



**B2 WORKING GROUP  
MEETING  
MINUTES**

**13-1-16**

**DATE AND VENUE**

The GeoparkLIFE B2 Working Group Meeting was held in the Temple Gate Hotel, Ennis on Monday January 13, 2016 from 10am to 1pm.

**ATTENDANCE**

In attendance: Enda Mooney (EM), Christine Grant (CGr), Congella McGuire (CMG), Joanne Gaffrey (JG), Dick Cronin (DC), Ken Curley (KW), Emma Glanville (EG), Sharon Parr (SP) Carol Gleeson (CG) and Zena Hctor (ZH).

Apologies: Beatrice Kelly (BK), Gabriel Cooney (GC)

**ITEMS AND DISCUSSION**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Item 1: Agreement of minutes	KC requested that the minutes of the last meeting (16-9-15) be amended to clarify that under An Rath/Cahermore actions that the drawings being prepared by the OPW would be forwarded to Jackson Coleman through the NMS (CGR). The remainder of the Meeting minutes of 16-9-15 were agreed.	Amendment to minutes of 16-9-15	ZH
Item 2: Progress update on demonstration site	<u>Slieve Carran:</u> Following a meeting between Ann Lynch, Pauline Gleeson and CGr of the NMS and CG, on 17-12-15, it was agreed that there would be high level departmental discussion on the ownership and long term management of Mac Duagh oratory and archaeological site at Slieve Carran and other similar sites. EM stated that there is no issue over ownership, the issue is over registration of the land in the Departments name and that the archaeological site is not at present under the care of the OPW. These will be internal decisions that need to be made between the different agencies. GeoparkLIFE will await the outcome of these discussions to determine whether it can play any further role in the sustainable conservation of these monuments.  Since the meeting of 16-9-15, the action was taken by the NPWS in cutting back the willow tree which overhung the oratory building. The trunk of the tree remains to provide habitat for the lichens while the potential danger of falling limbs damaging the oratory structure has been removed.  Draft assessment report received from Tony Kirby re votive offerings at the oratory site. Following the seminar held in October 2014 on spiritual tourism,		

