



Burren Geopark LIFE Project

Discussion paper on selection of monuments and habitats

This note is an input to discussion on the selection of monuments/habitats.

Following the recent discussion at the steering group, eight criteria are proposed: ownership, tourism impact, conservation impact, access, visitor management, visitor attraction, facilities and demonstration effect.

The suggestion is to 'score' each of 12 potential sites as 'high', 'medium' or 'low' under these criteria.

Each of the 12 possible sites are described and scored separately.

A summary chart at the end brings together the overall picture.

The suggestion is that, following discussion, a short-list of maybe the top 6 out of the 12 be agreed. These could then be subsequently reviewed in more detail, particularly in the light of the budget available. Visits to sites on the short-list could then be included in the forthcoming study-day, after which a final decision could be made.

February 2013

(1) Possible criteria for selection of the monument/habitat

1. Ownership

Is land-owner agreeable to granting access?

2. Tourism impact

Is the site of interest to visitors, especially international visitors (including holiday-makers and educational/research)? Highest marks would be awarded to sites actually or potentially attracting international visitors.

3. Conservation impact

What type of conservation impact will there be? Is the site highly sensitive? Does it have the capacity to absorb extra users?

4. Access

Is access to site physically easy? Are there any significant costs associated with provision of access?

5. Visitor management

Does it help to manage existing visitor flows? Does this help to reduce congestion and over-use in tourism?

6. Visitor attraction

Does this attract visitors into underutilised areas and possibly reduce pressure points elsewhere?

7. Facilities

Is there the benefit of existing facilities on site? Would the project capitalise on previous works or investment?

8. Demonstration effect

An overall criterion that brings much of the others together: will this demonstrate the positive interaction between tourism and conservation? will it be highly visible? will there be high added value? is there a positive linkage with other aspects of the project?

(2) Possible scoring system

High

Very positive possibilities, such as: land owner will give access; of strong interest to tourists; positive conservation outcomes; physical access is easy; good visitor management in heavily used location; will attract visitors to an under-used location; existing facilities present; overall strong demonstration effect.

Low

Not so positive possibilities, such as: land owner will not easily give access; not such strong interest to tourists; conservation outcomes not so positive; physical access not easy; not managing existing visitors; not attracting visitors to under-used location; no existing facilities; not as strong a demonstration effect as other sites.

Medium

Intermediate outcomes

(3) Review of 12 potential sites

SITE: Flaggy Shore		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Commonage, no problem	H
Tourism impact	Becoming increasingly popular	M
Conservation impact	Need for conservation strategy	H
Access	Yes	H
Visitor management	This would manage impacts	H
Visitor attraction	Already under pressure	L
Facilities	Road access, nothing else	L
Demonstration effect	Good example of a visitor management strategy, but is it used by international visitors?	M

SITE: Blackhead		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Commonage, no problem	H
Tourism impact	Already substantial	H
Conservation impact	Under pressure	H
Access	Yes	H
Visitor management	This would manage impacts	H
Visitor attraction	Already under pressure	L
Facilities	Road access, walking route	M
Demonstration effect	Good example of a visitor management strategy	H

SITE: Fanore Dunes		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Public ownership	H
Tourism impact	Already heavy pressure	H
Conservation impact	Under pressure, serious erosion	H
Access	Yes	H
Visitor management	Need to manage impacts	H
Visitor attraction	Already under pressure	L
Facilities	Road access, parking	M
Demonstration effect	Good example of a visitor management strategy	H

SITE: Stone fort and cairn at Blackhead		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Commonage, no problem	H
Tourism impact	Special monuments	M
Conservation impact	Need to balance restoration with preservation	H
Access	Via walking route	M
Visitor management	Restore damage by visitors	H
Visitor attraction	Under-used because of lack of road access	H
Facilities	None	M
Demonstration effect	An iconic project, conservation issues, but not highly accessible	M

SITE: Ballyreen and Poulsallagh		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Commonage but no agreement for management programme	L
Tourism impact	Already heavily used	H
Conservation impact	International geological importance, suffers from impact	H
Access	Road nearby	H
Visitor management	Need to manage visitor impact	H
Visitor attraction	Already heavily used	L
Facilities	Road	H
Demonstration effect	Combines high visibility, management of use, scientific interest	H

