



The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark Newsletter

Welcome to the third edition of our newsletter, your guide to what the Geopark is all about, with updates on the GeoparkLIFE project, events, education initiatives and much more....

Influential visitors to the Geopark

The Geopark and the Burren Ecotourism Network played hosts to a number of international visitors earlier in the summer.

Firstly a group of international journalists came to sample the award-winning Burren Food Trail as a result of its success in the European Destination of Excellence Awards last year. The Journalists from Germany, Spain and the United States travelled here to meet the producers, sample their produce and to ex-

perience the food heritage of the Burren.

We also played host to the National Geographic, this time the Editor at large Costas Christ was visiting to write a piece on our destination for the National Geographic Traveller Magazine. As one of the world's most widely read travel magazine they focus their stories on sustainable destinations, championing local experience that benefit and support local people, their livelihoods and the landscape.

The Geopark has also been selected as one of two Global Geoparks by Korean Broadcasting Systems to be the focus of a documentary on how Geoparks work. The documentary style programme was filmed in July and will focus on the sustainable co-existence of humans and nature, practice in education, community activity and sustainable tourism. Our Geopark was recommended through the UNESCO Global Geoparks programme.



Above left: Thomas Haver, Frances Fulsom, Franz Attenburger and Saul Cepeda who visited as part of the EDEN Award. Photograph by David Ruffles. Above right: Costas Christ and his wife Sally with Ralph Doyle at the Burren Perfumery



Strengthening of ties with China

A delegation from Yunnan Province in the People's Republic of China visited the Geopark in early June to further progress the Friendship Park Agreement signed between the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and Shilin Geopark.

During the visit the delegation, which was led by Liu Huiyan, Vice Governor of the People's Government of Yunnan Province (pictured), received an extensive tour of the Geopark and an overview on our education, community and sustainable tourism programmes.





Education

The Burren Rocks Festival

The Burren Rocks Festival which combines outdoor activity and adventure with geology and the landscape took place on the 28th and 29th May. The Festival forms part of the European Geoparks Network week, a European wide festival of Geoparks aimed at promoting their geological heritage.

The theme for this year's festival, was Bedrock, Boulders and Bears. The programme of events featured cave tours, walks, climbing, cycling, a talk, an exhibition of bear remains and a teddy bears picnic to celebrate 40 years of Aillwee Cave.



Right: Edward bear of Aillwee cave celebrated his landmark 40th Birthday with a Teddy bears picnic in the woodlands at Aillwee. The red cross youth were also on hand to 'Triage' any sick teddies.



Above left: Nigel Monaghan, Keeper, Natural History at the National History Museum (centre) gave a talk at Aillwee Cave during the festival on Brown Bears in the Irish Ice-Age.

Above right: The Natural History Museum provided an exhibition of bear remains that were on display at Aillwee Cave during the festival

Learning in the landscape

The Second annual Geology Field School took place in the Geopark in early June. Developed by Dr. Eamon Doyle in collaboration with Caherconnell Archaeological Field School and NUI Galway, the field school teaches students about the world-class geology of the Burren. The students that visited the Geopark to attend the field school have come from various American universities and will earn credits towards their US degrees as a result of their studies in the Burren.



The students undertook a number of field trips lead by experts including Dr. John Murray of the Earth and Ocean Sciences Department in NUI, Galway (pictured above left) and Dr. Eamon Doyle (pictured above right)





Burren Ecotourism Nominees in Responsible Tourism Awards

The long list for the 2016 Irish Responsible Tourism Awards was announced in June with 5 members of the Burren Ecotourism Network and the Geopark featuring among eight nominees from Clare.

The Geopark has been named in the Best Destination category while the Cliffs of Moher is in the running for the Best for Accessible/Inclusive Tourism category.



Both Doolin Cave and the Burren Nature Sanctuary have been named in the Best for Natural Heritage Tourism category.

Sea View House, Doolin have been named alongside last

years winners Hotel Doolin in in the category for Best Accommodation for Local Sourcing.

A shortlist will be revealed at the beginning of September and award winners will be announced in October. The awards are part of the World Responsible Tourism Awards family which are the most rigorously judged responsible tourism awards in the world.

Talking Sustainable Tourism with KBS News

Korean Broadcasting Systems, the national public broadcaster of South Korea, visited the Geopark in July to do a documentary style programme on Geopark. The film crew visited the Cliffs of Moher, as well as several heritage sites and monuments in the Burren, we spoke about our GeoparkLIFE project, our conservation and sustainable tourism initiatives with the Burren Ecotourism Network and of course geology!



Above left: Ger Dollard, Clare County Council with Kim Ki-Hyn of KBS News at the Geopark Office. Above right: the KBS team at the Cliffs of Moher documenting the geology of the Cliffs. Below left: Filming the conservation initiative 'Adopt a Hedgerow' at the Boghill Centre. Below right: the KBS crew interviewing Siobhan at St. Tola on her efforts to promote sustainable transport throughout her business.





