore to maximize the export contribution of tourism, while protecting the invaluable assets that are our natural, built and cultural heritage. This involves **a change in focus from overseas visitor numbers to overseas visitor revenue.**

The BCOM GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee and the Burren Ecotourism Network have shown that the management and development of the Burren as a sustainable destination requires a change in the current approach to coach tourism and that this change is also required to align with national tourism policy.

As set out in *People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025* (2015) Section 4 the role of local authorities is to support communities in tourism development and to act as a link between State tourism agencies and communities, having due regard for national tourism strategy.

Comment on the text in the CC Development Plan referring the WAW and increasing visitor figures – apparent contradiction to national policy on tourism. On the other hand the Action Plan for Rural Development citing the Tourism Action Plan 2016-2018 wants to increase visitors to rural Ireland by 12% by 2019?.

Transport policy should be considered in the context of an overall strategy for tourism in County Clare. The current policy instrument, the Integrated Tourism Strategy for County Clare 2011-2014 (prepared by the Clare County Development Board) is out of date and was prepared at a time when the key threat was reduced visitor numbers. It is an objective (CDP9.1) of the County Development Plan to support the preparation, adoption and implementation of a strategic regional plan for tourism. It is an action of the Action Plan for Rural Development (2017, 42) to provide practical support to local authorities to develop comprehensive tourism strategies.

A key tool in managing coach tourism could be National Transport Authority route license conditions and the stop permissions granted by Clare County Council.

B. Slieve Carran (St Mac Duagh's Hermitage)

What are the issues?

Slieve Carran is one of the seven B2 demonstration sites where transferable approaches and toolkits for the monitoring and visitor management of archaeological sites and monuments are being developed by the GeoparkLIFE Programme.

As described by Jones (2004) and Kirby (2016) the site is more generally known as St (Colmán) Mac Duagh's Hermitage, Keelhillia. The site is related to early medieval monastic site about 10km to the east at Kilmacduagh on the lowlands near Gort. There is a possible unmarked pilgrim's path, St Colmán's path, linking the two sites (Kirby 2016). An element of the Irish early medieval monastic tradition was the practice of monks retreating from the world to a hermitage. The site at the base of the cliffs on east side of Slievecarran is the hermitage of St Mac Duagh. Under Section 5 of the National Monument (Amendment) Act 1987 they are listed collectively as a Monastic Site on the Register of Historic Monuments under reference number 443. Under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 they have been listed individually on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) as components 1-10 of the overall site; CL006-023.

The elements of the site consist of a cave in the cliffs and below it is a small medieval stone church or oratory, graveyard, two *leachtanna* or outdoor altars/memorial cairns, a bullaun (mortar) stone and a holy well. The site may be set within a stone enclosure. About 400m to the south east is a semi-circular stone enclosure and two more *leachtanna*. There are also two *fulachta fiadh* in the vicinity. There is rich tradition associated with the site and St Mac Duagh, including the name of the track leading to the hermitage. This is known as *Bothar na méisel* or 'way of the dishes' (referring to a meal that killed the servant of St Mac Duagh, also referenced in the name of the enclosure to the south east as the Grave of the Saint's Servant).

The features of the site, its remote location and the traditions associated with it all suggest the site was an early hermitage site, possibly dating to the seventh century.

The site is within the area of the Burren National Park, which is located in the east of the Burren and about 1500 hectares in size. The Park is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA). The site is located within the Eagle's Rock/Slievecarran/Keelhilla Nature Reserve and is the main attraction on a designated 2.5km looped walking trail within the Nature Reserve. The starting point of the walk is a parking area off the Carran to Kinvarra road. This road has been repaved making access from both directions easier. The hermitage is about 1km from the road and reached by a track on open limestone pavement which also passes through areas of woodland (oak, ash and hazel).

There is unsupervised free public access to the site. There are anecdotal reports of an increase in visitors in recent years. One material impact of this is the deposition of 'votive' offerings, particularly ribbons, at the site. In 2010 all such offerings from the site were removed from the site. Kirby's (2016) survey in December 2015 revealed a total of all 400 offerings present at the site. The issue here is whether these offerings are a genuine expression of spirituality or casual touristic deposition. If the latter it can certainly be argued that they detract from the authenticity of the site and the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE's 'Leave No Trace' policy and code of conduct. Kirby also recorded other visitor impact on the site, notably the partial collapse of the stone structure around the well.

