

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark Newsletter

Welcome to the seventh 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....

Launching destination managers guides

The latter half of 2017 saw the Geopark team wrapping up the GeoparkLIFE tourism for conservation project. Throughout the project a partnership of state agencies and local community and business groups worked to develop a model for sustainable tourism destination development. The model aims to balance tourism development with heritage conservation in high nature value destinations and was presented at the final GeoparkLIFE conference in November.

The conference also saw the launch of a suite of destination managers 'how to' guides and a series of online tools that will enable other destinations to adapt the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geoparks model to their own destinations.

The premise in the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark is that



conservation and tourism depend on each other and support each other. It's clear that a balance between the two can only be achieved through a partnership between conservation, economic and social interests – and in particular, between agencies and local people.

The suites of guides tackle three strands of sustainable destination development:

- Working with tourism businesses

- Managing heritage sites
- Developing stakeholder partnership skills

The destination manager guides include detailed step by step guidelines on bringing all parties to the table and how to work productively as a group.

The guides are available to download from the Geopark website.

Each guide is supported by a set of tools including an online code of practice in sustainable tourism for tourism businesses, a monitoring app for trails and heritage site management and an online data management tool for planners, managers and communities. These tools, developed in conjunction with local businesses, communities and conservation agencies, help develop a balance between tourism development and the conservation needs of the North Clare region.



Sarah Gatley, Geological Survey of Ireland, Cllr Tom McNamara, Carol Gleeson, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Pat Reid, The Heritage Council and Tina O'Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE launching the GeoparkLIFE destination Managers guides at the Falls Hotel

<http://www.burrengeopark.ie/geopark-life/>





GeoparkLIFE final conference

The final conference reporting on the outputs of the GeoparkLIFE tourism for conservation project was held in the Falls hotel, Ennistymon in November. The conference saw over 120 attendees from local authorities and community groups from around the country gather for the launch of the GeoparkLIFE destination managers guidelines and tools and to hear from the coordinators and the agency and community partners involved in the sustainable tourism project.



Carol Gleeson, Manager GeoparkLIFE, Cllr Tom McNamara and Brian McCarthy, Clare County Council at the GeoparkLIFE conference launching the Geopark model for sustainable destination development.



Zena Hctor, GeoparkLIFE coordinator sites and monuments, presenting guidelines and tools that were developed for the integrated management of heritage sites



Niall Hughes, Sea View House, Doolin and member of the Burren Ecotourism Network speaking about the some of the challenges experienced by local tourism businesses



Ken Curley, OPW and GeoparkLIFE Partner, Irene Hamilton Scatney Island Tours and Dick Cronin, Clare County Council and GeoparkLIFE Partner



GeoparkLIFE conference stakeholder panel participants: Brian McCarthy, Clare County Council, Nuala Mulqueeny, Aillwee Cave, Eoghan Corry, Travel write, Michelle O’Dea, OPW, Paddy Matthews, Failte Ireland, Gabriel Cooney, UCD



Tina O’Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE coordinator presenting on the projects work with tourism businesses.





Education

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 and is 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 8th 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 Dr. Brian Kelleher, DCU 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 7th – March 7th inclusive **Time:** 7.30 – 9.30 pm

Venue: Burren Outdoor Education Centre, Turlough, Bell Harbour.

Bookings and enquiries: colin.bunce@lcetb.ie or info@burrengeopark.ie or 065 7078066

Supporting science week with Clare County Library

Geopark Geologist Dr. Eamon Doyle took part in Clare County Library's Children's Book festival. Eamon spoke to senior classes at a number of libraries around the county on the Geopark's book, Stone, Water & Ice: A Geology Trip Through The Burren. During his talks he explored the beauty and fascination of some of the smallest and often overlooked fossil creatures in the Burren and in County Clare as a whole.





GeoparkLIFE Awards

We celebrated the achievements and examples of good practice in the development of sustainable tourism in the Geopark with The GeoparkLIFE Awards on Thursday 7th December.

The awards programme showcases the work being done and the initiatives undertaken by the businesses in the Burren Ecotourism Network who have adopted the Geopark Code of Practice for sustainable tourism. Case studies profiling the winners activities will be published on the Geopark website in the new year. Keep an eye on www.burrengeopark.ie/geopark-life.

Awards categories and winners on the night:

- Working Together Group: Burren Food Trail
- Working Together Business: Burren Smokehouse
- A Cared For Landscape: Conservation & Advocacy Group
- A Well Understood Heritage: Burren Nature Sanctuary
- Vibrant Communities: Aillwee Cave & Birds of Prey Centre
- Strengthened Livelihoods: Aillwee Cave & Birds of Prey Centre
- Green Purchasing, Burren Fine Wine & Food
- Waste Management: Hotel Doolin
- Water Conservation: Hotel Doolin
- Energy Management: Hotel Doolin
- Sustainable Tourism Operator of the Year: Hotel Doolin



Above the team at Hotel Doolin who were big winners on the night taking home 4 awards including the big prize of Sustainable Tourism operator of the year.

L-R Carol Gleeson, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Cllr Tom McNamara, Paul Coote, Donal Minihane Tina O'Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE, Michael Fitzsimons, Failte Ireland. Front row: Aine Martin, Triona Molony





GeoparkLIFE Awards



Nuala Mulqueeny, Aillwee Cave and Birds of Prey Centre, centre who won the awards for their contribution to Strengthened Livelihoods and Vibrant Communities.

