



LIFE11 ENV/IE/922

Minutes of Meeting

Project	Geopark LIFE Partners Meetings	
Date	27/04/2016	
Location	The Farmacyard, Corofin, Co. Clare	

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	Ristead Ua Croinin	Clare County Council	RUC
Apologies	Congella McGuire	Clare County Council	CMcG
Yes	Tracey Duffy	Clare County Council	TD
Apologies	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
Yes	Ken Curley	Office of Public Works	KC
Yes	Enda Mooney	National Parks & Wildlife Service	EM
Apologies	Emma Glanville	National Parks & Wildlife Service	EG
Yes	Katherine Webster	Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience	KW
Yes	Christy Sinclair	Burren Ecotourism Network	CS
Apologies	Martin Waldron	Burren Ecotourism Network	MW
Apologies	Richard Morrison	Burrenbeo Trust	RM
Yes	Frank O'Grady	Kilinaboy Historical and Heritage Society	FOG
Yes	Eoin Hogan	RRO, Clare Local Development Company	EH
Apologies	Chris Corlett	Cultural Tourism Officer, Dept. AHG	CC
Yes	Brian Callinan	Consultant	BC
Yes	Niall Hughes	Burren Ecotourism Network	NH
Yes	Tiernan Henry	NUIG	TH
Yes	Suzanne Trehy	Faillte Ireland	ST
Yes	Zena Hctor	B2 Co-ordinator	ZH
Yes	Carol Gleeson	Manager	CG
Yes	Tina O'Dwyer	B1 Co-ordinator	TO'D
Yes	Laura Cotter	Communications Co-ordinator	LC

1.0	<p>Welcome and Opening Introductions</p> <p>MM informed the meeting of the noted apologies</p> <p>MM informed the meeting of new attendees to the steering committee meeting; Tiernan Henry, NUIG, Suzanne Trehy, Failte Ireland and Niall Hughes, Burren Ecotourism Network</p>	
2.0	<p>Review of Minutes</p> <p>Minutes of previous meeting were proposed by RUC and seconded by GC</p>	
3.0	<p>MAP Project overview and Update</p> <p>CG updated the group on an opportunity that has arisen through Michigan University MBA programme where a group of students were made available to do a study of the Geopark with the intention of providing a possible management plan for the Geopark AfterLIFE.</p> <p>CG informed the group that each LIFE project is required to have an AfterLIFE plan and stated that the report the students are compiling is very much an independent report. In their research the students are talking to all the stakeholders as well as considering other models of successful destinations and how other Geoparks operate.</p> <p>The final report is to be circulated to the steering committee for consideration.</p>	
4.0	<p>Action B1 Tourism Enterprises</p> <p>CG asked if any of the group had any questions in relation to the B1 report that had been circulated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KW informed the group that the FAM trip activity detailed in the report has received great feedback from her staff. The trips have been motivational for the staff and are achieving the results of spreading knowledge among frontline staff. <p>BC questioned whether the environmental impacts stage was easier to do than resource planning stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TOD informed the group that originally it had been proposed to do resources / business / strategic planning at an individual level; however through the experiences of the project it has been decided it would be more effective in GeoparkLIFE to do resource planning for the network as a whole. - TOD updated the group on the process undertaken over the autumn to develop a strategic plan. 	
5.0	<p>Action B2 Habitats and Monuments</p> <p>MM questioned if there has been any further update on An Rath / Cahermore</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ZH informed the group that the ecological screening is underway at the moment <p>Blackhead Cairn</p> <p>ZH informed the group that another project has begun since the B2 report was circulated, which is a community project to do some work on the Cairn at blackhead. ZH is working on the brief with CHG which will be going for 3 quotes as it will be under 5k. Once the quotes are received the project will go for ministerial consent and is expected to be up and running in September.</p> <p>Blackhead Laybys</p> <p>ZH informed the group that a technical survey for the Blackhead layby has been completed. Initially the project started out with 14 parking laybys and after an AA was done this was reduced to 10. Since then ZH has looked at the laybys in relations to habitats and limestone pavement, also an engineer is looking at the proposal in relation to sightlines and new regulations. The sightlines are proving to be a problem and it looks like the number of feasible layby's could be reduced to 5.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A discussion took place around the priority of the laybys – Are they to alleviate congestion and improve traffic flow or to facilitate visitor parking? - ZH informed the group that a decision will need to be made once all the reports are finalised, whether the project is economically viable. <p>Carran Church ZH gave an update on the Carran Church project. When the B2 report was circulated the project was still waiting for confirmation of funding to carryout building work, which has now been approved by Lynne Barrett of EU LIFE.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ZH informed the group that the next step in the process is a conservation engineers report for a method statement before a ministerial grant can be sought. - ZH also informed the group that a number of other procedures need to be followed before work can be undertaken <p>Poulnabronne Sanitary Solutions TD gave an overview on the discussion report she prepared of options for sanitary solutions for visitors to the Poulnabronne Dolmen. The report also includes a review on existing sanitary services within the project area.</p> <p>A discussion took place around the different options the report investigated and the regulations, assessment process, impacts, and maintenance requirements of providing toilet facilities at the site or at a nearby business.</p> <p>The group concluded that toilets should not be placed at Poulnabronne and that an integrated management plan is required for the site.</p>	
6.0	<p>Action B3 Conservation Management</p> <p>MM requested if there were any updates since the update report was circulated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JG informed the group that there had been some confusion around the adopt a hedgerow signage updating the group that a desire of the initiative is to have temporary signage around the scheme with the group involved looking to put up temporary signage for the 6-month period between their two conservation events, which take place at the beginning and the end of the tourism season. The group is liaising with the County Council and will work out the signage requirements on an advisory basis. <p>A discussion took place around the integration of the different programmes and the challenge of reporting on the integration of policies considering there is no join up between some policies and a clash between policies in certain areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GC confirmed that he will be making suggestions around recommendations in terms of the integration of policies. - BC suggested the creation of an abstract procedural manual based on the B3 case studies indicating in steps how to integrate the policies. 	
7.0	<p>Proposal on Collective Signage at Sites and Monuments</p> <p>ZH gave a presentation which looked at the current state of signage at the seven GeoparkLIFE demonstration sites. The presentation highlighted that there are various styles and types of signage in place from various stakeholders. The presentation noted that the signs are in various states of repair, with some signs being out of date and a duplication of information across a number of signs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ZH stated that it is evident we need integrated management of the signage and interpretation, that a number of signs need to be replaced and some removed. - ZH noted that there should be a review of the information that each of the stakeholders are putting out there to avoid duplication. - ZH questioned if the stakeholders were willing to come together to look at the issues around signage? 	