	<p>ZH proposed that a second event be held in 2016 to update on the increase in votive offerings at various sites around the Burren and to create awareness around this as a littering issue in light of our Leave No trace policy. EM queried whether there had been any consensus on the issue at the first event. CG stated that the reaction was very mixed – some believing that it is a genuine custom; while others do not. ZH stated that we need to highlight the issue more. A discussion followed as to how we might do this – whether we take a softly, softly approach or take an action and look for a reaction. It was agreed that as the site has no long term tradition of this pilgrimage activity and there has been a major increase in what are seen as ‘tourist offerings’, the NPWS would remove all of the offerings at Slieve Carran in the near future and that we would monitor the site over the next year. EG to inform ZH on when action is to be taken as that a ‘before and after’ photographic record can be obtained. CMG stated that it should be part of the reconstructed Burren /Leave No trace code which is currently being worked on.</p> <p>EM stated that tour guides and groups going into Slieve Carran need a permit and that currently there is no Code of Practise, outside of a draft code which is for the NPWS park staff. CG suggested that we should tackle this issue with regard to a Code of practise in the Burren and highlight the requirement of permits. EM stated that in terms of the overall LIFE project this needs to be applied throughout the Burren and other parts of the country under NPWS jurisdiction. SP stated that it shouldn’t just be NPWS lands but all protected sites such as SACs and the whole Burren. EM stated that it would be hard to enforce. ZH informed that work was currently underway with LNT to explore these issues and develop a skills and ethics booklet for the Burren. SP suggested that the message can also be delivered through QR codes on signage. ZH stated that she will circulate the draft LNT/GeoparkLIFE document when available for input from the working group.</p> <p>EG stated that a section of the wall surrounding the well had collapsed and been reinstated by the NPWS general operatives. CGr thought it may have been due to natural collapse.</p> <p><u>Burren National Park</u> The findings of the Free Bus service survey undertaken last year showed that it is underutilised. It is a very good service but the bulk of awareness is only being created through the National Park Visitor Centre and the accommodation providers and businesses around the Corofin area. Discussion took place around whether the bus company could take on passengers in Ennis in the morning and bring them to Corofin with return in evening. EM and EG stated that the contract only concerned their time in Corofin</p>	<p>EG to organise removal of votive offerings at Slieve Carran.</p> <p>ZH to include issue of votive offerings in LNT/GeoparkLIFE code</p> <p>ZH to circulate draft LNT/GeoparkLIFE skills and ethics book for input by working group.</p>	
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	<p>(from 10am) and so they could provide this service in their own time if they wished. CGr queried if events could be run to highlight the service. CG queried could this promotion become an action under GeoparkLIFE. EM replied yes, but to remember that the bus can only do 6 journeys per day with a maximum of 16 passengers – so even at full capacity this is not going to address the issue of visitor traffic management. This raised the issue of the development of a traffic management plan. EM stated that he had hoped the LIFE project could have helped with this issue. To progress this in any way, EM stated that he would like clarification on what exact information CCC required following their request for further information on the car park planning application made in 2012. CMG stated that they were probably looking for a rationale for a car park and further information within a broader management plan. CG queried could the LIFE project provide a traffic survey. ZH stated that perhaps the LIFE project could gather together the baseline information that has been compiled through the proeject, add to it in terms of the information required by the CCC and start to pull these threads together which may facilitate the NPWS to compile a visitor/traffic management plan for the Park. SP suggested that a local resident’s survey be undertaken as part of the process. Discussion continued on the issues around Fr. Teds House and the Lough Avalla Walk adding to the traffic congestion around Gortlecka. It was agreed that the LIFE programme would gather as much information as is feasible and feed it to the NPWS and facilitate the conversation between CCC, NPWS and residents.</p> <p><u>Blackhead</u>  <u>Lay-bys:</u>  EM, CMG and ZH visited Blackhead on September 30, 2015 to examine the possibility of revising the planning application to develop lay-bys at Blackhead made in 2011. Using the original maps drawn up for the lay-bys, it was difficult to pinpoint their exact position on the ground but overall the consensus was that some of the sites are suitable in terms of habitat present. ZH subsequently drew up a work plan which was approved by CCC to proceed with the project (document emailed to B2 working group 12-1-16). Following discussion on this workplan CMG stated that the application may not have to go to An Bord Pleanala as it is a new application and EM stated that it also may not need a full AA depending on the sites selected and habitats present. CG stated that we can only work on the actual land areas that were purchased in 2008. In order to identify the habitat in some of the areas, scrub must first be removed. The question was raised as to whether screening was required to remove this scrub. SP stated that a felling licence is required if blackthorn or hazel is cut. EM stated the answer to whether screening was required could not be answered until the species in the scrub</p>	<p>ZH to meet with EM and progress collection of baseline data to inform development of traffic and visitorSe management strategy for BNP</p> <p>ZH is to obtain the exact co-ordinates of areas bought, identify where scrub needs to be removed to proceed with habitat identification, arrange same (after screening) and organise habitat mapping and technical surveys required.</p>	
