



Action Tourism Enterprises (B1)

Working Group & Advisory Group Joint Meeting

23rd June 2016

Attendees: Laura Cotter, Birgitte Curtin, Tracey Duffy, Michael Fitzsimons, Carol Gleeson, Tina O'Dwyer, Martin Waldron (part)

Apologies: Frances Connole, Karen Foley, Niall Hughes

CC: Frances Connole, Michael Roberts

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AGENDA:

1. Review of Actions Arising 04.02.2016
2. Project Update: Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice for Tourism
3. Project Update: B.E.N. Strategic Plan
4. EU Life Monitoring & Evaluation for Action B1
5. Review of Training Supports Autumn 2015-Spring 2016-06-20
6. Plan for Training Supports for Tourism Enterprises Autumn 2016-Spring 2017
7. AOB

ITEM	TOPIC	ACTION	DEADLINE
1	<p>Review of Actions 04.02.2016 LC & CS to carry over action on quantifying benefits of B.E.N. through creating infographics. All other actions completed.</p> <p><u>Updates arising from review of actions:</u> Mentor for Burren Food Trail: MF confirmed that Fáilte Ireland will allocate a mentor to Food Trail to look at financial sustainability strategy. 1.5 days total – ½ day financials, ½ day sales and marketing and ½ day to revert to group and tie up. TOD and BC enthusiastic about this support. TOD expressed concern that it's a little late in the year now and may need to be pushed out. BC highlighted a recent course that ran regarding making events financially sustainable – unable to attend; MF pointed out that there's also a webinar on FI on this topic by Caeman</p>	<p>LC & CS</p> <p>TOD To liaise with MF and BFT</p>	

	<p>Wall. BC highlighted that sponsorship is a real option and that the true opportunity lies in finding manpower – somebody that on a continuous basis markets and develops the festival e.g. Litfest and Kerrygold. MF highlighted that any sponsor like FI will need to see a financial strategy to ensure the festival is self-sustaining over time. TOD felt developing a sound plan is not difficult but the plan is always weakened by its reliance on voluntary manpower. BC shared that Burren Smokehouse sponsors the Slow Food Festival through paying a member of staff to work on it.</p> <p>BC suggested we could pull projects maybe through universities with MF contributing that the GMIT event management course includes practical placement. BC felt that platform is there, not only for festivals and food trail, but also for Geopark. BC suggested a small working group to proceed with this.</p> <p>TOD hoped that the food story, which is the best marketing story available to group, is allowed to fly and reach its potential. Involvement of Executive and wider group is necessary and TOD invited Executive to attend the mentoring sessions. CS and MW confirmed that they will attend.</p> <p>Festival Funding 2016 MF confirmed it has to be spent this year. Invoices must be in 2016. MF to check if 50% can be paid upfront this year.</p> <p>“What’s the Big Idea?” programme “The Big Idea” programme has just closed and will run again. This is idea for projects that don’t meet the more demanding criteria for festival funding.</p> <p>MF proposed, LC seconded.</p>	CS & MW	
2.	<p>Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice for Tourism TOD presented the proposed new Code of Practice and circulated to group – Attachment 1. Intended to be clearer, more accessible and more holistic. TOD also circulated a draft Self Check list.</p> <p>MF: Suggested that this be designed up as a poster with Geopark branding and framed for display in all businesses. TOD confirmed that this will happen.</p> <p>TD: expressed some concern that ‘protection’ or ‘environmental protection’ is not mentioned in the 2 documents circulating, highlighting that this is the bread and butter of the Council and the core of what it’s all about. TOD explained that the Code would be situated on a system or in a manual which will have a foreword and context and that this would be communicated there. TOD also communicated that the approach was to use ‘layman’s language’ and to encourage involvement on the journey and that the job of</p>	TOD & LC	

	<p>enforcement and communicating legislation was not the remit of the Code. TD understood this view and still felt that a stronger place for the principle of protection should be included. TD concerned that the current version of the Code as a framed poster will be missing the key principle of ‘environmental protection’, which she feels is widely understood.</p> <p>MF wondered if the Code package would include information on regulations. TOD confirmed that it would not as there would be a job of work to ensure it was always up to date. Also for the reason that all businesses are subject to the laws and regulations of the country irrespective of whether or no they are in B.E.N., and so the Code did not need to cover this.</p> <p>TOD working towards a Code submission date of mid January. CS highlighted that the B.E.N. Executive have decided on a 23rd December submission deadline to tie in to membership year. TOD and BC expressed concerns as to the viability of this date. CG suggested that B.E.N’s calendar year might start on 1st February to allow for this. CS & TOD to review and agree.</p>	<p>TOD to review</p> <p>TOD & Executive</p>	
3	<p>Project Update: BEN Strategic Plan</p> <p>TOD updated on the new context for the B.E.N. Strategic Plan: LEADER funding now with CLDC and potentially €60k available for animator with some other funds available for marketing; Clare County Council confirmation that their support to the Burren after LIFE would be the Geopark Manager and Geologist; Failte Ireland has designated the Burren for a focused ‘Experience Development Planning Programme’ from September. TOD highlighted that there are lots of positive opportunities and asked the group to consider how we mobilise to take advantage of this and ensure a strong AfterLIFE strategy. MF highlighted that if FI are involved in creating a plan, it will also be involved in implementing it and supporting it in the AfterLIFE period. Update on developments on strategic plan sought from CG and CS.</p> <p>CS: update on network: have been working on long-term view of what they can do without funding. They have focused on ‘worst case scenario’ and what can be continued based on member fees alone. Executive happy that the B.E.N. can continue to work well based on fees alone and that most of the marketing and training could be managed by a greater member contribution. A mindset exists in the Network that the Geopark will step in and do work and this needs to change. If this changes and members step up to do more, then the Executive feels much of the programme is manageable.</p> <p>CG: expressed view that it is not realistic to expect plan, programme and management to come from member</p>		

