



Progress Report

March 2014

ITEM	PROGRESS
EGN/GGN Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attended Irish Geopark Forum Meeting (7th March) and European Geopark Meeting (26-30th March) ➤ Submitted annual report to EGN. ➤ Submitted details of EGN Week for 2014
Awards and conferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Shortlisted a one of three finalists for WTTC Tourism for Tomorrow Sustainable Destination Awards. Hosted an audit by WTTC of the Geopark Programme in February. The award will be announced on April 24th. ➤ Shortlisted for the Responsible Tourism Destination Award, Nov. 2013 ➤ Presented the Geopark programme at Clare Tourist Council and The Responsible Tourism Conferences
Strategic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Met with the Director General of UNESCO on 21st March to present the case for Geoparks as a UNESCO programme ➤ Promoted the use of ETIS within the EGN as a framework for collaboration on developing baselines and measurement of sustainability at a destination level. ➤ Met with MEP's and the Committee of the Regions in Brussels to promote long term support and policy for sustainable tourism development ➤ Agreed to become a destination partner with Leave No Trace
Education and Research Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Visit by Metropolitan State University of Denver, Colorado to promote Burren Geology Summer School ➤ Publication of submerged forest paper in Irish Journal of Earth Science, with Prof Mike Williams of NUIG, considerable media attention. ➤ Neanderthal 150 conference in NUIG in May, We will co-host post conference field trip to the Burren. ➤ Lisdoonvarna Secondary School students won GSI special award for their Young Scientist of the Year project which was supported by BCM Geopark ➤ Lisdoonvarna secondary school enter EcoUnesco Young Environmentalist competition with Transition Year Project supported by BCM Geopark ➤ Adult Evening Course Introduction to the Geology of the Burren run jointly with Burren Outdoor Education Centre ran successfully in Feb/March.
Trail and geosites development	<p><u>Heritage Walking Trails:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Six Heritage Trails erected in Lisdoonvarna, Corrofin, Ballyvaughan, Flaggy Shore, Kilfenora and Dysert O'Dea. ➤ Launches by local community groups taking place on weekend of 29th and April 5th/6th ➤ Further trails to be reviewed and developed in conjunction with Walking Trails Officer ➤ Signage redesign and installation planned for all Geosites this year.
Communications	<p><u>Trade Fairs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attended ITOA and presented the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark destination and the visitor experiences that have been developed for the 2014 season (details in products and experience section below). There was great interest in the Burren Food trail and the Activity trail, follow up completed with contacts who showed interest in further information

- Scheduled to attend Meitheal on the 8th and 9th April with the same proposition as ITOA
- Scheduled to attend the “Be Captured by Clare” which is being organised by Shannon Region Conference and Sports Bureau. It is a trade event that is being organised to showcase what Co. Clare has to offer the business and sports tourism industry

Geopark and B.E.N printed materials

- Geopark branded Maps and been produced and are currently being distributed throughout the Burren area, as well as throughout the county and at strategic locations throughout the country
- Leaflets have also been produced to support the new products that have been developed in conjunction with B.E.N. (The Food and Activity trails, A Hostel Hop and a walking programme) these leaflets are also being distributed in the above mentioned locations.
- The B.E.N. and the Geopark will again produce a Free Visitor Guide to the Burren for the 2014 season – an excellent tool for raising awareness of the variety of offering within the Region.

Rebranding of Info points and Geosites

- The Geopark and they are in need of being rebranded with the Geopark branding. After a number of site visits it has been decided to update the main info point signage and to redirect the computers to www.burren.ie which is the visitor information website.
- A monthly newsletter will also be developed and emailed to each of the info point locations. The news letter will detail what is happening in the Burren this month and will be placed on the notice board at the info point
- We will wait until 2015 to update the map
- Signage at the Geosites and viewing points will also be updated to include Geopark branding this season

Changes to burrengeopark.ie

It had been decided that www.burrenecotourism.com would be the visitor site with all visitor information, this allowed for reorganisation of burrengeopark.ie. The visitor information section on the Burren Geopark site has been reorganised under the ‘The Geopark’ menu to allow for consolidation of all content related to the physical destination to be in one section. When someone is looking for visitor information there is a landing page that redirects to www.burren.ie. At a B.E.N. meeting early March ‘14 it was agreed that Burren Ecotourism does not mean anything to the visitor and the site will change to www.burren.ie.

As a result of burren.ie being the visitor site we have been able to consolidate and streamline the information on www.burrengeopark.ie allowing a greater profile for the GeoparkLIFE programme, Sustainable Tourism information and the Education section. Previously these sections were all under the one header menu ‘What we do’ and were difficult to navigate to. Now each section has its own header menu. The pages/titles under each menu have been updated and reorganised to achieve easier navigation of the content.