The proposal by the BCOM GeoparkLIFE programme B2 working group to look at the hermitage as a demonstration site and to engage in active management of the site raised the issue of the

ownership. It is assumed that as this is an archaeological site with the publicly owned National Park that it is owned by DAHRRGA. It is managed by NPWS as part of the overall management regime of the Burren National Park.

It also became clear that while the site is well-known that there were actually no detailed plans or descriptions of the archaeological features or assessment of their condition.

How are the issues being addressed?

GeoparkLIFE B2 working group:

A seminar was organized in October 2014 on the theme of Pilgrimage in the Burren. A field trip was undertaken to St Mac Duagh's hermitage to view and discuss the issues pertaining to the conservation of this important site.

The lack of archaeological and architectural baseline data was addressed by baseline geology, ecology, archaeology and architectural reports which were completed in December 2014. An archaeological assessment of the church/oratory site was also completed in August 2015.

This assessment revealed that only the west gable and part of the north wall are upstanding while the line of the rest of the foundations of the church can be traced on the ground. The church is in a vulnerable condition and continuing to deteriorate. In addition to the comment made above about the walling around the well this has potential implications for the health and safety of visitors and conservation work is required to ensure the preservation of structures.

To measure and assess the impact of visitor numbers and footfall on walking trails and the site from 2014 footfall counters were installed along the designated looped walking trail at Keelhilla Nature Reserve. These are used to obtain baseline data and to monitor visitor numbers on a daily, monthly and annual basis. The numbers recorded between September 2014 and September 2015 indicated that over 5000 people used the trail between the entrance to the Nature Reserve at the carpark on the Carran/Kinvara road and St Mac Duagh's hermitage (Doyle 2015). In addition NPWS have been monitoring the walking path since 2014 and testing of a trail monitoring app was carried out in August 2016.

Any update on the visitor figures –September 2016?

The issue of deposition of votive offerings at St Mac Duagh's hermitage was comprehensively addressed in a report

commissioned by the BCOM GeoparkLIFE programme (Kirby 2016). The key question to be determined was whether these were genuine votive offerings in the context of traditional or new spiritual tourism or the result of casual deposition by tourists. The report demonstrated that there was very little evidence of a historical tradition of the deposition of offerings on trees close to the well. The site was surveyed in December 2015, in contrast to the traditional mode of deposition at a particular tree (normally a thorn tree) and the holy well itself, there were 22 locations at which offerings were deposited. The deposits were dominated by ribbons, over 80% of the total, while there were no rags, which are the offerings traditionally left at holy wells and associated with cures and folk medicine. In the context of this detailed assessment NPWS did a follow up baseline survey of the offerings in March 2016 and all were removed in April 2016. Monitoring of votive deposition took place during the tourist season (May-October) in 2016.

Comment on policy gaps

The approach taken to addressing issues demonstrates best practice conservation principles as expressed in the ICOMOS Burra Charter of using description, assessment, detailed baseline survey and identification of threats and vulnerabilities before any active intervention on the site.

It is clear in this context that a programme of conservation is required on the site. An unexpected problem that has arisen is the status of the ownership of the site. This is the subject of ongoing discussion between NPWS and NMS. It should be noted that both bodies are in the same Government Department (DAHRRGA).

Specify the problem

The problem would appear to be at least in part due to inconsistencies in the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2004. A Consolidated National Monuments Bill is now at an advanced stage of drafting but requires Government approval before publication.

A conservation/management plan is required for St Mac Duagh's hermitage and its environs. Clarification of the issue of ownership is required before any programme of conservation or other significant intervention can be conducted.

The Monastic site registered as number 443 on the Register of Historic Monuments and the individual sites listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (CL006-02301-010) are not national monuments as defined in the National Monuments Act. Currently therefore they do not come under the remit of the Service Level

Agreement between NMS, DAHRRGA and the Office of Public Works for conservation work on National Monuments in State Care. It should be noted that the OPW has an informal relationship with NPWS and consults with them regularly.

Discussion about the status of St Mac Duagh's hermitage has raised the wider issue of the ownership, protection and management of archaeological monuments within the area of the Burren National Park. It is estimated that there are 00 monuments within the National Park. A working strategy agreed between NPWS and NMS would provide a good basis for the integration of the management of archaeological monuments into the overall management of the National Park.

It should also be noted that there is no general legislation on National Parks in Ireland and that it is not a statutory term. The State Property Act 1954 is used to administer most of the National Parks.

