



**LIFE11 ENV/IE/922**

## Minutes of Meeting

<b>Project</b>	Geopark LIFE Partners Meetings	
<b>Date</b>	2/4/2014	
<b>Location</b>	Burren College of Art	

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Person</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Abbr.</b>
Apologies	Pat O'Connor	Ex-Geological Survey of Ireland	POC
Apologies	Sarah Gatley	Geological Survey of Ireland	SG
Apologies	Michael Fitzsimons	Fáilte Ireland	MF
Yes	Flan Quilligan	Fáilte Ireland	FQ
Apologies	Carleton Jones	NUIG	CJ
Yes	Gabriel Cooney	UCD	GC
Apologies	Beatrice Kelly	Heritage Council	BK
Apologies	Margaret Keane	National Monuments Service	MK
Yes	Christine Grant	National Monuments Service	CHG
Yes	Hugh Carey	National Monuments Service	HC
Apologies	Paul McMahan	Office of Public Works	PMcM
Yes	Ken Curley	Office of Public Works	KC
Yes	Enda Mooney	National Parks & Wildlife Service	EM
Yes	Emma Glanville	National Parks & Wildlife Service	EG
Yes	Katherine Webster	Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience	KW
Yes	Christy Sinclair	Burren Ecotourism Network	CS
Yes	Richard Morrison	Burrenbeo Trust	RM
No	Michael McGrath	Farmer Representative	MMcG
Apologies	Ger Dollard	Clare County Council	GD
Yes (Chair)	Monica Meehan	Clare County Council	MM
No	Caroline Balfe	Clare County Council	CB
Yes	Congella McGuire	Clare County Council	CMcG
Yes	Shane Casey	Clare County Council	SC
Apologies	Helen Quinn	Clare County Council	HQ
No	Tracey Duffy	Clare County Council	TD
Yes	Joan Tarmey	Clare County Council	JT
Yes	Ristard Cronin	Clare County Council	RC
Yes	Brian Callinan	Consultant	BC
Yes	Carol Gleeson	Geopark/Clare County Council	CG
Yes	Eamon Doyle	Burren Geopark Geologist	ED
Yes	Tina O'Dwyer	Geopark LIFE Tourism Co-ordinator	TO'D
Apologies	Siobain O'Brien	GeoparkLIFE Admin support	SO'B
Yes	Laura Cotter	GeoparkLIFE Communications Co-ordinator	LC

<p><b>1.0</b></p>	<p><b>Review of Minutes</b>  Minutes Accepted. Proposed by Katherine Webster and Seconded by Tina O'Dwyer  Joining us was Mary Hawkes Green, Director of the Burren College of Art and Advisor to the GeoparkLIFE project.</p>	
<p><b>2.0</b></p>	<p><b>Geopark Progress Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CG introduced Laura Cotter as the new Communications coordinator</li> <li>- KW enquired about the Tourism for tomorrow award and when we'd hear the results. CG confirmed winners would be notified prior to travel and highlighted the benefits each nominated destination receives</li> <li>- EM asked about Burren Signage Plan and FQ confirmed that we can't speak publicly about it just yet but it is signed off and approved</li> <li>- KW asked about a target date completion date for analysis of coach tourism part of the transtourism project. CG confirmed that it is being amalgamated with the LIFE programme and that the deadline has been extended to end of this summer to capture this tourist season's data.  KW confirmed that there has been a shift towards coach tourism at the Cliffs from their own analysis.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b>LIFE Administrative Matters</b>  CG reinforced the importance of time sheets.</p>	
	<p><b>Geopark LIFE Action B1 Tourism Enterprises</b></p> <p><b>The Burren Tourism Story event</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TO'D gave an overview of the Burren tourism story event that was held in the pavilion in Lisdoonvarna in March and the background to it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o The event showcased the tourism products that have been developed by the network for the Burren.</li> <li>o The event reflected all the work the network had undertaken in the winter in terms of training and cooperation and it showed the economic value and benefit that has been bought</li> <li>o 22 new businesses joined the network during the winter and it was a chance for all the BEN member old and new to network and present as a united front</li> <li>o KW highlighted that the event was great for the stakeholders and consolidated their work over the winter and brought it to the point where they can speak to the visitor</li> <li>o A number of new membership enquires came from the event</li> </ul> </li> <li>- TO'D took the group through the new products (the Activity trail, food trail and the supporting events, the walking programme, the hostel hop and the heritage trails) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Tina highlighted the important elements of the sustainable transport elements to the walking programme and the hostel hop and the sustainability of being guided by a member of the network</li> </ul> </li> <li>- CG, TO'D and KW updated the group on the feedback from the B.E.N members regarding network membership; the target is 100 businesses,</li> </ul>	