<p>volunteer time.</p> <p>TOD: expressed the view that this approach did not take account of the significant time required to complete marketing and training programmes e.g. 2-3 days to co-ordinate a FAM Trip itinerary.</p> <p>BC: expressed concern that this approach would result in ad hoc activity and urged the group to be more ambitious and go after what's out there.</p> <p>LC: pointed out that all of the marketing actions are completed by her in the main, even the content for burren.ie website. There is no obvious capacity within the group to take on marketing tasks and there's also a question of objectivity.</p> <p>MF: felt there's an issue with internal communication and his sense is that the average member doesn't know there's a real crossroads coming.</p> <p>CS: felt members are aware and there's a feeling of uncertainty within the group. He also felt that a main reason why there's no obvious capacity to run marketing and training is that members have not had to do this to date, there's always been the safety net of the Geopark. The Executive plan for this to change.</p> <p>MF: suggested the members lobby the County Council based on an ambitious plan. Why now, after so much funds invested by Europe and other stakeholders, is Clare County Council pulling back? This question needs to be asked.</p> <p>CG: felt there could be a strong case for lobbying Clare County Council to retain management of the Code of Practice.</p> <p>MF: suggested that B.E.N. really needs to be sharp on identifying new avenues of funding. For example, every training event run by B.E.N. could have a €1 cover fee towards costs of co-ordination; contribution boxes could be set up beside Code of Practice poster in visitor centres and attractions; online contribution button could be installed.</p> <p>TOD: suggested a series of short meetings with members, in locations around the region to update on the large opportunities now presenting and to seek input into the final plan. The plan must be complete by September with a view to engaging in a positive, upbeat and ambitious fashion with County, LEADER and Fáilte Ireland.</p> <p>CS & MW: on behalf of B.E.N. Executive, authorised Tina to go ahead and invite members to these meetings with a view to completing strategy and being ready for September.</p>		
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	<p>BC: contributed that the time to act is now and that it will be too late if left for a few months.</p> <p>TOD: emphasised need for a strong vision and upbeat, positive communication. All developments are positive and the opportunities available to B.E.N. are significant.</p>		
4	<p>EU Life Monitoring & Evaluation Action B1</p> <p>TOD proposed changing the indicator that relates to the Resource Planning element of Action B1. Initially, the indicator was the number of businesses preparing business plans. However, since GeoparkLIFE is not focussing on a plan for the B.E.N. rather than individual businesses, TOD proposed changing this indicator to ‘the creation of a viable sustainability plan for the B.E.N.’.</p> <p>MF questioned if this was wise as it would make more sense to get the members to all have a plan before concentrating on a plan for the Network.</p> <p>TOD advised that this change in approach was discussed and agreed in 2014 and that the intention is that the collective strategic planning process would filter down to individual members. BC and CG also contributed that a strong Network plan could provide a framework that members could leverage and align with in their own business plans.</p> <p>MF: suggested we include an indicator of ‘having a business plan’ in the Code of Practice self-check list. This was agreed.</p> <p>The change of reporting indicator for Resource Planning was agreed.</p>	TOD	
5.	<p>Review of Training Supports Cycle 3</p> <p>TOD presented an overview of training provision to Tourism Enterprises under GeoparkLIFE in Cycle 3, October 2015-May 2016 – see Attachment 2.</p> <p>In response to queries from MF, CG and MW, TOD clarified that the spend indicated on this overview related only to amounts invoiced to GeoparkLIFE and paid out directly (external trainers, transport, refreshments and venue hire). It did not account for the ‘value’ of the training (CS pointed out that the value is higher than the actual cost) or the direct invoiced cost to Fáilte Ireland, the cost of co-ordinator time or the cost/value of the LAPN contribution.</p> <p>A true reflection of cost and value should be developed.</p> <p>TOD highlighted that the feedback on Cycle 3 training provision was extremely positive.</p>	TOD	
6.	<p>Review of Suggested Training Supports for Tourism Enterprises Cycle 4</p> <p>TOD outlined proposals for training provision for October 2016-March 2017 as well as estimated cost of €23,000. See</p>		