The report on votive offerings (Kirby 2016) indicates that the 29th of October, the official day of diocesan commemoration of the feast of St Mac Duagh, is still being celebrated locally and is likely to be a day on which there is heightened visitor impact on the site. It would be useful to identify other potential peaks in visitation and to organize supervision of the site on those days.

Management of the trail

C. An Cabhail Mhór

What are the issues

This is one of the case studies under Action B3 of the BCOM GeoparkLIFE programme. The initial proposal coming from an active local community group, the Kilnaboy History and Heritage Group (KHHG) whose activities in the area have included a historical account and transcriptions of the gravestones in the historic graveyards of Killinaboy and Coad (KHHG 0000). As an extension of their work the group identified the need for a training programme which would involve the repair and repointing of a seventeenth century building, An Cabhail Mhór and skills which could be applied to historic masonry structures elsewhere in the Burren. This would involve health and safety training, lime preparation and training in the use of lime. For this proposal to be progressed preparatory work was required to comply with relevant legislation and policy.

As described by (UaCróinín 2014) An Cabhail Mhór is the name given to a fortified dwelling situated by the river Fergus. The

building is associated with the Blood family who came to Ireland in 1595 at the behest of O'Brien of Inchiquin to provide security. Neptune Blood who was born in 1595 may have been responsible for the construction of An Cabhail Mhór and he certainly lived there. Neptune Blood was ordained a priest and installed as vicar of Kilfenora and Dean of Killinaboy and Rath in 1633. In the Catholic Rebellion of 1641 the house appears to have been pulled down by the rebels and appears not to have been inhabited again.

Architecturally the building fits with an earlier seventeenth century date and its fortification is understandable in the context of the time. It is an almost complete rectangular bawn (walled courtyard of a castle) built of rubble limestone. The main entrance arched gateway is in the centre of the north wall and there is a second entrance (river gate) in the south wall. The pointed arch is lying on the ground. The walls are complete to an height of about 3m with rectangular turrets on the north west and south east corners. The location of the residential structure is indicated by a gable wall with chimney rising to a height of 7m at the north east corner and the rubble in the south east. The bawn is covered with ivy which is obscuring details and more importantly causing instability in the walls due to its weight. The site appears to have been approached by a roadway to the north with its own access to the river to the south.

Most of the structure including walls, gates, corners turrets and house gable remains intact though in poor condition. There is a threat that unless cleared of vegetation and repaired it could result in significant collapse.

The site is privately owned. Under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act the site is listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (CL017-056) and Protected Structure 255 in the County Clare Development Plan. As such works to repair the walls must be agreed in writing with the National Monuments Service, DAHRRGA and permitted under a Section 57 Declaration from Clare County Council. An official notification to carry out the works must also be submitted to NMS.

How are the issues being addressed?

GeoparkLIFE B3 Working Group:

In collaboration with the B2 Working Group and KHHG a meeting was held on site in January 2015 to discuss the proposal for a building lime training course on the repair and conservation of historic ruins at An Cabhail Mhór.

An Architectural Heritage Report, Archaeological Assessment, photographic record and method statement for a training course in building conservation for the north wall of the monument were prepared (UaCróinín and KHHG 2014 and 2015).

A Conservation Inspection and Risk Assessment was carried out through GeoparkLIFE (Architectural Conservation Professionals) in 2015. This concluded that the site was dangerous as it stands and should be fenced off to prevent access. The report recommended that the removal of ivy and immediate repairs on the masonry should be carried out under the supervision of an appropriately qualified conservation professional and that removal/sorting of stone should be supervised by a licensed archaeologist.

Written notification of the proposal to repair the north wall was submitted by the KHHG to the National Monuments Service, DAHGRRRA (May 2015). A section 57 Declaration was submitted to Clare County Council (May 2015). The KKHG responded to NMS queries on the notification documentation and permission was granted in principle by NMS subject to conditions (including a wildlife/ecological report which was commissioned by GeoparkLIFE in May 2015) in July 2015. Landowner agreement was put in place by KHHG, to be finalized on commencement of the work.

A tender document was circulated by GeoparkLIFE for a conservation engineer's report (in line with the NMS permission conditions). The tender was not proceeded with as it became clear that GeoparkLIFE could not commission this work on behalf of Clare County Council for a community group. In addition under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005) a Project Supervisor for the Design Process (PSDP) must be appointed to address and co-ordinate safety and health matters. Against this background the KHHG have not been in a position to pursue the project further.

