



LIFE11 ENV/IE/922

Minutes of Meeting

Project	Geopark LIFE Partners Meetings	
Date	21/10/2015	
Location	Civic Room in Ennis Town Council. Buttermarket Building, Drumbiggle, Ennis.	

Attendance	Person	Organisation	Abbr.
Apologies	Ger Dollard	Clare County Council	GD
Yes (Chair)	Monica Meehan	Clare County Council	MM
Apologies	Helen Quinn	Clare County Council	HQ
Yes	Risteard Ua Croinin	Clare County Council	RUC
Apologies	Congella McGuire	Clare County Council	CMcG
Yes	Tracey Duffy	Clare County Council	TD
Yes	Karen Foley	Clare County Council	JT
Yes	Sarah Gatley	Geological Survey of Ireland	SG
Apologies	Pat O'Connor	Ex-Director Geological Survey of Ireland	POC
Yes	Michael Fitzsimons	Fáilte Ireland	MF
Yes	Gabriel Cooney	UCD	GC
Yes	Joanne Gaffery	UCD	JG
Apologies	Beatrice Kelly	Heritage Council	BK
Apologies	Margaret Keane	National Monuments Service	MK
Apologies	Christine Grant	National Monuments Service	CHG
Apologies	Hugh Carey	National Monuments Service	HC
Apologies	Ken Curley	Office of Public Works	KC
Yes	John O'Brien	Office of Public Works	JO'B
Yes	Enda Mooney	National Parks & Wildlife Service	EM
Apologies	Emma Glanville	National Parks & Wildlife Service	EG
Apologies	Katherine Webster	Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience	KW
Apologies	Christy Sinclair	Burren Ecotourism Network	CS
Yes	Martin Waldron	Burren Ecotourism Network	MW
Apologies	Richard Morrison	Burrenbeo Trust	RM
No	Michael McGrath	Farmer Representative	MMcG
Apologies	Eoin Hogan	RRO, Clare Local Development Company	EH
Yes	Chris Corlett	Cultural Tourism Officer, Dept. AHG	CC
Yes	Brian Callinan	Consultant	BC
Yes	Tina O'Dwyer	B1 Co-ordinator	TO'D
Yes	Eamon Doyle	Geopark Geologist	ED
Yes	Laura Cotter	Communications Co-ordinator	LC
Yes	Zena Hocht	B2 Co-ordinator	ZH
Yes	Carol Gleeson	Manager	CG

1.0	<p>Welcome and Opening Introductions</p> <p>MM advised of apologies from Ken Curley, Michelle O'Dea, Eoin Hogan, Gareth Ruane, Beatrice Kelly, Katherine Webster.</p>	
2.0	<p>Review of Minutes</p> <p>Minutes of previous meeting accepted. Proposed by GC, seconded by BC</p> <p>-</p>	
3.0	<p>Action B1 Tourism Enterprises</p> <p>TOD gave an update on the progress in Action B1 covering; Code of Practice developments, Developments in Resource Planning and Implementation and feedback and proposals from working group. Full report available here: http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B1-Progress-Report-October-2015.pdf</p> <p>TOD confirmed the next phase for the Code of Practice programme was moving to a mentoring system with the mentors being members of the Burren Ecotourism Network who have completed the Code of Practice Training programme and have excelled in a particular area. With that the focus for the next year will be on refining the toolkit, refining templates, developing the mentors and the Geopark manual.</p> <p>CG informed the group that the mentoring programme could reduce some of the costs of running the training programme for future businesses.</p> <p>The group discussed how many people per business engaged with the Code of Practice training programme and TOD confirmed that this year the focus was on getting more staff involved in the network training.</p> <p>TOD provided an update on the strategic planning process that has been undertaken with the Burren Ecotourism Network.</p> <p>TOD confirmed that the target is to maintain the current number of businesses in the Network and focus on resource planning for both the environmental and economic impact variables. The environmental focus is on developing the mentors for the code of practice and the economic focus is on making the marketing and product development.</p> <p>TOD informed the group of the marketing plans for the coming year which include making activity a strong story along with developing a plan for attractions to be the interpretation centres of the Geopark. TOD informed the group that familiarisation trips for the businesses staff have been made a priority to ensure they are well prepared and confident to refer to the Ask me about the Geopark; a campaign to train staff in the basics of the Geopark concept and main features.</p> <p>LC played some videos that had been made to showcase the impact of the code of practice and show best practice in implementation. Full suite of case studies and videos available here: http://www.burrengeopark.ie/community-business/the-geopark-code-of-practice/</p>	

4.0**Geopark LIFE Action B3 Conservation Management**

JG gave an update on action B3 and each of the 6 case studies. Full report available here:

<http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B3-Progress-Report-October-20151.pdf>

JG gave an update to the group on Adopt a Hedgerow informing the group that it is run by the Burren Ecotourism Network and supports the B1 programme. The initiative began last April (2015) with 25 businesses taking part and was a great success. 2016 activity is planned to coincide with the CCC spring clean programme. The conservation advocacy committee within BEN that are responsible for the organisation of the programme are currently in a strategic planning process to determine how to run the project independently of GeoparkLIFE going forward.

