



LIFE11 ENV/IE/922

## Minutes of Steering Committee Meeting

<b>Project</b>	Geopark LIFE Partners Meetings	
<b>Date</b>	27/04/2016	
<b>Location</b>	The Farmyard, Corofin, Co. Clare	

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Person</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Abbr.</b>
Apologies	Ger Dollard	Clare County Council	GD
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 Gately	Geological Survey of Ireland	SG
Yes	Anne Reynolds	Clare County Council	AR
Yes	Michael Fitzsimons	Fáilte Ireland	MF
Yes	Gabriel Cooney	UCD	GC
Yes	Joanne Gaffery	UCD	JG
Apologies	Beatrice Kelly	Heritage Council	BK
No	Margaret Keane	National Monuments Service	MK
Yes	Christine Grant	National Monuments Service	CHG
No	Hugh Carey	National Monuments Service	HC
Apologies	Ken Curley	Office of Public Works	KC
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
Yes	Christy Sinclair	Burren Ecotourism Network	CS

Yes	Martin Waldron	Burren Ecotourism Network	MW
No	Richard Morrison	Burrenbeo Trust	RM
No	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
Part	Niall Hughes	Burren Ecotourism Network	NH
Apologies	Tiernan Henry	NUIG	TH
No	Suzanne Trehay	Faillte Ireland	ST
Apologies	Zena Hoctor	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
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome and Opening Introductions</b>		
	<p>CG informed apologies and updated the group on the department changes in Clare County Council and the appointment of the new CEO.</p> <p>CG introduced BC as the chair for the meeting in the absence of GD</p>		
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Review of Minutes</b>		
	<p>Minutes of previous meeting were proposed by RUC and seconded by GC</p> <p>CG informed the group that the decision that was made to do a resident's survey at the last meeting it is proving too costly but there may be an opportunity with incoming co-funding that could make it affordable.</p>		
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Report on EU Commission site visit on 4th and 5th of October</b>		
	<p>CG gave an update on the site visit by Lynne Barrett (EU LIFE Monitor) and reported that her feedback on the progress of the actions to date was very positive.</p> <p>GC gave an update on the policy findings to date, on the process which is being undertaken to review existing policies that he and JG presented to Lynne Barrett.</p> <p>A discussion took place on what the final policy reports and recommendations would look like and that there most likely wouldn't be a recommendation of more policy but the focus will be on the interpretation and the implementation of currently policy. On behalf of the programme, GC made a submission on policy to the County Development Plan.</p> <p>A discussion took place around a partnership approach and its facilitation of an understanding of other policies that departments are working to. Both TD and MF noted a change in ways of working in their departments towards a partnerships approach.</p>		

	<p>CG suggested a draft of the policy document would be made available to the steering committee to review and have further input in the final document.</p> <p>CG updated the groups that co-funding is available from non-partner members of the project. A cash contribution can be made by non-beneficiary partners but time contributions cannot.</p> <p>A discussion took place around timesheets and the importance of the beneficiaries time contribution being kept up to date and submitted on time.</p> <p>CG updated the group on the need to do another progress report by the end of this year; to be submitted on the 31<sup>st</sup> January.</p> <p>CG proposed that a substantial draft of the policy document would be ready for review in advance of the spring steering committee meeting.</p>	
4.0	<p><b>Action B1 Tourism Enterprises</b></p> <p>TO'D gave an overview of the progress report. She updated the group on the development of the Code of Practice to a self-guided online system which will be supported by mentoring. A mentor panel will be set up and will comprise of experienced network members.</p> <p>TO'D updated the group on the resource planning element of the programme and how the network can become a self-sustaining network. Having availed of a mentor from Failte Ireland and having undertaken a strategic planning process with the members of the network, a draft plan is now with a small group of members to finalise.</p> <p>TO'D informed the group that the strategic planning process also identified the need for two part-time positions to ensure the future sustainability of the network. LEADER funding is available for one position and the Network have decided to utilise membership fees to employ a part-time marketing coordinator as marketing was identified as a key benefit of membership.</p> <p>A full report is available on the Geopark website here:  <a href="http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B1-Progress-Report-October-2016.pdf">http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B1-Progress-Report-October-2016.pdf</a></p> <p>A discussion took place around the benefits the businesses have seen from undertaking the Code of Practice. Consultation and feedback from BEN representatives at the meeting showed that the training supporting the code was very useful and that the businesses would have found this training difficult to access previously.</p> <p>CS reported that many of the benefits are intangible but some have seen cost savings on their bottom line and that it has impacted positively on the way they do business.</p> <p>NH told the group that the Code of Practice has enabled his business to pursue external certification and to win an award. The practical elements of the Code have helped make his businesses more profitable and more sustainable.</p> <p>A discussion took place around the learning from the B1 programme and the recommendations that will be made, including the barriers to achieving the success</p>	