The KHHG made an application to the Heritage Council for a conservation grant in April 2015. This was unsuccessful on the basis that the project was already receiving grants from the GeoparkLIFE programme.

In January 2016 the KHHG and Burren Conservation Volunteers (BCV), with the support of GeoparkLIFE made an application to the Heritage Council for An Cabhail Mhór to be one of the monuments included in a pilot phase of an 'Adopt a Monument' scheme. The project was not chosen.

Comment on policy gaps

At each stage in the process KHHG were consulted and numerous meetings were held to discuss the various actions and the reason for each one. Frustrations were perhaps inevitable as KHHG considered progress to be slow and the process to be unnecessarily cumbersome. GeoparkLIFE facilitated and supported as much as possible and guided the community group through the process.

Ironically having successfully negotiated the requirements of the National Monuments Acts what has stymied progress is the issue of PSDP (Project Supervisor for the Design Process) and health and safety policy as directed by the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005). The KHHG were faced with the dilemma of fulfilling the criteria required for this process. It became apparent that as a community group the KHHG did not have the resources to act as a corporate body, unfortunately putting the proposed training scheme beyond their reach at this time.

Not surprisingly the KHHG are somewhat disillusioned with the process and what it regards as a tangled, unnecessarily complex and restrictive regulatory framework, even if GeoparkLIFE has provided clear and concise guidance at all times. The GeoparkLIFE programme also has to be conscious to balance its commitment to capacity building through community-based projects with the objectives of best practice conservation and management of archaeological sites and monuments.

The outcomes from the case study at An Cabhail Mhór have been informative with regards to the range of relevant policies that have to be considered in this type of project where an active conservation intervention on a standing structure is proposed.

It also demonstrates the challenges that are posed at national level in Ireland as we move towards a more community-focused and led approach to conservation of cultural heritage (for example as promoted by the Faro Convention).

The issues for community groups are also relevant in terms of new heritage guidelines being published by National Monuments Service which are designed to aid communities and Local Action Groups (LAGs) undertaking heritage projects under LEADER. GeoparkLIFE has acted in a mentoring role for KHHG through this process. But the process has shown that there is also a need for a mentoring role as well as a regulatory one within the relevant agencies/partners if there is to be a genuine drive towards empowering communities to actively engage in conservation

management and more broadly to sustain rural communities as aspired to in the national *Action Plan for Rural Development* (2017)

5.2.3 Concluding comment: What do the case studies tell us?

It is clear that the potential of the County Clare Development Plan as an integrating policy instrument is not being fully realized and that there is significant potential here. Despite the stated aim of the core strategy of the plan being to align national policies with development and community needs at local level it is not always clear in terms of the management process that this alignment is in place.

To take one example, national tourism strategy now specifically recognizes the need to focus on visitor revenue, economic impact and sustainability, but there is still a focus in the Development Plan on sustainable tourism or eco-tourism as a subset of the wider tourism 'product'. There is also a number of places in the plan where the focus is on increasing visitor numbers, when it is clear that in the BCOM Geopark area the current number of coach visitors is creating capacity problems at key sites, is having a knock-on negative environmental impact while the weak positive economic impact is offset by traffic congestion and impact on the quality of life. The critical underlying policy gap here is action to address this issue. More broadly there is a need for a Tourism Strategy for County Clare. This is a stated objective in the County Development Plan and it is recommended that this should be implemented as an urgent action.

The value of partnership model adopted by the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee is that it has facilitated the identification of policy gaps and how they can be addressed. One of the realities on the ground is that structure of government agencies at national, regional and local level in general supports actors to work within agency based frameworks, rather than collaboratively across agencies, even within the same Government Department, as is the case with the National Monuments Service and National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The value of promoting a more collaborative approach can be seen for example in the case of St Mac Duagh's hermitage demonstration site for the GeoparkLIFE programme within the Burren National Park where the focus on this particular monument has raised issues and an approaches that can be applied to all the archaeological monuments within the area of the National Park.

A principle of the partnership model adopted by the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee is the participation of communities in conservation management and sustainable tourism. It is clear that in an international context that is seen as the best practice framework for the conservation for the historic environment (Hudson and James 2007). The case study of An Cabhail Mhór indicates a number of key lessons. Firstly it is important to remember that active participation of communities can take a number of different forms and that the proposed programme at An Cabhail Mhór of active conservation of a standing building could be seen as an ambitious form of community participation. This should be encouraged and developed but the process indicated that it requires significant investment of time, resources and mentoring to build capacity in local communities. It should be noted here that it was the implications of health and safety legislation and policy rather than the requirements of the National Monuments Acts regulatory framework that has stymied progress.

