

# The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark Newsletter

Welcome to the fourth 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....

## International Year of Sustainable Tourism

2017 has been named as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism by The United Nations (UN) and the European Geoparks Network (EGN) has become a silver partner for this initiative.

The European Geoparks Network have developed a programme that will see them promote sustainable tourism as a tool for development, they will take steps to encourage its full integration in national, regional and global development agendas by highlighting it as a potential function for economic and sustainable development. Their first initiative has been the production of a video promoting the European Geoparks as territories of outstanding geological heritage, nature, culture and people that connect traditional knowledge, local products and sustainable development.



Above: 'Discover More with a Guide' has been one of the sustainable tourism initiatives supported by the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark through the GeoparkLIFE project

Here in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark 2017 will see us wrapping up our GeoparkLIFE project and launching a series of toolkits on sustainable tourism for sustainable destination managers. We will also be hosting two international conferences. In

March representative from over 70 European Geoparks will visit our Geopark for five days to see our sustainable tourism developments. In November we will be showcasing the work of our GeoparkLIFE project. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for details on the conferences and the launch of our toolkits.



Click on the image above to watch the video





## Education

### The Burren, an Outdoor Classroom

We were delighted to support the Irish Quaternary Associations Autumn Field Meeting.

The association is a diverse group of Geologists, Botanists, Archaeologists and Environmental Scientists with a particular interest in the last two million years of Ireland's history. The group spent two days doing fieldwork examining some of our glacial history.

Geopark Geologist Dr. Eamon Doyle assisted the group during their visit to the region.

**Picture right: The group visited Turlogh Hill during their visit.**



### Geology Evening Course Enrolment

**Stone, water and Ice:** the Burren – a landscape shaped by time.

This course is an introduction to the geology of the Burren aimed at anyone with an interest in the Burren and a curious mind. It will run for 5 Thursday evenings in February/March 2017 for 2 hours each evening at the Burren Outdoor Education Centre in Bell Harbour. This popular course is run by Colin Bunce (Burren Outdoor Education Centre) and Dr. Eamon Doyle (Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark) and is now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year.

Topics covered are: an introduction to geology, the geology of Ireland, the geology of the Burren, fossils, geological maps, geology and the Burren landscape; there is also a field trip. On the last night there will be a guest speaker.

The course is designed to be relaxed, informative and practical. No previous geology knowledge is required (and there are no exams!)

**Cost:** E60

**Dates:** Feb 2nd – March 2nd inclusive

**Time:** 7.30 – 9.30 pm





## International Visitors to the Geopark

We have welcomed several international delegations to the Geopark in recent months. The visitors from the American Geological Survey, UNESCO, Rokua Geopark in Finland, Shilin Geopark, China and the National Geoparks delegation of Korea have come to learn about the sustainable tourism programmes that we have been working on with our local businesses and communities.

**Right: Orla Vaughan, Kilfenora, Carol Gleeson, Burren Geopark and Ger Dollard, Clare County Council with the delegation from Shilin Geopark.**



**Above left: Tom Casadevall, geologist with the American Geological Survey and chair of the US Geoheritage and Geoparks Advisory Group visiting Doolin Pier. Above right: Dr. Eamon Doyle with Dr. Katrien Heirman, Ecological and Earth sciences, Natural Sciences Sector, UNESCO at our Heritage week event in Fanore.**

## Awards Success for Burren Ecotourism Members

Autumn 2016 was a very successful period for members of the Burren Ecotourism Network with many receiving recognition for their outstanding commitment to Irish food, Heritage Interpretation and local sourcing.

Birgitta Curtin (right) of the Burren Smokehouse received Best of the **Decade Food Champion award**, and was named as one of fifteen **International Ambassadors** from the Good Food Ireland membership, who have worked consistently over the last ten years to raise the profile of Irish food at home and abroad.

Kasha Connolly of Hazel Mountain Chocolates was named winner in the Start-up of the Year category at the **Image Businesswoman of the Year** awards.