- Website visits for March 2014

Visitors	Unique Visits	Page per visit	Visit duration	Bounce Rate	By Desktop	By Mobile	By Tablet
2,514	1,907	3.16	02:49	50.44%	1,954	294	266

- Facebook Likes 644 - 27% increase in likes from November 2013
- Twitter Followers 523 - 67% increase in followers from November 2013

	<p><u>Other Publications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stone Water & Ice will be reprinted this year due to success of last years sales, further updates planned for 2015 ➤ Carsten Krieger’s book of the Burren is awaiting contract details from Mercier, several draft chapters (Landscape and Heritage) completed.
<p>B.E.N. Training & Standards Programme</p>	<p>Following a communications and recruitment process in October 2013, 25 businesses signed up for the Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Training with a view to becoming members of B.E.N. 21 of those successfully completed the programme and adopted the Code of Practice, submitting evidence of same in January 2014. The same programme was repeated between January and March 2014 for the existing members of B.E.N, the majority of whom had formally adopted the Code of Practice by late March 2014. Highlights of the programme are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The waste, water, energy and wastewater elements of this programme were co-ordinated and delivered by the LAPN via Joan Tarmey in Clare County Council. ➤ 40 businesses completed the Leave No Trace Awareness training and a further 10 individuals have completed the Leave No Trace Educator programme. They will be in a position to train further businesses in the principles of Leave No Trace. ➤ As well as sustainability practices, the training programme included the development of a social media strategy for the destination that would leverage the strength of the Network and the Geopark combined. A manual is being produced and two training sessions have been delivered (to about half of the businesses). It is hoped to secure a further two sessions for the remaining members through Failte Ireland in 2014. This will be a priority focus in the training programme for the coming Autumn. ➤ Sustainable Travel Awareness & Promotion is also included (asub-committee of BEN now formed to actively promote sustainable travel and the app). This element strengthened links between the businesses and the Green Schools Travel Programme and Clare County Council’s Sustainable Travel Officer through training and combined promotional events. ➤ The programme also included a 2 half day workshops on ‘Interpreting the Geopark for Visitors’ designed to enable tourism providers to competently communicate the Geopark region to visitors. These sessions were independently facilitated and focused on businesses working out and defining the language and content for themselves. This theme will be further built on in the training programme for next Autumn. ➤ The Network now totals 49 members, 1 partner and 8 friends. ➤ The Code of Practice programme proved to be challenging for businesses and effective in introducing a change of behaviour and heightened awareness amongst participants. It also served as an important networking forum for the further integration of the businesses. For example, the businesses have themselves set up a new sub-committee on Sustainable Transport & Energy and has set itself projects and actions to make improvements and reduce costs in these areas, as well as an initiative to lobby for greater broadband coverage across the area. ➤ Baseline information and a formal evaluation report of the programme and the evaluation process itself will be prepared in the coming weeks. ➤ The Code of Practice has been recognised by the Green Hospitality Programme as fulfilling its Ecolabel requirements for certification. Tina is now starting discussions with Bord Bia regarding mapping the Code to the Origin Green programme, and is also looking at mapping to the recently launched Tripadvisor Green Leaders programme.
<p>B.E.N. Product & Experience Development</p>	<p>Between January-March 2014, Tina led an extensive facilitation process with the enlarged B.E.N. membership to foster and strengthen collaboration in order to bring creative new destination experiences to the market in 2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Burren Food Trail & Burren Food Trail Mondays: evaluations showed it to be a

	<p>very successful initiative in 2013 and it was reviewed and updated for 2014. The B.E.N. has been invited to lead/manage the Burren Slow Food Festival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <u>Burren Activity & Adventure Trail & Burren Activity Fridays</u>: 19 outdoor activity providers across the region have collaborated to produce the first ever outdoor activity trail for the area, supported by a series of unique Friday events between May and September. ➤ <u>Burren Walking Programme 2014</u>: Co-ordinated and led by the Boghill Centre. A schedule of set weekly walks (7 days/week) by different guides with different themes on location in the Burren. Bookable centrally and with a shuttle bus to collect from key locations in the area. <p>Tina & Laura presented the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark destination and all the above visitor experiences and the Heritage Trails to the Fáilte Ireland Publicity Team in February 2014, which was very well received. We expect to gain significant media coverage as a result, with our first international media trip already scheduled for 16th April 2014.</p>
Burren Tourism Story 2014	<p>The culmination of the training, networking, collaboration and Geopark investment between November and March (and long before!) was showcased at 'The Burren Tourism Story 2014' which was held in The Pavilion Lisdoonvarna on 5th March. This event was designed to generate enthusiasm and awareness among the local tourism businesses and general community about what was on offer in the area for this summer. The Geopark Heritage Trails were also formally launched by Fiona Monaghan of Fáilte Ireland. Approximately 200 people attended, three guest speakers delivered inspiring talks and 45 B.E.N. businesses showcased their food, activities and accommodation in the evening. It was perceived as a powerful and very positive event.</p>
Transtourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On site audit carried out in February. Final claim and reports submitted by Feb 28th. ➤ Analysis of coach tourism in the Burren; the environmental and economic impacts, is ongoing and will become part of the baseline survey for Geopark LIFE programme
Signage Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Awaiting confirmation on funding for signage from FI