

**B2 WORKING GROUP**

**MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**16-9-15**

**DATE AND VENUE**

The GeoparkLIFE B2 Working Group Meeting was held in the Temple Gate Hotel, Ennis on Wednesday September 16, 2015 from 10am to 1pm.

**ATTENDANCE**

In attendance were: Christine Grant (CGr), Beatrice Kelly (BK), Congella McGuire (CMG), Joanne Gaffrey (JG), Dick Cronin (DC), Ken Curley (KW), Emma Glanville (EG), Carol Gleeson (CG), Eamon Doyle (ED) and Zena Hoctor (ZH).

Apologies: Enda Mooney (EM), John O’Brien (JO’B), Sharon Parr (SP), Michelle O’Dea (MD) and Gabriel Cooney (GC)

**ITEMS AND DISCUSSION**

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| **Item** | **Discussion** | **Action** | **Responsibility** |
| Item 1: Agreement of minutes | Meeting minutes of 9-3-15 were agreed. |  |  |
| Item 2: Progress update on demonstration site and future workplan | Summary work programme sheet for all demonstration sites distributed.  **Slieve Carran**: The recommendations of the Archaeological report supplied by Christine Grant include a detailed assessment of the oratory by a conservation engineer, including scaled topographic survey of the monument group, a rectified photographic survey of the upstanding church walls and the development of a monitoring programme for the site monuments.  The following points were discussed: the transfer of the site management between the NPWS and OPW – why is this necessary when both operate under the one Department? The monument is currently located on State owned land managed by the NPWS and is a Recorded Monument but whether its future management should be a partnership between NPWS and OPW or become a National Monument solely managed by the OPW needs to be decided. Now that the GeoparkLIFE project has highlighted the issue and gathered relevant information about the site, the NMS and OPW will pursue the issue internally within the Department and decide whether it is taken into state care as a National Monument.  To advance this process, a copy of the file showing state ownership needs to be passed from the NPWS to the NMS.  It was decided to wait until future management of the site is decided within the Department before any further reports/conservation plans were commissioned by GeoparkLIFE.  This site is providing a very good case study of combined management of properties within Government Departments, due to the issues that have been raised through the GeoparkLIFE project. The learnings will be applicable to similar sites around the country. As part of the GeoparkLIFE programme it provides a good opportunity to look at integrated management by all the relevant agencies, in terms of all the aspects of heritage – natural, built and cultural and visitor access/services at sites and the possibility of local/regional management. The question of promotion of sites and anticipation of the effects that may bring in terms of visitor pressure also need to be explored e.g. if the oratory at Slieve Carran is designated as a National Monument what impact will this have? The preparation of an Impact Statement would look at all these issues.  With regard to the treatment of the dead Willow tree and Lichens it was agreed to consult SP and NPWS.  Monitoring of footpaths is showing very little impact from footfall.  **Burren National Park**  Policy in forthcoming Clare County Development Plan for car park in Burren National Park. Past rulings have decreed that there can be no car park until there is a Burren National Park Management Plan and an area Traffic Management plan.  The BNP Free Bus service is underutilised. A short survey was carried out over the summer in conjunction with the BNP Visitor Information Centre staff and the findings show a lack of awareness of the existence of the service and most users learn about the service through the BNP website and promotion by the accommodation providers in Corofin. The Geopark has offered in the past to put resources into the development of this service as a mini-interpretive unit with on board materials e.g video etc. and in terms of advertisement, but this offer has not been taken up.  **Blackhead**  Need to revisit the parking issue at Blackhead with regard to developing parking spaces in light of the Sweetman Ruling on removal of limestone pavement.  Temporary signs have been made and erected at both the Caher and cairn sites (late August) in conjunction with the landowners asking users to respect and not to climb on the ancient monument. Effect of signage will be monitored.  CGr has completed preliminary reports on the Caher and cairn at Blackhead for discussion purposes. Recommendations include preparation of conservation reports on both monuments by conservation engineers. Carleton Jones of NUI Galway has expressed his interest in being re-involved in the GeoparkLIFE project to carry out condition reports for these sites. CGr queried - would this mean repeating what she had already done or would they be interested in developing a conservation plan for the sites? Could they produce topographical surveys for all relevant demonstration sites?  The cairn offers the opportunity to do a practical conservation project within in a very short time period and which could possibly engage NUIG students and the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers into the project. It was suggested that Carleton Jones and CGr work together to develop a schedule of works for the conservation of the cairn.  **Fanore**  RFT sent to 4 consultants. One reply stating that he would have time to undertake the work. ZH rang others 15-9-15. Two said they had not received the brief. Other – no reply.  **An Rath/Cahermore**  OPW preferred options for boardwalk and access points presented by KC. KC will now forward to CGr (NMS) for review and archaeological assessment. Explore any necessity for archaeological excavation.  The agreed option will then be sent to Jackson Coleman and Paul Murphy (EirEco).  **Poulnabrone**  Tracy Duffy Environment Section of CCC working on feasibility study on provision on toilets.  **Carran Church**  CG and ZH meeting CCC engineer on 29/9/15 to discuss possibilities of providing car parking facility. Issue of limestone pavement removal.  Existing reports on church structure need updating – NUIG to be asked to include this work in their brief.  **All sites**  The project has started working with Leave No Trace Ireland to develop a series of Burren specific guidelines, which will combine the learning’s of the Burren Code and Leave No Trace and deal with local issues such as mini-dolmens and votive offerings.  