GeoparkLIFE

GeoparkLIFE: A Partnership

In the first edition of our newsletter we introduced and profiled some of our partners; Clare County Council, who manage and co-fund the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, the Geological Survey of Ireland, who supported the application for Geopark status and who continue to support and co-fund the Geopark and Fáilte Ireland,

We also wrote about local partnerships and the work we are doing with the Burren Ecotourism Network, the Kilinaboy Historical and heritage group and the Ballyvaughan Community Development Group. In this edition we would like to introduce our agency and

university partners who are contributing enormously to our GeoparkLIFE project.

Our GeoparkLIFE project began in October 2012, the essence of the project is to balance the needs of tourism and conservation in the Geopark region. To do this we are working with our agency partners to develop an integrated management strategy for the conservation of our landscape and its heritage resources while providing access and quality interpretation for visitors. Through the conservation section of this programme, we have been working on several projects



based on our seven demonstration sites. Our partners have been contributing their expertise and guidance throughout this process and have been active contributors through our working groups. Below is a brief introduction to some of the projects they have been involved with.



The Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht: The Heritage Division of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht are active contributors to GeoparkLIFE through the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the National Monuments Service (NMS), each of these agencies provide invaluable advice and resources to the GeoparkLIFE visitor management programme.

The National parks and Wildlife service: The regional office of NPWS have been working with GeoparkLIFE on the development of an app based system to monitor visitor impact on designated walking trails, recording of visitor movement and behaviour through and around the Burren National park in order to determine visitor impacts and develop adaptive management strategies in response.

The National Monuments Service: provides guidance with regard to legislation and policy relating to archaeological monuments. Their advice and guidance has been invaluable to GeoparkLIFE in the exploration of developing community based conservation projects and the legislative requirements involved.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) has provided valuable baseline data and carried out assessments of the condition of monuments. They have provided guidance with regard to the recording of change, monitoring of condition and development of conservation management strategies for monuments. The OPW have been particularly active in the development of our proposed conservation actions for the monuments at Ballyallaban and An Cahermore.



GeoparkLIFE Funding Partners



Clare County Council
Comhairle Contae an Chláir



An Chomhairle Oidhreacht
The Heritage Council



An Roinn
Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta
Department of
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh





The Heritage Council: The Heritage Council’s vision is that the value of our heritage is enjoyed, managed and protected for the vital contribution that it makes to our identity, well-being and future. They are providing support to the GeoparkLIFE project through the development of a specific GeoparkLIFE section on their GIS Heritage Map Viewer. This will be a vital tool for presenting data which has been collected over the course of the GeoparkLIFE project as well as providing a unique landscape database for the Burren region.



National University of Ireland, Galway: Dr. Tiernan Henry, hydrologist in the Earth and Ocean Sciences Department at NUIG is developing a Groundwater Catchment Awareness Programme which involves an MSc student working with Transition Year students at Lisdoonvarna Secondary School and producing an integrated catchment map for the local Aille River. The students will then develop a toolkit which can be used by other schools for their own local rivers. This project is part of The Conservation Management part of the GeoparkLIFE project and ties in with the EU Water Framework Directive



All partners have been working in co-operation through the GeoparkLIFE working group to assess our demonstration sites in a holistic manner with the aim of developing integrated management strategies for the future. We thank them for their valuable contributions.

Above left: GeoparkLIFE partners attending a training day provided by the National disability authority. Above Centre: Our GeoparkLIFE partners working together at a steering committee meeting. Above right: GeoparkLIFE partners on a site visit.



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN: UCD School of Archaeology is Ireland’s leading centre for archaeological education and research. Professor Gabriel Cooney and Joanne Gaffery have been providing coordination and research support to the GeoparkLIFE project.

Prof Gabriel Cooney: Gabriel has been Professor of Celtic Archaeology at UCD since 2008 has been contributing to the GeoparkLIFE project by looking at the of the current state of the policies affecting the natural and built heritage, the environment and the tourism sectors in the Burren region with a view to making recommendations in terms of the integration of policies that govern these areas.



Joanne Gaffery: Joanne’s role in the GeoparkLIFE is to coordinate the community stakeholders as they participate in active conservation in the Burren. Her focus is on developing the skills base of the groups she works with in the understanding, management and conservation of natural and cultural heritage which reinforce the tourism and conservation management components of the project.



The key feature of her work is to coordinate and monitor the active conservation efforts of six chosen case studies. She follows and documents their progress and will work to create transferrable toolkits for community groups engaging in active conservation projects. As well as this, Joanne’s work with UCD as a project partner also involves looking at the policies that impact on the actions of the case study groups and how these policies are being implemented with a view to making recommendations for the future.





GeoparkLIFE



Back left to right: John Kelly, John Walsh, Tiernan Henry, Eamon Doyle, John Murray, JP Moore, Ted McCormack and David Drew. Kneeling left to right: Colin Bunce, Lawrence Gill, Yvonne O'Connell and Phillip Schuler

FIELD MEETING IN THE CARRON DEPRESSION

A Field meeting was held in Carron in May to discuss the origin and significance of the Carron Depression. Organised by Colin Bunce of the Burren Outdoor Education Centre, and supported by the GeoparkLIFE project and NUIG, the meeting brought together many of the leading researchers in the country who are currently working on various aspects of the geology and hydrology of the Burren.

