



**B2 WORKING GROUP  
MEETING  
MINUTES**

**9-3-15**

**DATE AND VENUE**

The GeoparkLIFE B2 Working Group Meeting was held in the Temple Gate Hotel, Ennis on Monday, March 9, 2015 from 10am to 1pm.

**ATTENDANCE**

In attendance were: Joanne Gaffrey (JG), Dick Cronin (DC), Ken Curley (KW), John O'Brien (JO'B), Sharon Parr (SP), Emma Glanville (EG), Carol Gleeson (CG), Eamon Doyle (ED) and Zena Hctor (ZH).

Apologies: Christine Grant (CGr) and Enda Mooney (EM).

**ITEMS AND DISCUSSION**

| <b>Item</b>   | <b>Discussion</b>   | <b>Action</b>   | <b>Responsibility</b> |
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| Item 1:<br>Agreement of minutes                         | Meeting minutes of 15-12-14 were agreed. Proposed by SP, seconded by EG.  |   |                       |
| Item 2:<br>Summary of data from surveys/people counters | ZH presented a collation report of the baseline surveys carried out to date.<br>The collation of reports revealed information gaps where further survey is required. This is especially the case for the observation studies. The ideal scenario is to carry out observation studies at each demonstration site one day per month from April to Sept 2015, with a mixture of weekdays being included. This would necessitate the organisation and transportation of 16 people each survey day; preparation of required materials/equipment; collection and collation of findings. Negotiations have been taking place with Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers (BCVs) to undertake this work with payment to be made through the Burrenbeo Trust (BBT). A brief of work has been sent to BBT covering the observation studies plus the following B3 projects: a case study of the BCVs operation; an active conservation work programme in partnership with BEN and identification, mapping and preparation of an awareness and management programme for Invasive Alien species in the Burren. On 5-3-15 the BCVs responded, stating that they would be unable to undertake the observation studies due to the logistics involved. The remainder of the proposal is currently under review by the BBT and the BCVs.<br><br>There has been a large increase in coach passenger numbers since 2009. The Cliffs of Moher Visitor | Identify team to carry out observation studies for 2015 | ZH                    |