JG also gave an update on Meitheal which is also a BEN conservation initiative that supports the B1 programme. JG informed the group that the 2015 activity is scheduled for 6th November 2015 and will take place in Carron, where BEN members will cut back hazel on farmland that provides access to walkers and is also a breeding habitat for rare butterflies. Burrenbeo Trust will provide co-ordination and expert advice.

JG updated on the Ballyvaughan Tidy Towns biodiversity project. The GeoparkLIFE project funded wildlife and biodiversity survey which the group are using in many community initiatives and the impact will be much wider than just the Tidy Towns group. The group are only starting into full cycle now and we will be working with them on the development of a toolkit as this cycle begins. JG informed the group that the Ballyvaughan Development group are looking to use the tidy towns competition to motivate the community to change the mindset on biodiversity and that winning the competition isn't a priority. The group did receive positive feedback from the competition on their biodiversity project.

JG then gave an update on An Cabhail Mor, informing the group that a tender is currently under development for a conservation engineers report and the recommendations from this will direct where the project will go from here. JG confirmed that no training has been rolled out as yet as a lot of preparatory work had to happen in advance and training is expected to be rolled out in spring 2016. JG commented that it has taken some time to get to this point and as a result of the lengthy process there has been some frustration amongst the community group.

JG updated the group that Lisdoonvarna Failte has completed a tender for a feasibility study and are waiting on confirmation of funding to complete this process.

JG gave an update on the final case study of the Lisdoonvarna Schools Hydrology Project. The project ran quite well but the litter and waste management section of the training programme is already covered in primary schools quite well with An Taisce Green Schools training. JG commented that a gap in secondary school environmental knowledge has been identified. There are many programmes specifically targeted at primary level but not secondary. JG highlighted that there is

	<p>an opportunity to develop a programme that could fit into the Junior cycle curriculum of CSPE.</p> <p>CG informed the group that Tiernan Henry of NUIG has approached the Geopark about doing a ground water project as part of the LIFE project which would be focused on a community approach to groundwater catchment management. The groundwater in the Burren is classified as extremely vulnerable and the project aims to get people to think about their groundwater catchment area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TD commented that a new office to be established by the Dept of the environment this year in relation to water is looking to engage with communities by hydrometric areas. Recruitment is ongoing with the target of beginning engagement with communities next year and TD believed the new office was looking for pilot projects. - TD also mentioned that the EPA has established a water framework catchment management office and part of their work is to liaise with community groups and there could be opportunities to tie in. - CG commented that there is a lot of crossover and appears to be lots of opportunities to tie in with the hydrology project that is worth exploring further. <p>GC provided an update on the process he is undertaking to look at policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GC confirmed that he was interviewed 13 members of the steering committee in relation as part of his policy review and informed the group that there is always going to be conflict and perceptions that differ depending on the area one works for. - GC also commented that there will need to be maintenance of the partnership arrangements that have built up through the GeoparkLIFE project to help the policy conversation to continue once the project completes. The critical articulation in terms of policy will be with the case studies in B3 and B2 and how they work out. 	
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Action B2 Habitats and Monuments</p> <p>ZH provided an update on action B2 by going through each of the seven demonstration sites and updated the group on what has been happening at each of the sites. ZH presented the issues that have been identified by site and the steps that have been taken to date to deal with the identified issues and looked at what is going to happen in terms of future management. ZH also identified and presented issues that are common to all sites. Full report available here: http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B2-Progress-Report-October-2015.pdf</p> <p>A discussion took place around the access point for An Rath / Cahermore the proposed car parking development and the detailed proposal required for the landowner. It is hoped that this project can be progressed. Feedback is awaited from the OPW.</p> <p>ZH raised the question in relation to data management, informing the group of the wealth of information that has been gathered during the assessment of each of the sites and the questions that have to be considered now is how we manage it and who manages it into the future post GeoparkLIFE</p>	