	to date and those that will have to be dealt with going forward.	
<b>5.0</b>	<p><b>Action B2 Habitats and Monuments</b></p> <p>CG gave an update on the B2 report that was prepared by ZH</p> <p>The full report is available here:  <a href="http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B2-steering-group-report-25-10-2016.pdf">http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B2-steering-group-report-25-10-2016.pdf</a></p> <p>CG confirmed the purpose of B2 was to show through practical applications of works on demonstration sites a collaborative approach that will lead towards a model of integrated management for sites and monuments in the Burren. This will in turn lead to an overall integrated management approach to the destination as a whole.</p> <p>A discussion took place on the need to look at issues like parking and facilities for the destination as a whole; for example, though toilets cannot be installed at Poul nabrone, we still need to resolve the demand for facilities at this site by providing some at more accessible locations. The tool kits produced by the GeoparkLIFE programme will assist in planning for such developments; Tools like the Heritage map viewer will help planners and the monitoring app will help to integrate visitor and conservation management at specific sites and in the destination as a whole. The App is already of interest to the National Trails Office and the National Parks.</p> <p>A discussion took place around the traffic survey, the people counters surveys, visitor survey and observation surveys that the GeoparkLIFE project has been able to support in the National Park this year and how it will inform the upcoming NPWS visitors management plan.</p> <p>CG informed the group that the works at the demonstration sites are triggering further actions beyond the LIFE project, which will have to be recorded as an output of the programme to be managed in the AfterLIFE programme plan.</p>	
<b>6.0</b>	<p><b>Action B3 Conservation Management</b></p> <p>JG gave an update on the B3 case studies which focus on partnerships with a number of community groups focused on tourism and conservation efforts.</p> <p>Full report available here:  <a href="http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B3-Progress-Report-Oct16.pdf">http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/B3-Progress-Report-Oct16.pdf</a></p> <p>A discussion took place around the Killinaboy Cabhail Mhor project and the lessons learnt from the process. JG noted that the general perception is that people see the policies as barriers and that trying to balance all the policies, procurement issues and H&amp;S requirements for a community group is a huge challenge.</p> <p>CHG confirmed that there is no particular role in any agency that can help a community group to navigate this area. She informed the group that the Heritage</p>	

	<p>Council are appointing a community archaeologist in Fingal to trial a way to overcome this barrier.</p> <p>CG confirmed that initially the aim of the LIFE project was to empower community groups to navigate their own way through the requirements but in reflection a coordinator is often required. The challenge is to identify the resource needed to assist community groups wishing to engage in the care or conservation of monuments and sites and how this can be sustained.</p> <p>JG updated the group on the Lisdoonvarna Integrated Catchment Management programme that is being coordinated by Tiernan Henry of NUIG and that is being contributed to by Eamon Doyle and Tracy Duffy from the Steering Committee.</p> <p>NH informed the group and JG that the tidy towns group in Doolin have been influenced by the Geopark programme and the 'Adopt a Hedgerow' Initiative and are using their methodology in tackling invasive species.</p>	
<p><b>7.0</b></p>	<p><b>C1 Monitoring</b></p> <p>ED gave an update on the people counters programme and the process that has been undertaken to verify the accuracy of the data.</p> <p>ED also updated on the 'Ask me about the Geopark' Programme that he as Geopark Geologist will be facilitating as part of the B1 training programme. The initiative aims to ensure that frontline staff in B.E.N. members businesses feel comfortable talking about the Geopark, Geology and Leave No Trace to their visitors.</p> <p>Full report here <a href="http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Geopark-Geologist-progress-report-for-C1-and-B1-Nov-2016.pdf">http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Geopark-Geologist-progress-report-for-C1-and-B1-Nov-2016.pdf</a></p>	
<p><b>8.0</b></p>	<p><b>D4 Targeted Communications</b></p> <p>LC gave an update on the progress since the last Steering Group meeting, highlighting recent communication initiatives which included the publishing of the 3rd edition of the Geopark Newsletter, the continued growth in social media followers and the achievement of 21 press articles since the last steering committee meeting.</p> <p>LC informed the group that BEN were in the process of hiring a dedicated part time marketing person to take on some of the destination marketing responsibilities she had been undertaking.</p> <p>LC also informed the group of the development of a Burren specific 'Leave No Trace' leaflet.</p> <p>Full report available here <a href="http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/D4-Targeted-communications-progress-report-Oct-2016.pdf">http://www.burrengeopark.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/D4-Targeted-communications-progress-report-Oct-2016.pdf</a></p>	