In terms of policy coherence the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee partnership is proving a very successful device in moving the major stakeholders towards a single vision, even if this has also revealed the policy gaps that have to be overcome to achieve that vision. A key question is how is this partnership approach to be continued and sustained into the future but more critically given the policy issues that have been identified, how is it to be developed for the future? How can the management and governance of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark build on the lessons learnt from the GeoparkLIFE programme?

The role of the County Council is of course to plan for the future of the county and the Burren only forms part of the Council's wider remit and planning and management policy for the Burren has to be balanced within its wider vision for the county. However, the international importance of the Burren has been formally recognised by the designation of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher as UNESCO Global Geopark and it is an objective of the County Development Plan to continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and to retain its status as a UNESCO Global Geopark. Under the operational guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks one of the key criteria (v) is the implementation of a management plan.

Bringing these observations together a key policy requirement is to identify a best practice model for the future management process for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark.

5.3 Best Policy Practice – identifying international models

One widely used approach to identifying best practice models is to look at comparator sites where integrated management processes and practice have been established and addressed. Ideally the comparator sites should be examples where specific points of comparison can be made with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. The criteria that have been identified for comparison are:

- Karst/limestone landscapes culturally shaped by human interaction with the environment.
- Sites where the local authority(ies) is the main driver of management.
- Sites recognised as being of global significance as indicated by designation as a UNESCO Global Geopark or as UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Sites within the remit of European Union and Council of Europe legislative and policy frameworks.

On this basis four sites have been identified for comparison; Talayotic Minorca (Balaeric Islands), Spain, Idrija, Slovenia Global Geopark, Dorset and East Devon (Jurassic Coast) World Heritage Site, UK and Southern Oland, Sweden World Heritage Site

A. TALAYOTIC MINORCA, BALAERIC ISLANDS, SPAIN

Description:

Thirty two sites that have been chosen as representative of the material culture and monuments of the Talayotic culture of Minorca (2500-400 BC). Settlement of the island appears only to have begun around 2100 BC and the sites chart the evolution of prehistoric society. The earliest monuments are megalithic tombs. Caves and hypogea were also used for burial right through prehistory. Boat-shaped (naviform) houses were in use from 1600 BC and over time these are transformed into a distinctive tomb form (navetas). From 1100 BC the talayots appear, these are unique 'truncated cone' monumental constructions that were focal buildings in settlements. The post-talayotic period from 600 BC is marked by the construction of taula enclosures, focused on a monumental T-shaped megalith, composed of an upright with a lintel on top. The sites are seen as outstanding because of their monumentality and state of preservation. Many of the settlement sites show continuity of activity in different periods.

Talayotic Minorca is currently under consideration for inscription on the World Heritage List as a serial cultural site.

Management

The sites are spread across the island, with a marked concentration in the southern half of Minorca. The management of the sites is included in the Island Historical Management Plan. While some of the sites are in public ownership the majority are in private hands. There are partnership agreements with all the landowners of these sites. Interpretation is provided at the sites through information panels and in some cases leaflets provided at entry. The central hub of interpretation on the island will be the refurbished Museu de Menorca. Visitors to the sites come by car or coach, either on self-organised, educational or organized tours. The highest number of visitors to an individual site is around 35,000 per year. Currently the sites attract only a small proportion of the over one million 'sun' tourists. But the broader tourism policy of the Island Council emphasises a greater focus on cultural tourism through the development of cultural routes, specifically Talayotic Minorca. 160

There is strong local support for the concept of World Heritage inscription at political and community level. Community support is expressed through visitation but this raises interesting issues regarding management – for example a reluctance to control access. The state of conservation of some of the components raises issues about the level and impact of unmonitored access. While there is a programme of conservation this is allied to a fragmented system of management and an active programme of research excavations whose impact on the sites and integration into interpretation needs to be developed.

Website: The first link is to the WH nomination site while the other two are tourism-based websites.