SITE: Prehistoric wedge tomb at Doolin		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Commonage, no problem	H
Tourism impact	Highly visible, near Doolin village	H
Conservation impact	Need for active conservation and archaeological management	H
Access	Near road and shore	H
Visitor management	Complementary attraction in popular area	H
Visitor attraction	Area is already heavily used	L
Facilities	Near village	H
Demonstration effect	Combines high visibility, high potential use and conservation	H

SITE: Cliffs of Moher (seabird colonies)		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Public	H
Tourism impact	One of Ireland's top attractions	H
Conservation impact	Concentration of breeding seabirds	H
Access	Roads and car park	H
Visitor management	Visitor management for the seabird colony	H
Visitor attraction	Already heavily used	L
Facilities	Substantial	H
Demonstration effect	This would be an investment in a heavily-used area, but would it be noticed?	M

SITE: Lisdoonvarna Spa Wells (looped walk)		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Public	H
Tourism impact	Local urban tourism centre	M
Conservation impact	Managing natural and cultural tourism interests	M
Access	Yes	H
Visitor management	Management of local impacts	M
Visitor attraction	Already used	L
Facilities	Town facilities	H
Demonstration effect	But not so attractive to international visitors?	M

SITE: Carron (mediaeval church and archaeological complex)		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Public	H
Tourism impact	Monument in highly visible location on tourist route	H
Conservation impact	Challenges with buildings conservation	H
Access	Yes	H
Visitor management	Smaller visitor numbers, but concern about safety	M
Visitor attraction	Attract visitors into eastern Burren	H
Facilities	Roads	M
Demonstration effect	Significant impact in one of the lesser-used areas	H

SITE: Sheshmore pavement (geological site of international importance)		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Privately owned, but land owner is supportive	M
Tourism impact	Geology students	M
Conservation impact	Rapid encroachment of hazel shrub	H
Access	Restricted, parking not available	M
Visitor management	Need for access and geological management	H
Visitor attraction	This is an underused resource	H
Facilities	None	M
Demonstration effect	Good example of a special-interest project in an under-used area, but is it too specialised?	M

SITE: Mediaeval stone fort at Cahercommaun		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Public	H
Tourism impact	High potential impact, dramatic archaeological site	H
Conservation impact	Substantial conservation challenges	H
Access	Needs to be improved	M
Visitor management	Few existing visitors	M
Visitor attraction	This would attract visitors to under-used area	H
Facilities	Some local visitor facilities	M
Demonstration effect	Iconic project with conservation challenges in under-used area	H

SITE: Lough Bunny		
CRITERION	COMMENT	SCORE
Ownership	Commonage	M
Tourism impact	Popular location for botanists and students	M
Conservation impact	Problems with erosion and visitor impact	H
Access	Road and car park	H
Visitor management	Maintenance and access issues need to be addressed	H
Visitor attraction	Already in demand	L
Facilities	Parking and access	H
Demonstration effect	Good demonstration on access to commonage; but is it of interest to international visitors?	M

(4) Overall summary

LOCATION	CRITERIA								
	Ownership	Tourism	Conservation	Access	Management	Attraction	Facilities	Demonstration	Short-list? ✓
Flaggy Shore	H	M	H	H	H	L	L	M	
Blackhead	H	H	H	H	H	L	M	H	
Fanore	H	H	H	H	H	L	M	H	
Fort at Blackhead	H	M	H	M	H	H	M	M	
Ballyreen/Poulsallagh	L	H	H	H	H	L	H	H	
Doolin wedge tomb	H	H	H	H	H	L	H	H	
Cliffs of Moher	H	H	H	H	H	L	H	M	
Lisdoonvarna spa wells	H	M	M	H	M	L	H	M	
Carron church	H	H	H	H	M	H	M	H	
Sheshymore	M	M	H	M	H	H	M	M	
Cahercommaun	H	H	H	M	M	H	M	H	
Lough Bunny	M	M	H	H	H	L	H	M	

Scoring system: H = High; M = Medium; L= Low