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	<p>present is identified.</p> <p><u>Monuments:</u> NUIG will not be involved in archaeological site assessments due to time commitments. ZH suggested talking to the Burrenbeo Trust about a possible joint application to the Heritage Council Adopt-A-Monument scheme for community work on the cairn. SP stated that Burrenbeo are looking at other projects. CMG stated that the Heritage Council do want a Burren application and it would be best if this were a joint application and not separate ones. SP advised talking to Kate Lavender (BCVs) as she is currently talking to others about an application.</p> <p><u>Fanore</u> Site meeting held with Prof. Robert Devoy and Jimmy Murphy of MarEI, Cork, Steve Lahiffe, CCC Engineer and ZH in December 2015. Study commissioned and due for completion on February 29, 2016. SP stated that the learnings should be applied to Bishops Quarter asap.</p> <p><u>An Rath/Cahermore</u> KC stated that proposal had been sent in to NMS and a pre-consent discussion had taken place. NMS are positive about access around the back of the monument and entry through the previous entrance at front. NMS suggested that the viewing platform would be inserted into the existing breach at the rear which would eliminate the need for excavation work in the fosse. Prevention of visitors climbing onto the embankment will be addressed initially through awareness/conservation signage and if this is ineffective there may be the possibility of the maintenance crew from Poul nabrone overseeing An Rath/Cahermore also. CG queried what do Coleman's (the company preparing the overall site plans) do next. KC stated that the plans for the archaeological monuments needed to go for Ministerial consent but that Colemans can go ahead and add current OPW drawings in their application preparation for Part 8. CG queried Paul Murphy's next steps re the ecological screening.</p> <p><u>Poul nabrone</u> Trace Duffy CCC has completed draft feasibility study on provision of toilet facilities at Poul nabrone. CG and ZH to provide comment and finalise with Tracy. Completed report will then be circulated to B2 working group.</p> <p><u>Security at car park</u> Guards recommended CCTV on site. Under Geopark, funding had been supplied each year for a clean-up of car park. Integrated management of sites and car parks is an issue at Poul nabrone and will be a future issue at An Rath/Cahermore. This needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>ZH to contact Kate Lavender to discuss joint application to the Heritage Council Adopt-A-Monument Scheme. CGr to draw up a report for both monuments (cairn and cashel).</p> <p>Proposal for viewing platform to be developed for Ministerial consent. Detail of structure and materials to be agreed by OPW and NMS. KC to send OPW drawings to CG for forwarding to Paul Murphy to complete ecological screening.</p> <p>ZH to forward Poul nabrone sanitary report to B2 group on completion</p>	
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	<p><u>Carran Church</u> Engineers report states the car park not feasible on west side of road due to sightlines. Not feasible on east side due to archaeology. SP suggested that a location closer to the sheds to the south might be worth considering, as there is no current operating licence for recycling business at this site.</p> <p>Following meeting between CG, CGr Ann Lynch and Pauline Gleeson NMS it was agreed to progress minimal structural work to secure the NW corner of the building. CGr recommended using existing reports as basis and work up method statement and submission for Ministerial consent.</p> <p><u>All Sites</u> – Leave No Trace guidelines being developed.</p> <p><u>Heritage Map Viewer</u> planned with Heritage Council – work to get under way in short term on specific Burren &amp; Cliffs of Moher section. This will provide us with a map based system for the data collected through GeoparkLIFE.</p>	<p>DC and ZH to progress this work.</p> <p>ZH to liaise with Heritage Council</p>	
<p>Item 3: 2016 Work Programme</p>	<p>The development of <u>Carrying capacity and indicators</u> for monitoring have proved difficult. EM stated that the studies done re WAW do not appear to show any major damage to habitats. SP highlighted the damage from mini-dolmen building and the erosion on the Blackhead walking trail. CG highlighted the wear on the pavement at Alladies. CMG queried erosion on the BNP trails. EM replied that there were only small spots where pockets of clay soils were present and this was dependent on time of year. CMG queried was GeoparkLIFE monitoring not including habitat survey. It was agreed that the quadrat studies undertaken to date at Fanore and for WAW studies were of little use and very expensive. Fixed point photography was agreed to be the best methodology. EM queried whether the Visitor surveys included psychological damage impact e.g. along the coast road? CG replied that the question wasn't asked directly but there were other questions around visitor experience at sites and the response was very positive. SP queried whether residents/Communities views been surveyed? CG stated that a resident's survey is planned for this year. EM stated that the answer to how many tourists are too much is very subjective – how it can be quantified and a carrying capacity defined is the stumbling block. SP stated that the site carrying capacity doesn't just affect the site but the routes into it. ZH stated that we have now visitor numbers for the demonstration sites and for instance for the BNP trails there does not appear to be any major impacts – so are we below carrying capacity? We have to decide do we want to get to a stage where there is damage - What limit should it be and how do we enforce it if we make a decision? CGr stated that we need to control before we get to point where limit is set and that is done by the extent</p>		

	<p>to which facilities are provided such as parking. Decisions must be made on whether facilities at a site need to be reduced, whether it is doing fine as is or is an intervention needed. EM suggested quantification by breaking down the resource into sections (monument, habitat, landscape), identification of damage – development of matrix from monitoring and then decide if impacts are unacceptable and address. The major question will be - if we do decide on limits – how will they be enforced and controlled?</p>	ZH to research development of matrix	
Item 4: Universal Design workshop	<p>Call for all participants to attend the Universal Design Workshop being delivered by the National Disability Authority (Centre for Universal Design and Excellence) on February 10, 2016 10am-4pm. This workshop will be the basis for developing our Universal Design Guidelines for all Burren Heritage sites. A second workshop is organised in March for the Burren Ecotourism Network in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland.</p>		
Item 5: AOB	<p>Meetings for year were agreed as follows:  May 3  September 7  December 7</p>		
	<p><b>Next meeting: May 3, 2016.</b></p>		