There was also success at the **Irish Responsible Tourism Awards** for Sea View House, Doolin (Gold) and Hotel Doolin (Silver) in the Best for Local Sourcing Category, While Doolin Cave (Gold) and the Burren Nature Sanctuary (silver) picked up awards in the Best for Natural Heritage Tourism category.





# GeoparkLIFE

## The Importance of Integrated Management

“Together is better” has become the motto of the GeoparkLIFE project. Working in consultation with Geopark stakeholders and considering issues holistically has proved effective when seeking solutions to challenges in the region.

One of the areas we have been working on together is the development of tools that will assist site managers with the monitoring of visitor sites. Using these tools data will be collected on visitor numbers, movement and behaviour at sites, site condition and impacts on walking trails. Analysis of this data will assist site managers to provide adaptive management solutions.

Presentation of this collected data is very important and work is underway in partnership with the Heritage Council to present data in a user friendly manner. The newly re-vamped Heritage Councils **Heritage Map Viewer** will have a specific Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark Viewer section, collating all the data we have gathered on the Geopark region in a single location.

The Viewer will allow the user to look at a wide range of built and natural heritage information in map form. Much of this data hasn't been widely available previously as there hasn't been a suitable portal. The tool will provide a unique landscape planning da-



tabase for the Geopark region.

Having a wide variety of data available in one single location will make the future planning and management programme in the Geopark easier and much more informative for all stakeholders.

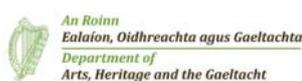


Above: The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark Viewer on HeritageMaps.ie will go live in 2017. Currently live for exploration is the Dublin Archaeology Viewer.

### GeoparkLIFE Funding Partners



Clare County Council  
Comhairle Contae an Chláir





## A Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism

Over the course of our Geopark-LIFE tourism for conservation programme the Geopark Management team have been working very closely with the members of the Burren Ecotourism Network to develop a more sustainable type of tourism for the area, one that leaves as little impact as possible on our place and a type of tourism that benefits the people that live here. The focus of our work together has been to introduce more sustainable practices among the tourism businesses in the Burren Ecotourism Network and to encourage longer-stay tourism that gives a greater economic return to the area. Together we have developed a Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism to address these aims.

The Code of Practice can be adopted by any type of business; it is made up of six principles that encourage businesses in a given area to work together for the greater good of the region, environmentally, economically and socially. Signing up to and adopting the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism enables a business to operate economically, join others in networking opportunities, contribute to destination wide conservation initiatives and to be part of a destination marketing programme.

Adopting the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism is now a straightforward process for businesses in the Burren Ecotourism Network. Having been developed into an online self-guided programme of checklists, recommended actions and tips, it will be

easy for any business to start on the path to operating more sustainably in ways that are practical for the business. The online programme is supported by a number of practical workshops and mentoring sessions to help businesses get to grips with what could be a new way of operating for them.

The Code of Practice is a practical set of principles that encourages tourism business to work together and put their place,

their region, their destination at the centre of their business operations. The programme is in the process of being made into a transferrable toolkit that will enable other places across Ireland and around Europe to adopt it.

The toolkit will be online in the New Year and will be tested by the Burren Ecotourism Network businesses prior to its launch later in 2017.



**Above: Geopark Code of Practice poster explaining the principles adopted by a business on signing up to the code.**





## Looking at Integrated Catchment Management with Lisdoonvarna Transition Year students



Dr. Tiernan Henry out in the field with the transition year students of Mary Immaculate Secondary School in Lisdoonvarna mapping the Aille River catchment area.

As part of our GeoparkLIFE project we are looking to raise environmental awareness among students in the Geopark region. Working with Dr. Tiernan Henry of the Earth and Ocean Sciences Department, and Dr. Gesche Kindermann of the Centre for Environmental Science in NUI Galway we have begun a project with the transition year students of Mary Immaculate Secondary School Lisdoonvarna that looks at the integrated management of their local water.