	<p>The group discussed the parking at Blackhead and the possibility of identifying where walkers are coming from.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EM questioned if it would be possible not to facilitate walkers with layby parking. - ZH highlighted that the majority of walkers visiting the Blackhead Cashel are long distance walkers and those who generally use the laybys only walk short distances. - CG raised the issue of traffic management in the area and confirmed that the laybys are there to help the flow of traffic and not necessarily as carpark spaces. - CG highlighted that a traffic management plan undertaken in 2008 highlighted the importance of the pull in / layby areas. <p>A discussion took place around the issue of Interpretation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CC felt these signage issues lie with Dept and OPW for both onsite and online interpretation for sites in their ownership and cautioned that we run the risk of overdoing interpretation at sites like Poul nabrone, which has a lot of signage. - ZH informed the group that a signage audit would be appropriate to establish what is in place already and that an audit would inform a comprehensive and appropriate signage plan. - MM highlighted that any audit done through the LIFE programme would in consultation with all partners - CG commented that there is a need to come up with a template of interpretation and that it would then be the responsibility of the site owner. She suggested it would be good to have a common look for all signage and include universal design as a component. - BC informed the group that an international toolkit to manage integrated sites is a requirement from LIFE point of view - GC confirmed that integrated management ties into signage - CG highlighted that the group has an opportunity to use the demonstration sites to develop an integrated management toolkit including interpretation. 	
6.0	<p>National Disability Authority (NDA) presentation on Universal Design and proposed workshop for partners</p> <p>Dr Gerard Craddock, Chief Executive of the Centre for Excellence for Universal Design (CEUD) and Shane Hogan, Senior Standards Officer of the National Disability Council presented to the group on 'what is universal design' and how it applies to the Burren. Presentation available on the Geopark website http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/NDA-Presentation.pdf</p> <p>A workshop on Universal Design is planned for January 25, and the presenters outlined what this workshop would involve for the sites in the Burren</p> <p>The NDA requested suggestions from the group of what they would like to see included in the workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ZH suggested help on how to use / produce easy read publications - ED suggested looking at how to deal with accessibility without damaging 	

	<p>sites and taking into account that much of the land is working farmland.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JO'B requested suggestions on things that could be implemented within a limited budget - ZH suggested using the 7 demonstration sites to guide the workshop <p>The workshop will be scheduled for January 25, 2016.</p>	
<p>7.0</p>	<p>ETIS (European Tourism Indicator System)</p> <p>TOD gave a presentation to the group on ETIS, the purpose behind the system and summarised it as a framework that is designed to enable more informed and better group decision making at a destination level. It is also a relevant framework for data analysis management and measurement.</p> <p>TOD proposed the GeoparkLIFE Steering Group trial the framework using just two criteria that area are relevant to the LIFE project; Universal Access and Sustainable Transport. these two would aid the development of a framework for collaborative decision-making and identify baselines, benchmarks, action plans and responsibilities. A process like this would enhance appreciation and understanding of how destination decisions are made and the trade-offs that have to be considered.</p> <p>TOD informed the group that data is currently being collected on the economic side, with very little on environmental. A residents survey is about to be undertaken. Ideally, collated data from a variety of sources would be brought to the steering committee for collective decision-making but this is not currently happening. The process would involve agreeing targets and working collectively towards these. This is a key goal of GeoparkLIFE and ETIS may provide the framework for this.</p> <p>The group discussed if using the ETIS framework was required by LIFE. BC confirmed that a monitoring system is required. TOD confirmed that the ETIS framework per se is not required by LIFE but that the European Commission is enthusiastic about incorporating it into this LIFE programme. ,</p> <p>The group discussed how ETIS could be used in the GeoparkLIFE project with the suggestion of two areas; Universal Access or Sustainable Transport and the highlighted the need to establish baselines and set targets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TD raised the concern of the level of on the ground work and resource requirements - TOD confirmed that the process would require meetings initially to establish what information is held and then time would need to be spent collecting data and reporting on it and suggested a central collator/facilitator as a data manager who would have a project wide view. , - CG highlighted ETIS could be a good method of strategic decision making and informing policy and suggested teasing the framework out in this project as there is a need to get maximum value out of the data already collected. - MM suggested TOD look at what the suggested indicators might be before we continue. Using the examples of transport and access that would give the group a better idea of what's involved so a more informed discussion could happen at the next meeting. 	