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|  | <p>Centre is almost at capacity and under pressure. The numbers using the Cliffs of Moher walk is also causing problems. The coach study shows an estimated 45,000 persons were brought by bus to An Rath in 2014. 5,781 visitors were recorded for the same site between Sept and mid-Feb by the on-site people counter. KC queried the high number estimated through the coach study. CG to check out how this figure was calculated. The on-site people counters will provide figures which will give monthly breakdowns for the site and indicate when the bulk of visitors are using the site.</p> <p>The Millward Brown (MWB) visitor survey shows high overall satisfaction with the Burren; with signage and interpretation. Visitors to the Eastern Zone (Slieve Carran and BNP) expressed lowest satisfaction with signage (see further discussion under Item 8 below) Survey shows interpretive boards working very well, being read and informing people about the Burren, its heritage and conservation.</p> <p>The length of time spent by the visitor at Slieve Carran presented in the MWB visitor survey was queried. ZH stated that only the summary results were presented in the report and the full database of results is still to be received.</p> <p>The categorisation developed by CAAS for visitor activities and levels of impacts was produced for the whole WAW. It was agreed that the list of impacts compiled should be made more 'Burren' site specific. The template should be simplified to use in sheet, app or tablet form so that monitoring data can be fed into a central database by volunteers such as BEN, BCV, adopt-a-monument and others into the future and after the LIFE project. A database system for the storage and analysis of all information gathered through the LIFE project could be developed which will act as a repository of data for all users in the future. The NETP7 project is to do SmartOpenData work with the Geopark working on the ETIS programme and creating an APP around that data. The system being developed needs to cover all the aspects of tourism and conservation, providing a front end of information provision for the GeoparkLIFE project. A simple scoring system will need to be developed to enable local volunteers/free rangers to feed in information e.g. as with the butterfly monitoring scheme, bird surveys etc. There are already several templates for citizen survey data collection, such as SCHARP (Scottish coastal heritage at risk project) which can be adapted for our use. All this information can then be communicated and fed out through front end website to the appropriate bodies.</p> <p>Discussion continued on the impacts at Poul nabrone recorded by CAAS, Joe Saunders and conversations with the site warden, including anti-social behaviour in the evening - car break ins, horses in car park; burning of cordon, climbing on monument and knocking down of people counter.</p> | <p>Check coach study figures for An Rath and how they were estimated</p> <p>Obtain full results for MWB survey</p> <p>Re-examine the categories for levels of impacts and how they are classified</p> <p>Find out the status of the NET7 project and what it can deliver for the GeoparkLIFE project</p> | <p>CG</p> <p>CG</p> <p>ZH guided by SP</p> <p>CG</p> |
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|  | <p>EirEco surveys generally report ecological impact at sites as – ‘<i>slight and capable of rapid recovery</i>’. 100 quadrats were surveyed for the CAAS work which was agreed to be totally unnecessary, excessive and not replicable into the future.</p> <p>Discussion continued with regard to the growth of Red Valerian at Aillwee Cave, its benefits for wildlife, its classification as an invasive and possible removal techniques. It was agreed that all this information should be included in the study to be undertaken by BCV if a work proposal is agreed.</p>  |  |                      |
| Item 3: Update Slieve Carran: Archaeological Condition report, votive offerings study and cutting of hazel | <p>CGr commissioning condition report but status of work unclear as CG not in attendance at meeting.</p> <p>Tony Kirby has been carrying out a study of the votive offerings at MacDuagh's Church site (Slieve Carran). Final report due March 31st. The ‘ribbon development’ is a growing phenomenon at several sites around the Burren. This needs to be explored further.</p> <p>EG organising hazel cutting at Slieve Carran over next 2 days.</p>   | <p>Archaeological Condition Report</p> <p>Hazel cutting</p>              | <p>CGr</p> <p>EG</p> |
| Item 4: Update An Rath and Cahermore: Part 8 planning application; screening out                           | <p>Permission has been obtained from the landowner to apply for Part 8 planning; Coleman &amp; Co. have been commissioned to produce detailed updated drawings of the site proposal and the screening out has been started by EirEco but decisions need to be finalised on positioning of viewing platform and entrance into fort. Coleman &amp; Co, are to be instructed to contact the OPW directly to discuss the conservation issues and to carry through the work to preparing the proposal for Ministerial consent.</p> <p>The safety issue of the current access point to An Rath was discussed and it was agreed very little could be done at present as it would be up to the landowner of the gateway where the buses park.</p> <p>KC stated that the OPW and the Discovery programme will be carrying out a laser scan of An Rath in mid-April. This will give a baseline survey showing any erosion at the site. An initial survey of Cahermore was undertaken in 2014 but post processing had not been completed. Both sites will be completed this summer.</p> | <p>Coleman &amp; Co. to liaise directly with the OPW</p>                 | <p>CG</p>            |
| Item 5: Update Blackhead: Archaeological Condition Report, meeting with landowners and issues arising      | <p>CGr commissioning condition report but status of work unclear as CG not in attendance at meeting.</p> <p>Meeting held with Blackhead landowners, attended by CG, ZH, ED, Eoin Hogan, John Burke and Raymond Casey. Issues raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deteriorating condition of archaeological monuments</li> <li>• Increasing volume of passing traffic;</li> <li>• Increasing use of area by large groups of walkers;</li> <li>• Possibility of creating a spur off the Blackhead Loop Trail to Caher Dun Irghuis;</li> <li>• Traffic along the road at John Burkes holiday cottages – walkers not using trailhead</li> </ul>   | <p>Archaeological Condition Report</p> <p>Explore placing of signage</p> | <p>CGr</p> <p>ZH</p> |

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|                                     | <p>parking;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climbers placing permanent hooks in cliffs and peregrine falcons.</li> <li>• Possibility of placing information signage at the archaeological monuments</li> </ul> <p>Discussion held around employing dune specialists to develop management plan around Fanore Dunes and best practice methodology for visitor management. This work to be organised in conjunction with Clare County Council Engineer.</p>  | Identify dune experts   | ZH & CG |
| Item 6: Paths Survey                | CG meeting Richard Tyler of Brecon Beacons this week – will discuss project and possibility of their personnel coming to the Burren to advise on this item  |   |         |
| Item 7: Access Audit                | Proposal to commission a full access audit (physical and cognitive) for the demonstration sites plus a number of visitor centres and businesses. This will be carried out in conjunction with the Bros of Charity, building on the work done on the pilot project with this group in 2014. An aim of this work will be to attempt to develop at least one fully accessible nature trail within the Burren.  | Meet with Brothers of Charity group and organise process                                | ZH & CG |
| Item 8: Interpretive Plan           | MWB Visitor Survey showed high satisfaction with current interpretive boards. ED working on new geosite interpretive panels. WAW will also be placing new interpretive panels at 'Discovery sites'. Due to increasing interpretive panels/signage an overall strategy is required to look at siting, quality, replication of information and future planning/monitoring/management. CG stated that she and ED had met with the company contracted to produce the interpretation for the WAW in 2014, to show where geosite signage already existed and what themes were covered, but there has been no feedback to date.<br>A meeting should be arranged with FI WAW team to discuss what is planned and how it is being implemented. | Organise meeting with FI and Congella McGuire to discuss WAW signage and interpretation | CG & ZH |
| Item 9: Links with B3 working group | Meeting followed by B3 meeting re An Cabhail Mhor project (Minutes forwarded by Joanne Gaffrey)   |   |         |
|                                     | Next meeting : June 8 <sup>th</sup> .   |   |         |