



Action Tourism Enterprises (B1)

Working Group & Advisory Group Joint Meeting

13th May 2015

Attendees: Frances Connole, Laura Cotter, Tracey Duffy, Michael Fitzsimons, Carol Gleeson, Niall Hughes, Tina O'Dwyer, Michael Roberts, Christy Sinclair, Martin Waldron

CC: Birgitta Curtin, Karen Foley, Michael Roberts

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AGENDA:

1. Roles of the Working Group and Advisory Group
2. Objectives of *Action Tourism Enterprises (B1)*
3. Review of progress to date
4. Review process May 2015
5. Working Group targets & actions
6. Approach & schedule of meetings

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ITEM	TOPIC	ACTION
1	<p>Welcome & Introductions</p> <p>CG outlined the 3 strands of the GeoparkLIFE project and general overview of progress on B1 to date, which benefitted from being a 'work-in-progress' prior to the LIFE programme starting.</p> <p>CG explained that B1 Co-ordinator position currently being tendered and that Tina O'Dwyer was present to update on previous contract and also to gather feedback as part of the review that she is contracted through B.E.N. to undertake in May.</p>	
2.	<p>Roles of Working Group & Advisory Group</p> <p>CG explained that the B1 Working Group is a sub-group of the GeoparkLIFE Steering Group and its function is to help manage the work programme for Action B1 and to report back to the steering group and the half-yearly meetings. Generally, the working groups meet every 2-3 months.</p> <p>An Advisory Group previously worked with Burren Connect. Some members of this group have volunteered to continue as advisors to</p>	

	<p>the GeoparkLIFE programme, and are augmented with new members. The advisory and working groups will meet together mostly and at times, may be more appropriate to meet separately. Advisory Group Members are: Frances Connole, Birgitta Curtin, Niall Hughes and Michael Roberts.</p> <p>It was confirmed that Working Group or Advisory Group members who were participating on a voluntary basis would have expenses covered by GeoparkLIFE. It was also agreed that consideration should be given to reducing expense/effort on their part e.g. printing documentation in advance.</p>	<p>Carol to advise process</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Objectives of Action Tourism Enterprises & Progress to Date 4 steps provided for Tourism Enterprises under Action B1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve environmental impact 2. Improve economic impact 3. Resource Planning for enterprise 4. Implementing the plan <p>Indicators for each step are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of environmental management techniques comparing pre- and post-training • Attitudes and beliefs of business owners as to whether their business has been strengthened as a result of the programme • The number of businesses preparing new business plans • Number of enterprises undertaking new activity as a result of the programme <p>Can report good progress on Steps 1 and 2 as outlined in the B1 Progress Report of March 2015 that has been distributed to group members. Steps 3 and 4 now in need of focus and action. The original overall objective of having 100 enterprises complete a training programme of 2000 days has been revised, with the Project now prioritising quality over quantity across all indicators.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Review Process May 2015 Consultation is taking place with members of the B.E.N. and within the Geopark Management Team to review activity to date, with particular emphasis on the Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice for Tourism (and related toolkits, training and evaluation) and the nature of the partnership between B.E.N. and GeoparkLIFE. Views of the Working Group and Steering Group were sought on all aspects of the review.</p> <p>Much discussion centred around the role of the Code of Practice into the future, particularly in the context of maintaining quality standards and requirements/desirability of third party certification for all B.E.N. members. The following key points were agreed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. From an external perspective, third-party certification is credible and it validates our own claims about ourselves. Developments in certification at global and national level should be monitored. ii. The question of whether third-party certification is a requirement for membership of B.E.N. rests with the B.E.N. membership itself. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. It would be a mistake to keep changing the goalposts. Arising from this review process, a clear decision on how to proceed should be made and then adhered to. iv. Overall, final consensus seemed to be that the Code of Practice is a good thing, and, while it needs some refinement, it has the potential to become a real solution for small enterprises/networks within the Geopark and also in other locations nationally and internationally. v. In order to create a transferable Code of Practice, focus on : making the training/mentoring leaner, creating a user-friendly intuitive manual, fixing the known issues on the toolkit and rationalising the toolkit, streamlining the reporting methodology, examining the potential for an online reporting and evaluation system vi. If this were a system that truly met a business need and supported the sustainable development of tourism enterprises, a case could be made to Fáilte Ireland to consider it as an official standard. vii. Time to move it out of the pilot stage and into a consolidation/transferable stage. 	
4.	<p>Working Group Programme & Actions</p> <p>1. Future Training Programmes</p> <p>Discussion concluded that a key objective should be to provide more mentoring support to enterprises to facilitate progress on Code of Practice variables, especially through identifying mentors within the Network.</p> <p>Need to establish the best approach to the ‘Resource Planning’ component of GeoparkLIFE. Discussion concluded that ‘Resource Planning’ should focus on business planning/strategic planning for the Network, rather than on the individual enterprises within it. This with a view to the Network being a catalyst for similar activity at individual enterprise level. Fáilte Ireland may be able to assist with solid supports on business planning for individual enterprises, but interest and willingness to engage are essential.</p> <p>Detailed discussion on the ‘Implementation’ Component was reserved for later meetings, as this element will be dependent on the outcomes of the ‘Resource Planning’ phase.</p> <p>In order to be able to commit training supports for 2016, Fáilte Ireland require requests to be made in September or October of this year. 2015 spend is already allocated. It is not possible for Fáilte Ireland to commit resources to the end of the project due to the system of annual budget allocation by central government. This is a similar situation for Clare County Council, Environment Section, which is also currently under-resourced. In this context, the statutory functions of the Council are primary. The GeoparkLIFE programme is very</p>	<p>MF to discuss within Fáilte Ireland</p> <p>GeoparkLIFE to provide information to Fáilte Ireland in October.</p> <p>TD & CG to follow</p>

	<p>relevant to the Environment section, and would be good fit for future support. This needs to be discussed with senior management in CCC.</p> <p>2. Measurement & Evaluation Methodology Group reviewed the measurement and evaluation methodology presented in the B1 Progress Report of March 2015, and were asked to consider this further before the next meeting to ensure it was fit for purpose for remainder of programme. Consider the usefulness of data outside of LIFE reporting requirements and ensure all relevant data is being collected. Having strong, quantifiable outcomes is essential to overall objectives of the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark.</p> <p>Group agreed that a move away from collecting actual aggregate consumption/reduction data from enterprises towards capturing trends and indicators outlined in methodology would be preferable. Trends could be supported with high quality case studies, which themselves would incorporate benchmarks and targets, as a means of illustrating potential and desired outcomes.</p> <p>3. Targets It was suggested that the next meeting should include a focus on setting tangible targets for Action Tourism Enterprises (B1), that would form part of the overall 3 year strategic plan.</p>	<p>up within Environment Section.</p> <p>All</p> <p>B1 Co-ordinator & Communications Co-ordinator.</p> <p>All for next meeting.</p>
5.	<p>Future Meetings The next two meetings will be held on: Monday, 29th June 2015, 10.30am-12.30pm. Venue TBC. 28th September 2015, 10.30am-12.30pm. Venue TBC.</p>	