	<p>A discussion took place around signage and the Burren Signage plan. CG informed the group that the Burren signage plan is currently out of date and needs to be updated to integrate the Geopark and UNESCO details. The project is quite a large one and requires management by Engineering and Roads staff from the County Council.</p> <p>GC reiterated to the groups that integration of signage is critical to integrated management and highlighted the importance of linking interpretation signage and directional signage.</p> <p>BC questioned if this project could issue guidelines for signage.</p>	
<p><b>9.0</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainable Transport Presentation</b></p> <p>CG gave an overview of what was discussed at the previous Steering Committee meeting and an overview of the developments that have occurred since the last Steering Committee meeting. She highlighted the opportunities that have arisen to look at traffic management., including the Wild Atlantic Way Experience Development Plan, a plan for the development of Doolin pier that is being commissioned by Clare County Council and NPWS National Park Traffic Management Plan.</p> <p>NH gave an overview of the a proposal produced by the Burren Ecotourism Network in relation to the coach tourism issues being experienced on the ground and the capacity management requirements. He highlighted that one of the main recommendations was to prioritise coaches that stay and benefit the county, and that visit more than one attraction in the region.</p> <p>NH gave an overview on the situation on the ground and how the day coach business is impacting the local tourism offering. NH surmised that though the FIT traveller is far more valuable to the region than the day coach passenger, the FIT traveller is being displaced and encouraged to visit the Cliffs of Moher during off peak hours. NH also informed the group that negative feedback is now coming from his customers due to a poor visitor experience of Doolin and the Cliffs.</p> <p>A discussion took place around the issues on the ground and how licenses are issued and regulated and possible options that could be looked at.</p> <p>CG asked the parties of the Steering Committee to consider the issue of day coach tourism in their organisation and come back with a position. She questioned what each partner's indicator would be for coach tourism and if each partner could consider the effects of coach tourism on has on their area of responsibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CG asked the group to come back within a month.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee felt looking at the issues of day coach tourism within the GeoparkLIFE framework is important, it looks at what is happening to the sites, the visitor experience and the quality of life of the people living in the Burren.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SG suggested that this issue is central to the overall project as it addresses the balance part.</li> <li>- NH suggested that there is a complete lack of understanding of the situation nationally and that we need to raise the issues which include a negative visitor experience and the reduction in quality of</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p>

	life of the people living in the Burren.	
<b>10.0</b>	<p><b>AfterLIFE preparations</b></p> <p>CG suggested to the group that the next Steering Committee meeting be a facilitated session where the Committee could look at the policy document suggestions but could also tease out what elements, if any, of the project and the Steering Committee/Working Groups platform the Committee would like to sustain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EM suggested for a session like this to be really valuable plenty of preparation time would be needed and headings for discussion in advance</li> </ul>	
<b>11.0</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>MF outlined the programme for the Visitor Experience Plan for the Burren; The tender has been issued for the consultants and it is currently in the cooling off period. The successful tenderer will consult as follows: the first meeting will be a working group which will develop the terms of reference; the working group is not yet decided and will be by invite only. It is hoped that the consultants will be appointed by 24th Nov and will have the plan available by the end of Feb.</p>	
<b>12.0</b>	<p><b>Next Steering Group Meetings</b></p> <p>Next meeting is going to be a facilitated meeting to decide what we need to sustain out of the life programme and a platform for integrated management</p> <p><b>Next Meeting</b> Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb.</p>	