		TOD to revert with proposal
8.0	<p>Sustainable Transport</p> <p>Coach drivers follow up CG gave an update on the work KW and the Cliffs of Moher are doing in relation to the coach driver's survey and the capacity management measurements they have put in place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Cliffs of Moher have implemented a 50% discount for coaches outside of Peak hours - KW has been working with the National Transport Authority to ensure coaches are sticking to the license agreements issued <p>CG highlighted that a number of actions have been identified to enable the better management of coach tourism but that implementing these actions will be the responsibility of the manager of each of the sites.</p> <p>CG highlighted the need to talk to the businesses involved and the need to balance the economic impact against the environmental issues and the quality of the visitor experience which is being eroded at the Cliffs and in Doolin at particular times of the day.</p> <p>CG is meeting with the businesses in Doolin to discuss these issues with the businesses that are seeing good economic impact and the businesses that are concerned about the environmental impact</p> <p>Coach Clinics LC informed the group that the Geopark had taken a stand at the Cliffs of Moher visitor centre on 5 days in September when the cliffs staff were also holding clinics to speak with drivers and guides. The Geopark engaged directly with a number of drivers and guides to gauge their knowledge of the Geopark, Leave no Trace and to establish if there were gaps in their interpretation of the region.</p> <p>LC informed the group that the clinics revealed that while the drivers and guides had good top line level of knowledge of the topics there were gaps.</p> <p>LC informed the group that she will be sending email bulletins to target this group which will include news, interpretation snippets and will reinforce the Leave No Trace principles</p>	
9.0	<p>Data collection and analysis of surveys etc to date</p> <p>People Counters ED gave a presentation on the people counter programme, informing the group of the locations, how they work and the type of data they produce.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ED highlighted some of the trends that have been seen since installation a year ago. - ED highlighted the issues and challenges that have been encountered which have included vandalism, interpreting the data, how we need to account for animals and people walking side by side - ED informed the group that the Lisdoonvarna secondary school is looking to do a young scientist project looking at factors that influence 	

	<p>the numbers and to come up with a correction pattern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ED informed the group that when drilling down into the data we can interpret trends. We have established good baseline data and we need to decide what to do with the data and who is going to monitor it. ED highlighted that the data can also inform the carrying capacity discussion. <p>Full report here: http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/GeoparkLIFE-People-Counters-Report-Sept-2015.pdf</p> <p>Heritage Map ZH provided an overview of the Heritage Councils Heritage Map Viewer which is an existing GIS map based system and informed the group that it is a type of planning tool similar to a destination management tool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ZH informed the group that there is already information in the existing Heritage Council system like the Clare boats survey but there are challenges as datasets can be in different digital formats and this causes problems in uploading data and with gaps in the data - ZH informed the group that the Heritage Council is currently reviewing the Map Viewer and developing an upgraded version. In agreement with GeoparkLIFE the new version will contain a 'Burren' specific section. The LIFE project will be working closely with the Heritage Council over the next year to accumulate, sort and input the data which has been collected with regard to the demonstration sites and geosites - ZH highlighted that the Burren is going to be the first region in the country with a specific area profile on the Heritage Map Viewer. <p>Smart open data CG provided an overview of what the project team achieved with the ETIS framework informing the group that a wireframe for an app was created around ETIS that enables us to input and analyse data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CG informed the group that there is more development work to be done on the programme and when complete we will have an online system that data could be keyed into. <p>MM requested that the group could have demos of the Smart Open Data and Heritage Map Viewer programmes at the next meeting</p> <p>CG informed the group that this slot on the agenda is to raise the awareness of the monitoring issues that the project is facing and the solutions that are being looked at. CG highlighted that the monitoring work has created an issue around the amount of data that has been collected and now needs to be interpreted, stating that it is a job in itself and we now need to identify what type of information will be collected, collated, managed and used. Proposal to be prepared for discussion</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>Action</p>
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10.0	<p>LIFE administrative matters;</p> <p>CG informed the group that NUIG are committed to the project CG informed the group that the mid-term report is now due and is being worked on CG requested time sheets be submitted MM informed the group that Siobain O'Brien has secured employment elsewhere and that Ryan O'Neill CO, Clare County Council will be in contact with them to follow up on timesheets etc. Co-operation would be appreciated.</p>	
11.0	<p>GeoparkLIFE and Irish Global Geoparks Committee Seminars</p> <p>CG reminded the group about the upcoming GeoparkLIFE seminar on the 19th November and the Irish Global Geoparks seminar which is being held in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark this year on the 20th November.</p> <p>SG informed the group that Prof. Patrick McKeever will be giving a keynote speech on the upcoming Geoparks UNESCO announcement</p>	
12.0	<p>Next Steering Group Meetings</p> <p>April 27th 2016</p>	