This is the first time that experts from a range of disciplines have come together to discuss one specific aspect of the Burren and this holistic approach to research is key to a fuller understanding of not only the Carron Depression but the Geology and Hydrology of the Geopark as a whole.

The Carron Depression is at the heart of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. It is perhaps the most significant and enigmatic of the Geopark Geosites; these sites were chosen as they showcase locations that highlight signifi-

cant geological, hydrological, archaeological or cultural features of the Geopark.

The Carron Depression (an example of a feature known as a Polje), is a huge basin with a total area of 8 square kilometres which has been eroded into the limestone to a depth of 50m. The next similar feature is 3,000 km away in Romania!

The Carron Depression is most famous for being an elevated Turlough, or seasonal lake. Situated almost 100m above the regional water table it is significant for its role in controlling groundwater which flows from the Burren uplands to the source of the River Fergus at Kilnaboy.

The field meeting attempted to address questions such as: why is this large depression situated here, what geological structures controlled its origins and where does the water go to?

Colin Bunce brought together Dr Eamon Doyle (BCM Geopark); Drs. David Drew and Lawrence Gill (TCD); Dr John Walsh; Drs. John Murray, Tiernan Henry and

Yvonne O'Connell (NUIG) and researchers Ted McCormack, JP Moore and Phillip Schuler.

The group assembled at the NUIG research station in Carron for a morning of presentations and discussions. The afternoon session was a series of site visits to get a closer look at specific aspects of the Carron Depression.

An initial general consensus is that ancient structural folds and joints which were the result of a tectonic collision almost 300 million years ago are the underlying basis for the Carron Depression with subsequent erosion particularly over the last 10 million years and the presence clay layers within the limestone controlling the development of groundwater conduits and its current shape and behaviour as a Turlough.

It is hoped that following further research a definitive publication on the formation and significance of the Carron Depression can be presented for publication.





GeoparkLIFE Heritage Interpretation

Between February and May this year sixteen activity providers from the Burren Ecotourism Network took part in the first GeoparkLIFE Burren Heritage Interpretation Training Course. The aim of the training was to provide the participants with an understanding of the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Burren landscape in order to enhance the interpretation of this resource through the participants own businesses.

The geology and geomorphology; archaeology and architecture; ecology and biodiversity; conservation and visitor management of the Burren were all put under scrutiny and many lively discussions followed.

The majority of the course was field based with Gleninagh Castle, Cahermore Caher, Glenisheen wedge tomb, Carran Church, Kilfenora Cathedral, Killinaboy Church, the Burren National Park, Glencolumbcille penitential stations, Templecronan Early Christian site, Slieve Carran

Nature Reserve, the Flaggy Shore, Corcomroe Abbey and Lisdoonvarna Spa Wells all included in the itinerary.

Led by Zena Hctor and coordinated by Tina O'Dwyer the course linked the GeoparkLIFE programme objectives of developing sustainable practices among tourism businesses and developing integrated management practices at heritage sites.

Each participant is currently applying their learning through the development of a practical project connected to their own business. The results of their work will be put on display in October 2016.

Many thanks to the guest lecturers on the course – Dr Christy Cunniffe (Archaeologist), Dr Eamon Doyle (Geologist), Paddy Dunne (Lisdoonvarna Fáilte) and Emma Glanville (NPWS) – for sharing their vast knowledge of our local heritage in a friendly and accessible manner.



Above photo was captured by Oonagh O'Dwyer during a field trip and is titled a 'Burren Tomb'



Above right: Members of the Burren Ecotourism Network on a field trip to the Burren National Park led by both Zena Hctor and Emma Glanville, NPWS. Centre left: the group on a fieldtrip to Gleninagh Castle. Above left Zena Hctor leading a class room session in heritage interpretation.





Out and about

Celebrating with our partners



We celebrated our recent National Geographic World legacy award win with our agency, community and tourism business partners.

Above left: Carol Gleeson gave a presentation during the celebrations on all the achievements and success of the partnerships since 2006 which have all contributed the region being recognised as a leading sustainable tourism destination.

Left and above: BEN members enjoying the celebrations at the Farmyard in Corofin.



Heritage Week

Geopark Geologist Dr. Eamon Doyle hosted a number of events at four of the Geopark Geosites during National Heritage Week. Eamon led walks at Fanore (Below), the Flaggy shore and in the Burren National Park (below right). He also hosted an antique Rock show at Doolin Cave (right). The walks focused on the geology of the particular site and of the Burren.



THE NEXT EDITION

The next edition of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geoparks newsletter will see us updating on our many and varied initiatives in education, site management, and sustainable tourism development. If you would like to be added to the mailing list contact lcotter@burren.ie. Until next time.....

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