



**B2 WORKING GROUP
SLIEVE CARRAN
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT
REPORT**

5-9-14

The B2 working group undertook an on-site assessment at the Slieve Carran demonstration site on Wednesday, September 3, 2014 between 10am and 1pm.

In attendance were: Christine Grant (NMS), Dick Cronin (Clare County Council), Eamon Doyle (Geopark), Sharon Parr (BFCP), Emma Glanville (NPWS), Enda Mooney (NPWS), Ken Curley (OPW), Gerry Salmon (OPW) and Zena Hoctor (consultant)

Points from the discussion

- The interpretation available at the site is dated and confusing - the NPWS are currently looking at developing a more uniform system of signage and interpretation throughout the National Park. The BurrenLIFE panel is reaching its 'use-by' date as the 5 year post project audit is due next year and the signage will no longer be required. The information presented could be updated and perhaps incorporated into new signage.
- The demonstration site is divided in two by the road. Both parcels of land are state owned and managed by the NPWS and a local farmer holds the grazing rights. To the north of the road the land is designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and classified Category 4; the section to the south of the road is part of the Burren National Park and is Category 2. The south parcel was a demonstration site for the BurrenLife Farming for Conservation Project.
- Although some trampling impact from cattle is visible along the brown walking trail - this is minimal and the habitat has a chance to recover when the cattle are removed from these areas, as is the practice under the agreed grazing regime with both the NPWS and the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP). Further along the trail, where the soil cover increases, there has been erosion due to visitors in the past. A gravel path was laid approx. 4-5 years ago and this has alleviated the problem. However there are no 'before' or 'after' photographs/surveys for this work and so the improvement is based on verbal record. In order to obtain baseline ecological information on the condition of the trail which will inform future monitoring to measure visitor impact, it is recommended that fixed point photography methodology is used in preference to quadrat surveying as this is more cost effective, less time consuming and can be repeated more easily. Emma Glanville (NPWS Conservation Ranger) is currently carrying out this type of survey on the Parks designated walking trails at Mullaghmore.
- The cluster of monuments surrounding MacDuach's Oratory appears to be within an area of the NNR that has been omitted from the site boundary maps. Ownership of this parcel of land and its exact location is uncertain at present. The monuments are recorded monuments and as such have a level of protection under the National Monuments Act. However neither the OPW nor NMS have any responsibility in the maintenance of these monuments at present.
- Access to the monuments is along a narrow access path under a grove of hazel and then a short ascent through rock outcrop. This area is mucky underfoot, eroding and in need of management action. A staged approach has been suggested in

which each stage is implemented and monitored to determine whether the impact has been lessened and whether there is a need to move onto the next stage: (Stage 1) cutting back the surrounding hazel to let light and air in to dry out the soil of the pathway (Stage 2) installation of a narrow path with geotextile base and gravel top layer (Stage 3) widening of path if necessary. Any management action to be taken has to be agreed by all partners and receive departmental approval. The assessment reports agreed below will inform further on the condition here.

The work agreements:

- Christine Grant (NMS) and Dick Cronin (Clare Co. Co.) (with input from Ken Curley OPW) will undertake a Condition Assessment of the archaeological monuments in early October with a draft report to be circulated by Oct 13th.
- Enda Mooney (NPWS) to check out folios for ownership of parcel of land which is not included within the NNR boundary.
- Emma Glanville (NPWS) and Sharon Parr (BFCP) to carry out assessment of ecological impacts along the trail - identifying where improvements have been made in the past and how these have worked; where problems are still occurring and making recommendations for future management of the trail.
- Eamon Doyle (Geopark) to determine whether there are any impacts on the geology along the trail.
- Zena Hctor to prepare information on the access/site information and assessing the other 6 demonstration sites in order to determine how the assessment techniques we are developing can be transferable between sites. Also to work with Sharon Parr to look at the BFCP scoring system and explore how the working group can develop a scoring system for the 7 demonstration sites and with Emma Glanville on the path survey work she has been carrying out on the National Park trails and how a similar survey can be extended to Slieve Carran.
- Elsewhere the Millward Brown Visitor Survey will be starting tomorrow (Sept 5th) and will continue throughout the month of September. Observation Studies will be taking place this weekend (Sept 6-7) by CAAS Ltd. and Zena Hctor will be carrying out further observation at all sites (using the same template) throughout September.

The next working group meeting was set for **Wednesday Oct 15th (10am - 1pm)**.