	<p>now at 49 with 1 partner and many friends that are still in the process of being confirmed for this year; figure will be well into the 60's. The group is developing a destination lead mentality through being in the network</p> <p><b>B.E.N Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TO'D advised that all of the B.E.N members had undertaken training in the areas of waste, water and energy management, leave no trace and a number of guest speakers had provided content through LAPN (Local Authority Prevention Network working with Environmental Protection Agency)</li> <li>- JT stated that the trainings given to date only scratching the surface of environmental education, it's an ongoing learning and BEN members are starting at different points. A lot of expertise in the group in different areas is coming through. SEI have some communities grant coming up and now the business have an energy action plan and could put in an action plan to take advantage of grants as a group. Also noted that the process is not asking business enough and we haven't approached training from a statutory point of view.</li> <li>- TO'D advised not to underestimate the effort required from the BEN members in engaging with the Code of Practice, that we are requiring a lot from them environmentally, that there are destinations asking less while presenting themselves as 'green', and we need to encourage and promote the commitment and effort of the members to the process itself.</li> <li>- KW/TO'D noted that universities are undertaking studies on the network and its work in this area (UL, and universities in Canada and Germany), university vetted reports on our efforts is valuable for GeoparkLIFE.</li> </ul> <p><b>B.E.N Initiatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EM enquired if there is there a discount scheme between BEN businesses for referrals</li> <li>- TO'D responded that business shied away from money discount and more were more interested in offering added value</li> <li>- KW spoke about how the network have talked about tracking referrals but are encountering difficulty with being able to do this. But a university group are looking at this and coming up with a model for BEN to use.</li> <li>- CG/TO'D highlighted how there is major interest from the group in sustainable transport and supporting the national park bus; that SO'B collated a lot of sustainable transport data on the web site and app and that training on Sustainable Transport with Roisin Garvey from An Taisce Green Schools has produced lots of actions and a BEN sub-group has been created for this.</li> </ul> <p><b>ETIS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TO'D gave a presentation on ETIS as a framework, not a solution. The presentation is available on the GeoparkLIFE web site link: <a href="http://www.burrengeopark.ie/geopark-life/partner-meetings/">http://www.burrengeopark.ie/geopark-life/partner-meetings/</a></li> </ul> <p>CG is promoting the ETIS system to the European Geopark Network</p>	
	<p><b>Geopark LIFE Action B2 Habitats &amp; Monuments</b></p> <p><b>Project Overview</b> CG began this section with a project overview of GeoparkLIFE project;</p>	

- B1 is progressing well and with modifications should become a transferrable model; it has a very focused programme and the full co-operation of BEN and the Environment Section of CCC, is very well co-ordinated by TO'D, but as noted by JT, has involved a lot more focused attention from CCC Env section as partners than was initially envisaged.
- B2 and B3 requires more focused attention from all stakeholders in the programme. Most agencies are experiencing changes internally and it may be opportune for all agencies to now reassess their aspirations for the project and their input into it. Recommended a facilitated workshop where all stakeholders would agree a vision for the overall project and what each agency would like to achieve through the various actions, and how this would affect the overall development of the Geopark as a sustainable destination. The key to the development of these aspects was the level of commitment to engaging with the development and implementation of the work programmes by the relevant agencies.
- Much discussion ensued which would take pages to record; however the agreed outcomes are as follows:
  - Dedicated working groups will be created to deal with the 3 main actions (B1, B2 and B3)
  - Project Management will make recommendations to the working groups and the results will be brought back to the Steering Committee for approval.

#### **CG presented B2 proposal**

- CG presented the current B2 proposal (attached) which generated a lot of discussion and for expediency, only the outcomes are recorded:
- The final selection of demonstration sites and their priority are as follows:
  - Zone 1:** Blackhead/Fanore (Flaggy Shore will be monitored under the FI Wild Atlantic Way Programme)
  - Zone 2:** (1) Aillwee Cave (2) Poul nabrone (3) Carran Church (4) An Rath/Cahermore (Noted: as discussions with landowners at Carran Church and An Rath are ongoing it is still uncertain if a programme of works can be carried out. However, survey and monitoring can proceed)
  - Zone 3:** (1) National Park (2) Slieve Carran Nature Reserve

This brings to total 7 sites, as per the original application.