<http://www.menorcatalayotica.info/portal.aspx>

<http://www.menorca.es/Publicacions/Publicacions.aspx?TIPO=RTA&PAGINA=2>

<http://visitmenorca.com/en/know/archeology/>

B. IDRIJA GLOBAL GEOPARK, SLOVENIA

Description

The Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark lies in the western part of Slovenia and comprises the area of the municipality of Idrija. The town of Idrija has one of the largest mercury mines in the world. The area of the Geopark has an extremely diversified morphology,

featuring deep and narrow ravines and gorges, as well as karstified plateaus, due to its position at the meeting point of the alpine and karst worlds. The Idrija Geopark unites the richness of geological and other natural and cultural heritage with traditional cuisine, domestic arts and crafts, services and tourist attractions which the area can offer to visitors. The project of establishing the Idrija Geopark was started in 2008 by the Idrija Mercury Mine and the Idrija Municipality on the basis of a mutual agreement. The Idrija Municipality established a consultative working body or committee, which prepared expert geological reports and other required materials.

Management

In 2010 Idrija was recognised as Geopark by the Global Geopark Network. Under a local decree the Idrija Municipality established a public institution – the Idrija Heritage Centre (IHC) to run the Geopark. The programme of the Idrija Geopark encompasses protection of natural heritage and geological heritage, research, management and tourist related activities working in collaboration with a range of public and private partners.

IHC is the legal entity providing legal and financial framework for Idrija Geopark, and as such it is the main developer and manager of the Idrija Geopark. For the purpose of managing and developing the Geopark, IHC has contractual relations with the two key institutions connected to the heritage of the Idrija ore deposit and mining in the mercury mine; the Idrija Municipal Museum and the Idrija Mercury Mine.

The Idrija Geopark organisation is comprised of several bodies: the *management body* (the Council of the IHC), the *executive body* is the director of IHC and the *expert and partner groups*. The Geopark *expert group* is an advisory body to the IHC and the IHC Director. It is comprised of expert organizations and institutions in the fields of geology, nature and environment protection, and is a collaborative body among scientific research institutions.

The Geopark *partner group* is comprised of public and private partners/associates of the Idrija Geopark who have signed the Partnership Agreement and are creatively contributing to the Geopark's development through activities and partnership cooperation. The common activities of IHC and individual partners are described in the appropriate legal document (Partnership Agreement). The partner group is open and welcomes everyone who wants to join. At the moment it includes 33 partners:

Website

<http://www.geopark-idrija.si/en/>

C. DORSET AND EAST DEVON COAST WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Description

The Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site has an outstanding combination of globally significant geological and geomorphological features. The property comprises eight sections along 155km of largely undeveloped coast. The property's geology displays approximately 185 million years of the Earth's history, including a number of internationally important fossil localities. The property also contains a range of outstanding examples of coastal geomorphological features, landforms and processes, and is renowned for its contribution to earth science investigations for over 300 years, helping to foster major contributions to many aspects of geology, palaeontology and geomorphology. This coast is considered by geologists and geomorphologists to be one of the most significant teaching and research sites in the world.

Management

The management of the site is undertaken by a formal partnership, established to oversee the protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage. The Partnership is led by a non-executive Steering Group and supported by a range of Working Groups and other sub-groups established to ensure effective delivery of purpose.

To support this governance structure, a small professional team, the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team, has been established. The Team's principal role is to support the implementation and delivery of the Management Plan, guided by the Steering Group. The Steering Group delegates responsibility to a small Management Group for the detail of implementation, overseeing the team and forward planning.

The Management Group comprises the Chair of the Steering Group, Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team leader and representatives from the core funding partners and other statutory agencies. The Group is chaired by a senior officer of the host authority.

The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team's role in implementation of the Management Plan is as advisor, supporter, coordinator, facilitator and deliverer. It plays a role in most but not all the initiatives undertaken under the Plan. The team is a small unit hosted by Dorset County Council comprising technical specialists in the areas of work covered by this Management Plan. Activities are delivered under the identity of the Partnership.

As the key body for the delivery of the Management Plan for the site, the Steering Group's priority is to ensure that sufficient resources are in place to enable the Team to achieve its core functions. Allocation of staff time and financial resources are planned by the Team, agreed annually and monitored by the Management Group.

The Jurassic Coast Trust is an independent charity established by the Steering Group to support education and conservation initiatives in the World Heritage Site through fundraising activities.

