

Visitor interpretation (Onsite) Award

Burren Nature Sanctuary, Kinvara

Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Award Winner



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Who they are: The Burren Nature Sanctuary is set on 50 acres of karst limestone farmland; it is a family focused interpretive centre for the natural history of the Burren where visitors, learn about the flora, fauna and limestone karst landscape of the region and leave armed with the tools to visit the Burren landscape in a sustainable way. Opening in 2013 the Burren Nature Sanctuary joined the Burren Ecotourism network and undertook the Geopark code of practice for sustainable tourism in their first year of business.

What they did: The Burren nature sanctuary sees interpretation as a key part of the experience they offer and critically important to the enjoyment of the region, they have developed a number of onsite communications initiatives / tools to inform the visitors and interpret the Burren that are both engaging and informative:

The nature quest was developed for young children and comprises play panels where children learn about the Burren through activity. The colourful and interactive information panels follow the principles 'I hear, I forget, I see, I remember, I do, I understand' and are integrated into the indoor and outdoor play areas.

For older children and adults **interpretive panels** are installed along the Sanctuary nature walk and are consolidated in a Burren **nature exhibition** in the visitors centre. Nature interpretation covers Karst, flora, fauna, farming and habitats as well as the history of the farm itself. 15,000 visitors completed the Burren walk in the first year of operation.

Recognising that people are one of the best resources to communicate a message and aid better visitor interpretation, all staff were trained on Burren Natural History & Conservation and on the Geopark principles.

Outcome: Increased visitor numbers and school tours numbers. The Nature sanctuary have also been featured on national television, been named as a 'secret gem' on the Wild Atlantic Way and won the Tourism and Arts category of the Scull Enterprise Awards in 2014 along with receiving excellent reviews on TripAdvisor.

Top Tip: Well-planned and coordinated interpretation makes the visitor experience richer. It engages visitors and encourages them to stay longer and understand more.