The transition year students have named their project **Uisce Aille** and are exploring and mapping the natural and built environment underlying the Aille River Catchment. In simple terms a catchment is the area of land contributing to a river, lake or other waterbody. Water is vital not just for our health but for the health of our ecosys-

tems, the community and local economies. Because water is so integral to our wellbeing it is essential to know how it moves through the landscape, from the highest point and all along its route to the sea, be that through ground or on land.

Lisdoonvarna makes an ideal setting for learning about the natural drainage of an area. The Aille River is fed by a number of tributaries including its headwaters on the slopes of Slieve Elva upstream of Lisdoonvarna. The system is characterised by predominantly surface water features on the shales until it reaches the karstic limestone cave system at Doolin, before entering the sea.

The programme is being delivered by Gráinne Barron an MSc research student at NUI Galway and includes contributions from Tracy Duffy, Environment section Clare

County Council, Dr. Eamon Doyle, Geopark Geologist, Colin Bunce of the Burren Outdoor Education Centre and Sonja O'Brien of the Boghill Centre, Kilfenora.

The students will be presenting their project to local community groups early in 2017 where they will detail the catchment, the methods they used to characterise it and the benefits inherent in engaging in its management. The students have also entered the project into the UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards. The GeoparkLIFE project will develop an educational toolkit for this Integrated Catchment Management project to enable other second level schools in Ireland and in Europe run this important environmental education project with their students. Integrated catchment is increasingly being seen as essential to successful water management.





## Conservation of the Murrooghkilly Cairn

Balancing tourism and conservation is core to the work of the Geopark team. Through our GeoparkLIFE project we are currently working with the National Monuments Service on the conservation of a stone cairn in the townland of Murrooghkilly, located at the summit above Blackhead.

The monument was built in two stages. A large base cairn is believed to be prehistoric in date and may contain burials. A smaller, more recent cairn has been constructed on top of the original cairn, possibly using stones removed from the prehistoric cairn. The prehistoric cairn shows signs of degradation in several areas due to the removal of stones.

In recent years it has become common practice for walkers to

the area to place stones onto the smaller cairn. This activity is leading to the increase of the small cairn and erosion of the prehistoric cairn.

Through our GeoparkLIFE programme, archaeologists Frank Coyne and Michael Lynch have been commissioned to undertake a comprehensive measured survey of the cairns (both prehistoric and recent). The survey will include a detailed scaled plan, a photographic survey and a detailed inventory of the monument and its features. Our partners in the Archaeology department in UCD have also carried out a drone survey of the site. The information gathered from both sources will provide us with details from which we can develop an agreed method statement for the conservation works



**Above: the Murrooghkilly cairn today** of the cairn with the National Monuments Service.

Upon agreement of the works plan with the National Monuments Service the conservation works to the cairn will be able to be implemented by a group of community volunteers who will be trained and supervised by the project archaeologists.

The physical conservation work will be carried out at the site in spring 2017.



**Above: Members of the Archaeology department of UCD flying a drone to capture footage of the Murrooghkilly cairn**





# Out and about



Above left: Transition year students from Mary Immaculate Secondary School in Lisdoonvarna out in the field learning about integrated catchment management. Above right: Members of the Burren Ecotourism Network and the Geopark team at a training session.

## The Burren Food Fayre

We were delighted to support the fifth Annual Burren Food Fayre which took place in Lisdoonvarna over the October bank holiday weekend. As part of the Winterage weekend the Food Fayre celebrates the bounty of local produce available in the region.

Right: Birgitta Curtin of the Burren Smokehouse giving a workshop on smoking fish at home. Below right: Brian O'Brian of Anam Coffee, Kilfenora at his stand in the Pavilion. Below: Peter Jackson of the Armada Hotel in Spanish Point using local seafood during his cookery demonstration.



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Burren and  
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The Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark supports people and organisations to work together to ensure a cared-for landscape, a better-understood heritage, more sustainable tourism, a vibrant community and strengthened livelihoods

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