	<p>Attachment 3. Suggestion that a module on Business Planning be added to this.</p> <p>MF advised that the best way to feed into the Failte Ireland training provision going forward is to feed it into the Linked IN system. Send requirements through this forum.</p> <p>MF highlighted how the GeoparkLIFE obligations of Failte Ireland have enabled him to tailor the training to the needs of the Burren and this has proven to be very effective. Failte Ireland are now taking this approach with other destinations.</p>	<p>TOD & MF</p> <p>TOD</p>	
	<p>Request for Enterprise Survey feedback tomorrow TOD requested feedback on the draft Enterprise Survey as it will be sent within the coming week.</p> <p>MF highlighted that the contribution of individual members of the Network needs to be evaluated.</p>	<p>All</p>	
	<p>AOB Change of Date: The date of the next meeting is moved to 6th October, 2016.</p> <p>Booking System: MF: Where is the 'booking system' at? TOD said this comes up regularly for discussion but there are not actions on it and so no progress. CG – MAP group really wanted to push this. Is there anybody that could identify exactly what needs to be done with it? TOD: Need to stop skirting around it and grasp the nettle. MF: each of the providers have to look at %'s they're paying to booking agents and identify how much they're losing % wise. Then they would have to say we'll put a % of that % into our own booking system. Incentive is within that to contribute to their own area. If your own website is strong enough, people are now moving away from bookings.com. Make it easy for people to book directly – this is something the Irish trade isn't doing right now. TOD: establishing a booking system is a 100% commercial business – somebody needs to see the gap in the market and go for it. A private enterprise could be supported in doing this LC: Anthony Molony very good at managing channels as are Hotel Doolin. Some expertise within the group.</p>		



Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark

Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism

By adopting the Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism, we commit to a process of continuous improvement in sustainable tourism practice. We observe the following principles and practices:

Working Together

We collaborate with all stakeholders to collectively develop the Geopark as a sustainable tourism destination.

A cared-for landscape

We actively participate in conserving our natural and cultural heritage.

A well-understood heritage

We offer quality information and interpretation to communicate our stories and the unique character of our place to guests.

Vibrant Communities

We work to ensure that tourism makes a positive social contribution so that it benefits our community as well as our guests.

Strengthened Livelihoods

We contribute to the local economy by maintaining and supporting local employment, by sourcing services and produce locally wherever possible, and by engaging with other businesses in promoting our region as a sustainable tourism destination.

Sustainable tourism management

We work to an Environmental Action Plan, which includes targets for improvement that are reviewed annually. We have effective systems for monitoring and adequately managing our waste, water, wastewater and energy.

ATTACHMENT 2: OVERVIEW OF TRAINING PROVISION 2015-16



Enterprise Training & Networking Programme – 2015-2016

Date	Topic	Eligible Participants	Actual Attendance	%
20.10.2015	Accommodation Providers Strategy Workshop 1	12	8	66%
24.11.2015	Accommodation Providers Strategy Workshop 2	12	8	66%
08.12.2015	Contracting for International Business	30	17	57%
27.01.2016	Digital Mobile World	25	21	84%
03.02.2016	Creating Content on Your Website	25	20	80%
15.02.2016	Geopark Heritage Interpretation – Session 1	15	15	100%
22.02.2016	Geopark Heritage Interpretation – Session 2	15	13	87%
23.02.2016	Geopark Heritage Interpretation – Session 3	15	12	80%
29.02.2016	Geopark Heritage Interpretation – Session 4	15	14	93%
01.03.2016	Invasive Alien Species Workshop	14	11	79%
07.03.2016	Geopark Heritage Interpretation – Session 5	15	10	67%
09.03.2016	Geopark Code of Practice Refresher Workshop	42	15	36%
14.03.2016	Geopark Heritage Interpretation – Session 6	15	14	93%
21.03.2016	Geopark Heritage Interpretation – Session 7	15	11	79%
19.04.2016	B.E.N. FAM Trip 1	25	23	92%
25.04.2016	B.E.N. FAM Trip 2	25	21	84%
03.05.2016	Geopark Heritage Interpretation – Session 8	15	11	79%
17.05.2016	B.E.N. FAM Trip 3	25	21	84%
TOTALS		355	265	75%

Events: 18

Days: 355 training days. 75% average attendance.



Overview of Training Geopark LIFE programme to date

Training Cycle	Number of Training Events	Total Training Day Provision	Approximate Cost	Number of Businesses
Oct 2013-May 2014	23	512	10100	52
Oct 2014-May 2015	26	727	16700	57 (45+12)
Oct 2015-May 2016	18	355	11000	42
<i>Cycle 4</i>				
OVERALL TOTALS	67	1594	37800	

Anticipated Provision Cycle 4

<i>Oct 2016-March 2017</i>	22	500	23000	50
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Attachment 3: Draft Schedule of Training – Cycle 4 (October 2016-March 2017)



Train the Trainer	September – October
Vision Day & New Members	11 th October
GHI Showcase Event	19 th October
Cycling Workshop	25 th October
Code Workshops & Mentoring	19 th October – 10 th January
Deadline for Code Submissions	10 th January
Geopark LIFE Awards Night	19 th January
Geopark Heritage Interpretation	17 th January – 4 th March