It was agreed that survey and monitoring at these sites would commence as soon as possible.

Three aspects of survey and monitoring are required:

1. Establishing baselines and condition reports for each site; work to be carried out by experts in association with the relevant agencies
2. Monitoring of visitor impacts to these locations; templates to be produced in association with relevant agencies and monitoring to be carried out by volunteers and/or students.
3. Economic and Social surveys of the impact of tourism in the 3 zones.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CG also proposed that the project considers the integration of tourism/visitor impacts as part of the scoring criteria for the Burren Farming for Conservation programme (formally BurrenLIFE), utilising the farmland associated with the Demonstration Sites as pilots. This proposal (initially put forward by Brendan Dunford at a consultation meeting with CG) met with general agreement; certainly worth assessing.</li> <li>- Also agreed to liaise with the Rural Recreation Officer Eoin Hogan to get advice on monitoring of visitors on walks and counters. CG proposed that he join the steering committee.</li> <li>- Agreed to try to develop survey templates through Direct Personnel contributions and utilise External Expertise for carrying out the monitoring.</li> <li>- Agreed to collate existing data on each location and assess the resources required to fill in the gaps in knowledge. Each partner would send on any existing relevant data and what information they want from each site by April 11<sup>th</sup>.</li> <li>- GC noted that a role of UCD in the project would be the collation of data and the development of a system for future input. There are models in existence for measuring. Queried if we look for same data from each site. Also noted the need to train whoever was to be used to monitor and survey.</li> <li>- EM advised on assessing the availability, skills and commitment of volunteers</li> <li>- Agreed that comparable data would be most beneficial, from both heavily and rarely visited sites, core issues may exist for all sites, and each site may have its distinctive issue that would need to be recorded.</li> <li>- KC/CHG recommended that monitoring footfall begins as soon as possible</li> <li>- Draft templates to be produced by the end of April and circulated to relevant partners for comment/approval.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> CG to circulate email tomorrow (3<sup>rd</sup> April) and answers to be returned by 11<sup>th</sup> April. Draft templates to be produced for comment by end of April.</p> <p><b>Agreements reached</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreed sites</li> <li>- Agreed need a template around monitoring</li> <li>- Agreed feedback to template by 11<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>- Agreed to collect baseline data</li> <li>- CG to produce draft monitoring templates for review by end of April</li> <li>- CG to produce and circulate guidance on surveys.</li> </ul>	
3.0	<p><b>Geopark LIFE Action B3 Conservation Management</b></p> <p>CG provided an update on the B3 proposals, which is the outcome of further consultation with a number of partners and stakeholders (attached). Reiterated that the key objective of B3 <i>is to develop the skills base of all stakeholders in the understanding, management and conservation of natural and cultural heritage and to reinforce Actions B1 and B2.</i></p>	

	<p>GC proposed that B2 sites be integrated into the B3 programme as much as possible.</p> <p>CG elaborated on the proposed programmes, including proposals involving Clare Pilgrim Group (Mapping pilgrimage sites), Brothers of Charity (Universal Access), Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns (Habitat Mapping), Burren Farming for Conservation (utilising farm structures as interpretative mediums, and a farm repair meitheal during the Winterage Festival involving farmers and tourism businesses) and BEN (Adopt a Road proposal). CG also outlined the shift away from a formal taught/accredited course towards Community Knowledge Initiative approach which focuses more on community based projects and the learning that can be gained through these.</p> <p>CG/TO'D clarified that <b>Training the Trainer</b> would be used to develop the training skills of experts and as a useful mechanism of strengthening the mentoring role of businesses with each other in areas where it is feasible, such as Leave No Trace. However, the waste/ energy topic requires expertise and we cannot expect the businesses to be trainers in these areas.</p> <p>CG clarified the Visitor centre surveys as a review of the visitor centre's effectiveness in communicating, in a positive way, the conservation ethos.</p> <p>Michael Lynch's role as FMA should be reinforced under the Conservation Skills programme.</p> <p>General concern was expressed over the scale and quantity of the items proposed in the programme. GC suggested focusing on one item per category.</p> <p>KW suggested that the committee be asked to rank the proposed programmes according to importance.</p> <p>Agreed to circulate the proposed programme to all partners and request ranking before the 11<sup>th</sup> April.</p> <p>CG to set up meetings of sub groups on B2 and B3 in May</p>	
	<p><b>Next Meetings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Next meetings in May to be focused workshops on B2 and B3</b></li> <li>- <b>Next steering committee Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June</b></li> </ul>	