ZH and ED to begin a review of site interpretation in terms of updating and duplication. It is vital that information from NPWS, Fáilte Ireland and National Trails Office with regard to their audit findings and plans for development of interpretation at WAW signature destinations such as the Burren National Park is passed on to the Geopark LIFE project.  Exploration of an app based system for trail monitoring has shown that the cost of such development is very high. There are several systems in existence (e.g. biodiversity centre using citizen survey) and being developed (OPW at trail stage for monitoring monuments) for discrete aspects of heritage but no overall one-use system for monitoring all aspects of heritage at a site. We are currently using fixed point photography and monitoring sheets but this is cumbersome and time consuming.  Through the discussion the following questions were raised: In terms of integrated management of sites - who will do the monitoring into the future? Who will use this information when it is gathered and how? If these questions are answered and responsibilities are signed up to, then a monitoring app system would very likely follow very quickly. But on the other hand, to encourage sign up should we be developing a demonstration version now to show how it might work? We could approach the NBDC to develop such a demonstration app. Should we be looking at all of this in terms of a case study of area based integrated monitoring and management under the National Landscape strategy? | CGr to pursue issue of future management of Slieve Carran oratory site with the NMS and OPW and report back to ZH  ZH to contact EM re transfer of file to CGr.  Following this meeting EG and SP agreed that the upper limbs of the tree could be removed.  CMG to explore this development further.  CG, ZH, CMG and EM to meet for site visit  ZH to contact Carleton Jones to discuss working with CGr on conservation project at the cairn and topographic surveys of other monuments.  ZH to re-issue tender.  KC to send to CGr for review and then to Jackson Coleman.  ZH to co-ordinate  Liaise with CCC engineer and NUIG | CGr  ZH  EG and NPWS park operatives.  CMG  CG, ZH, to arrange  ZH  ZH  KC and CGr  ZH  ZH and CG  ZH and ED |
| Item 3: Recording sites and developing conservation guidelines - what levels/standards should we be working to? | KC stated that legislation is clear in terms of works to be carried out at sites when dealing with Planning and Building controls but is not as clear for Conservation issues. The latter depends mainly on guidelines, charters and best practise standards. There are rarely defined standards to work to or technical details provided for recording and so the nearest standard is adopted. These do not necessarily carry legislative powers for application. So are you in breach of the law if you don’t apply these codes of practise? Where do we find the standards and what are our duties? Do we use sources such as English Heritage, Scottish Heritage or the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists? In light of this situation, how can we advise community groups on the level at which they should be recording when there is no clear legislation? If we are going to adopt best practise in this project we need to agree this among ourselves. If we want to spell out recording standards in this project we need to have the route legislation behind it, if it is to be adopted as best practise. CGr stated that NMS saw this issue as their opportunity to contribute to the GeoparkLIFE project – to develop this process which would be adopted as policy. This could possibly lead to legislation. A process must first be defined and then dependent on the level of work required a decision is made on the standards to be adopted. The process comes first and then the options. A broad process is required that can be applied to any type of monument.  ZH asked what about natural heritage? KC stated that if UNESCO become involved in the Burren we will then be looking at their practise manuals.  The case studies of GeoparkLIFE were designed to feed into the development of a policy document. The policy review document being worked on by JG and GC will be finished shortly and we then need to start working on examining the processes that are arising from the case studies and developing our policy documents. This will be a focus in the next B2 working group meeting. | Completion of Review of Policy document | JG and GC |
| Item 4: Universal Design with the National Disability Authority | Work has begun with the NDA to develop a series of Guidelines for Universal Design for Heritage sites using the Burren as the pilot area. At present there are guidelines for built heritage but none for natural heritage sites. NDA will give a presentation at the next GeoparkLIFE Steering group meeting (Oct 21st) the purpose of which will be to create interest among the agencies representatives in taking part in a one-day workshop to explore the implementation of Universal design at heritage sites in the Burren. They are also training Fáilte Ireland trainers in ‘Universal Design for SMEs’ so that FI will deliver a Burren specific programme to BEN members in early 2016.  The NDA work will combine with the project which has been ongoing by the Geopark with the Brothers of Charity in Ennis. The Ennis learners group have been assessing the demonstration sites in terms of physical and intellectual access over the summer. They will be producing a learning handbook for heritage sites in the Burren. ED is also working on an easy read version of the Geopark’s ‘Stone, Water and Ice’ book. | Agencies representatives to sign up for NDA workshop | All |
| Item 5: Links with B3 working group | The project at An Cabahil Mhor has become closely linked to B2 due to the nature of the work required. A RFT is currently being prepared for a conservation engineer to complete a conservation report for the building. It is hoped that the training programme will commence in March 2016. This project is showing the extent of the resources required to undertake this type of work if best practise is to be followed and the difficulties that entails for a local community group. It will provide a good case study for the development of a checklist for local communities approaching such projects and could link well into future funding offered under LEADER. |  |  |
|  | **Next meeting: January 13, 2016.** |  |  |