	<p>A discussion took place around the current signage, the history of why some were erected and the possibilities of integration. Issues like dual language and clutter were considered and the fact that each project requires a sign with no end date form removal indicated. The group also discussed national focused and destination focused signage as each of the agencies have national template rather than destination specific designs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CG emphasised the need to consider the aesthetic appearance of all the signs as well as the clutter at sites and proposed one single sign in which every stakeholder's logo would appear with the site owner taking priority location. - CG also proposed the option of agreeing on a particular ascetic for signage if one single sign wasn't an option and suggested the WAW sign as a possible template with each of the agencies keeping their branding. - ZH also highlighted the need to consider universal design principles when considering future signage <p>The group decided to look at the signage on a site by site basis starting with Fanore.</p>	Action
<p>8.0</p>	<p>Failte Ireland update on the Wild Atlantic Way</p> <p>ST presented to the group on the Wild Atlantic Way initiative which included the vision and the theme of the initiative, the target market, marketing and social media programmes, along with updates on the operational programme and the plans for 2016 with include the launch of a WAW passport and the development of WAW experiences.</p> <p>Full presentation available on the Geopark site http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Wild-Atlantic-Way-Briefing-Presentation-2016_Burren.pdf</p> <p>MF informed the group that Failte Ireland is launching a capital grants scheme with up to €105m available over five years. The small capital grants scheme is open to businesses with up to €200k available per application. The large capital grants scheme is for projects over €200k. Match funding will apply.</p> <p>MF updated on Failte Ireland's environmental monitoring programme for the WAW which has included monitoring sites and trails. He informed the group that CAAS has been awarded the tender to monitor the sites and trails on the WAW for 2016 and that all reports are available on the Failte Ireland website.</p> <p>A discussion took place around possible over success and too many visitors to iconic sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ST and MF confirmed that FI are looking at the regionality and seasonality of traffic on the WAW. They are looking to push the traffic out with the development of experiences that will hold people in particular areas and thus spreading the traffic beyond iconic locations. - MF confirmed that the Skelligs will be the first location where FI will be developing experience plans. There are 9 tourism locations within a 20-mile radius of the Skelligs that will benefit from experience development plans. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark will be the next area and Failte Ireland will be looking to see how they can help with experience development. 	
<p>9.0</p>	<p>Example of ETIS Decision Making Process; Sustainable Transport Presentation</p> <p>CG spoke to the group about integrated decision making and shared destination management. TOD had presented at a previous meeting on ETIS as a possible methodology and has prepared a proposal document on using ETIS as a method for collective decision making on transport and Universal Access.</p> <p>Full proposal document is available on the Geopark website at the link below: http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Collective-Approach-Transport.pdf</p>	