Website

www.jurassiccoast.com/team

D. SOUTHERN OLAND, SWEDEN WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Description

The area inscribed on the World Heritage List comprises the southern third (municipality of Morbylanga) of the island of Oland (part of the county of Kalmar) in the Baltic Sea, covering over 50,000 ha and is dominated by limestone pavement. The agricultural landscape is organically evolved and depends on continuing traditional land-use. This area is an outstanding example of human settlement where farmers, over its long cultural history have adapted to the constraints of its geology and topography and have made the optimum use of diverse landscape types. Several thousand years of cultural tradition are reflected in the patterns of land-use, land division, place names, settlements and biological diversity. The land is mainly owned by a large number of private individuals, which include over 400 agricultural enterprises.

Management

The area is protected under several Swedish statutes, specifically the Cultural Monuments Act and the Environmental Code. Under the Planning and Building Act management of the World Heritage Site is integrated into a Master Plan for the whole island. This does not have statutory force but is intended for guidance in policy and decision-making. This is followed up by a detailed, statutory development plan for Morbylanga. The responsibility for implementation lies with the municipality. Co-ordinating with the national agencies the county (Kalmar), municipality (Morbylanga) and farmers (Federation of Swedish Farmers) work within a joint management strategy for the cultural landscape. This is underwritten by a policy document in which the guidelines for co-operation and objectives for the property are stated.

Specific environmental support from the EU and the State exists to encourage more environment- friendly forms of production. There are several forms of environmental support partly funded by the EU. The EU LIFE fund has also contributed to restoration work. The majority of farmers have applied for one or other of the financial supports. Development has shown that financial compensation paid to farmers for managing the cultural landscape has produced a positive effect. Farmers are also offered visits from an advisor who draws up a management plan in consultation with the farmer.

In terms of conservation and management expertise the Kalmar County Administrative Board has experts in heritage management and nature conservancy. The Board is tasked with ensuring legal compliance and in contributing to the development of the regional economy. The Kalmar County Museum has experts on building conservation, archaeology and the history of the agrarian landscape.

Website

5.3.2 Concluding comment: What do the comparator sites tell us?

While there are significant differences between the operational systems of management across the four sites they all demonstrate an integrated management approach, combining natural and cultural heritage, active programmes of conservation, education and promotion of sustainable tourism.

The four management regimes explicitly demonstrate consistency with the requirements of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2015) or the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks (0000). All have been designated and reviewed periodically under these guidelines.

The relevant local authority/authorities plays a key role in the management of the four sites, despite significant national differences in legislation and the alignment of national and regional planning and development structures. The management of each of the sites is underwritten by a collaborative approach, involving relevant state and local authority agencies and communities. This is most explicitly and clearly structured by the site partnership agreement that oversees the protection, conservation, presentation and sustainability of the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site.

The success of the management approach is that it is an active

process, with objectives and indicators of success set out formally in a plan, carried out in the form of an ongoing, annually reviewed programme of work with staff and resources guaranteed on a multi-year basis by key national and regional funding agencies.

In terms of governance in each case a small professional team support the implementation and delivery of a management plan. Their work is overseen by a steering or partnership group who develop the management plan and set policy. In some instances a management group oversees the professional team with delegated decision-making authority from a steering group overseeing the professional team and reporting to the steering committee.

The management practices identified at the comparator sites and policy frameworks for best practice management such as the resource manual on *Managing Cultural World Heritage* (UNESCO 2013) provide the basis for building a suitable sustainable management system for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and more broadly the indicators that could be used as part of a toolkit for integrated management of conservation management and sustainable tourism.

5.4 Towards Policy Choice: The Burren/ Cliffs of Moher Geopark

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark LIFE programme has carried out an ambitious range of initiatives under three different work packages. This work has been co-ordinated by a Steering Committee which has in effect provided a management structure. As one of the partners states the LIFE programme has proved to be a successful device in moving the major stakeholders towards a single vision in thinking about the management of the Burren. But with the programme's completion at the end of 2017 the question arises as to how the BCOM Geopark will continue to deliver and sustain the aims and objectives of the programme?

It is clear from the views of partners in the LIFE programme expressed in Part 2 that there is a demonstrated need for a suitable management structure to continue. While the vision for integrated management is developing it is still very much a work in progress. The review in Part 3 has indicated that there are a range of major policy issues to be addressed in following through on specific actions.

At the same time under the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks the BCOM Geopark is required to have a

management plan that provides for the social and economic needs local populations, protects the landscape in which they live and conserves their cultural identity. The County Clare Development Plan provides a policy endorsement of this requirement by committing to support the retention and revalidation of UNESCO Global Geopark designation.