	<p>CG gave a presentation on the data that has been collected in the Geopark region in relation to transport. She reviewed the findings of the 2014 visitor's survey and the 2014 coach tourism study. The reports revealed statistics on modes of transport used in the Geopark, locations visitors travelled from, the most popular stopping sites along with economic and environmental impacts, traffic management and congestion issues, and capacity issues especially at the Cliffs of Moher and at Poul nabronne,</p> <p>KW gave a presentation on the visitor numbers and modes of transport used by visitors to the Cliffs of Moher highlighting the growth in the day tour visits since the visitor experience opened along with the change in starting point of the tours from Galway to Dublin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - KW informed the group that the aggressive marketing and the SEO activities of the tour operators operating out of Dublin has contributed heavily to the increase in day tours out of Dublin. She also highlighted capacity issues in Dublin for accommodation and profiled the type of visitor taking these day tours. - KW informed the group of some of the issues facing the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience at peak times, which include queues at ladies toilets, pressure on seating in the café and pressure on space in the coach park. - KW presented on the activities that are being put in place to deal with the issues highlighted, which include temporary toilet blocks at peak times, additional seating in the Café, extended opening hours in the summer months, incentives for advanced bookings and incentives for coach tours of reducing off-peak prices to encourage people to stay in the area. The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience is also liaising with the National Transport Authority to look at the licensing process for day tours. - KW informed the group that their customer surveys revealed that people who stay overnight in Co Clare has increased from 33% in 2014 to 36% in 2015 and highlighted that there is an issue with availability of accommodation in the area. <p>NH gave a presentation on the research carried out by the Burren Ecotourism Network including the observations on the behaviour of the coaches and the effect it is having on the village of Doolin.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NH spoke about the stop approval process that is required for a bus to visit a particular location, highlighting that for buses to stop in Doolin they are required to seek approval from Clare County Council. - NH informed the group that a number of stopping licenses for Doolin are up for renewal this year and it would be an ideal time for the Council to look at bus tour behaviour. - NH presented on the different types of visitors to the Geopark, the Fully Independent Traveller (FIT) traveller and the day tour visitors. He presented the impacts that growth in each segment would have highlighting that a 5% increase in coach tourism would supply 12 new jobs while a 5% increase in FIT travellers could create 217 jobs. <p>CG spoke to the group about the role of the National Transport Authority and the provisions of the license requirements that need to be met for a license to be issued.</p> <p>A discussion took place around the behaviour of the day tour operators, the National Transport Authority's license enforcement programme and the fact that the enforcement unit is relatively small.</p> <p>NH highlighted the need to put restrictions and conditions on the stop approvals and to revoke licenses if they are not being adhered to.</p> <p>CG pointed out that we are at a point where we have quite a bit of information on this issue including baseline information from the 2014 studies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TOD highlighted that the GeoparkLIFE steering committee is one of the only 	
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	<p>groups in the country that can take a collective approach to decision making on destination wide issues as all the stakeholders are around the same table at the same time. She highlighted that the group can make some recommendations that will be transferable to other destinations.</p> <p>It was proposed that a sub group would be established to look at the issue of coach tourism in Doolin in particular. The following members agreed to participate on the committee: Katherine Webster, Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience, Niall Hughes, Burren Ecotourism Network, Christy Sinclair, Burren Ecotourism Network, Monica Meehan, Clare County Council and Michael Fitzsimons, Failte Ireland.</p>	Action
10.0	<p>Proposal on Residents Survey</p> <p>CG outlined to the group that there has been no data collected from the residents of the Geopark on their views on tourism.</p> <p>TOD outlined the reasons for doing a resident's survey and the mechanics of how a survey would be done and questioned whether the group felt it was an initiative worth undertaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TOD outlined the costs involved and that the survey would follow an internationally acceptable template with only slight tweaking necessary to adapt for the Burren region. - The group discussed the need and value of doing a residents' survey and agreed it was worthwhile. 	
11.0	<p>AOB</p> <p>CG informed the group that due to time restraint Tiernan Henry was unable to present his proposal for a B3 project and that CG will circulate to the group separately for their consideration.</p>	Action
12.0	<p>Next Steering Group Meetings</p> <p>October 26th 2016</p>	