A logical cohesion of the County Clare Development plan and the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark would be the formal incorporation of the UNESCO Global Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark management plan into the next iteration of the County Development Plan and its addition as an appendix to the County Development Plan. This approach has been taken in County Meath where the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site Management Plan has been formally incorporated into the County Development Plan.

It is also a stated objective of the County Development Plan (CDP 14.23) to collaborate with landowners, local communities and other relevant stakeholders to achieve World Heritage Site status for the sites on the Irish Tentative List in County Clare. One of these is the Burren. Clare and Galway County Councils are currently preparing a Technical Evaluation that will be used to assess the Outstanding Universal Value of the Burren and its potential to be designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A functioning management system to ensure the safeguarding of the nominated property is mandatory in the consideration of the nomination of a property for inscription on the World Heritage List.

Hence putting in place an appropriate management system for the Geopark is the key policy choice that the partners in the GeoparkLIFE face.

Managing Cultural World Heritage (UNESCO 2013) provides the details of a widely used, globally recognised framework for defining heritage management systems (**Table**). This is seen as consisting of three categories; **elements**, **processes** and **results**, each three components

Elements: Legal framework, institutional framework and resources

Processes: Planning, implementation and monitoring

Results: Outcomes, outputs and improvements in the management system

Elements

In the case of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark the **legal framework** is provided by its recognition in the County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023. Under the Local Government Act

(2001) the plan is an agreed blueprint for the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of County Clare. The CDP aligns that blueprint with EU and national legislative and policy framework. The objective in the CDP to support the Geopark and recognition of its role and impact provides the critical link between the legal framework and the framework of its designation as a UNESCO Global Geopark with the attached Operational Guidelines (0000). Clare County Council is also the **institution** which gives form to the organizational needs and decision-making of the BCOM Geopark. Alongside other funding streams; **currently the critical one being the EU through the GeoparkLIFE programme, other sources?** Clare Council provides the **resources** which are used to make the Geopark operational. The resource allocation is primarily through supporting a small professional Geopark team.

Processes

The framework of elements facilitate the **planning, implementation** and **monitoring** of actions to deliver results which guarantee the conservation and management of sites and the Burren landscape, and their associated values in a sustainable way. The processes are what provide the policy choice and shift from a plan-based, static approach to one that is dynamic, process-based and reviewed and revised on an on-going basis. It is clear from the GeoparkLIFE programme review of policy that the only effective approach to achieve integrated management is a partnership approach. In the case of the BCOM the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee provides a model that could be transformed into a partnership structure under the leadership of Clare County Council that would;

- develop a management plan
- set policy for the Geopark
- oversee implementation of the management plan

To ensure the effectiveness of this governance structure it should be underwritten by a formal, written partnership agreement.

The plan would be implemented by the professional team and advisory or working groups. This enables a wide group of people to be involved in the process of Geopark management and the working groups would assist in helping partners to work towards agreed aims and priorities. Actions would be set out in the management plan with agreed timelines and resource allocation. This would be monitored on an annual basis and reviewed in detail on a 4 year cycle (to match with the revalidation process of UNESCO Global Geoparks). The current programme of work under the GeoparkLIFE programme could be seen as providing a pilot phase of implementation and monitoring.

Need to involve communities, capacity- building.
Monitoring systems already in place – e.g. B2

Results

Achieving the specific **outcomes** sought for the BCOM UNESCO Global Geopark, local communities and all relevant local, regional and national actors and authorities would be the ultimate aim of the of the BCOM Geopark management system. **Outputs** represent the actions, services or products produced by the management system.

A **management system improves** benefits from assessing progress against targets (outputs) and broader objectives (outcomes) and then analyzing discrepancies and their causes. Improving a management system depends on evaluating it: are the three elements supporting the three heritage processes and delivering target outputs and achieving all desired outcomes? The information derived from monitoring outputs and outcomes by means of indicators helps to define and future processes of the management system.

As a starting point the criteria set out in the Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks provide a core set of outcomes for a first iteration of a Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark management system.

5.5 Towards policy choice: Indicators of successful integration of policy in management

Best practice and preferred model.

Are there indicators of success?

Can this be transferred in the form of a toolkit?

OR – are policy contexts at national/local level the real driver

Might be worth looking at the models in that UN integrated environmental management module?

Comment – needs resources, people on the ground working to a system

There are existing tool kits – for example Enhancing our Heritage Toolkit (IUCN).