L-R Carol Gleeson, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Cllr Tom McNamara, Nuala Mulqueeny, Aillwee Cave, Tina O'Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE, Michael Fitzsimons, Failte Ireland



Cathleen Connlle, centre and Karen Connolle second right, Burren Fine Wine and food won the awards Green purchasing.

L-R Carol Gleeson, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Cllr Tom McNamara, Cathleen Connolle, Tina O'Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE, Karen Connolle, Michael Fitzsimons, Failte Ireland



Mrs Birmingham, Burren Nature Sanctuary, centre who won the award for a well understood heritage.

L-R Carol Gleeson, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Cllr Tom McNamara, Mrs Birmingham, Tina O'Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE, Michael Fitzsimons, Failte Ireland



Brigitta Curtin, Burren Smokehouse, centre woen the award for a business promoting and facilitating working together.

L-R Carol Gleeson, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Cllr Tom McNamara, Brigitta Curtin, Tina O'Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE, Michael Fitzsimons, Failte Ireland



Members of The Burren Food Trail who won the award for a group working together.

L-R Oonagh O'Dwyer, Nuala Mulqueeny, Carol Gleeson, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Cllr Tom McNamara, Karen Courtney, Tina O'Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE, Michael Fitzsimons, Failte Ireland, Minihane. Front row L-R Cathleen Connole, Brid Fahy, Eva Hegarty and Brigitta Curtin.



Members of the conservation Advocacy committee who won the award for A Cared for landscape.

L-R Chris O'Neill, Carol Gleeson, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Oonagh O'Dwyer, Cllr Tom McNamara, Tina O'Dwyer, GeoparkLIFE, Eva Hegarty, Michael Fitzsimons, Failte Ireland and Cari Ryan.





Conservation works to GeoparkLIFE demonstration sites

Through the GeoparkLIFE project we looked at how agencies and landowners could work together to develop an integrated management methodology for the conservation and visitor use of the Geopark's heritage sites.

To develop and test a methodology we selected seven demonstration sites. The sites were selected to represent a good geographical spread across the Burren, to have a variation in terms of intrinsic interest from built to natural to cultural heritage and varied visitor profiles and numbers.

We undertook detailed assessments and observation studies at sites and the groups of conservation agencies and landowners discussed and agreed conservation actions. During the discussions each stakeholder gained an understanding of the procedures and policies that regulate heritage conservation and also the challenges faced by communities and private landowners.

Actions carried out this autumn included conservation works to the 19th Century cairn at Murrooghkilly (Blackhead). A perimeter fence and signage have been installed asking visitors to refrain from



Top and above: Some before and after pictures of the conservation works to the 19th Century cairn at Murrooghkilly (Blackhead)

Below: Work to the wall at Murrooghtoohy





climbing onto this monument as such behaviour causes damage to our archaeological heritage.

Murrooghtoohey Wall

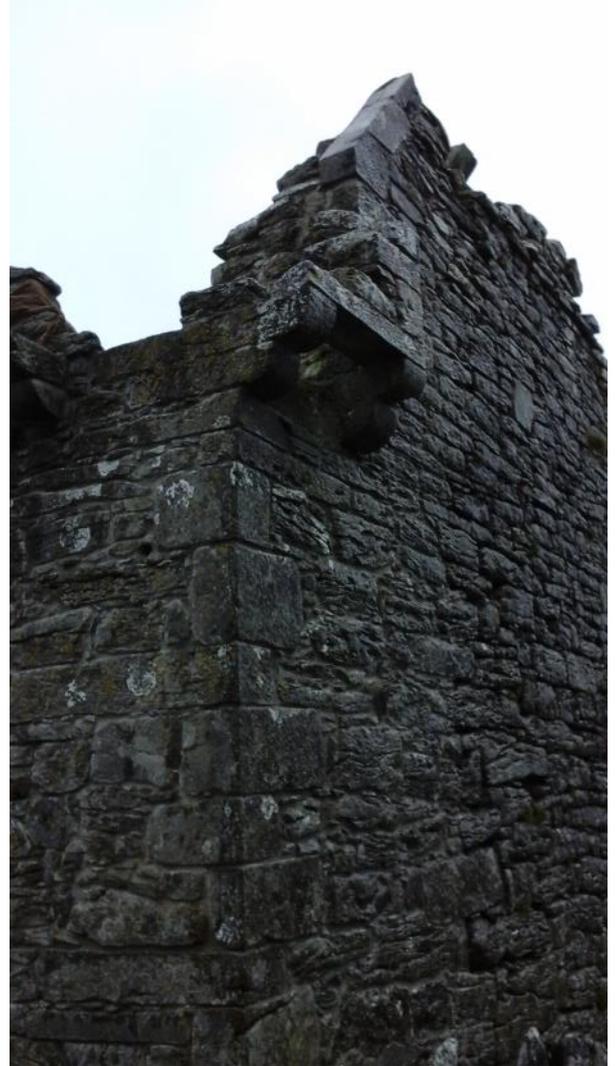
With its scenic views of Galway Bay, the Viewing point at Murrooghtoohey attracts large numbers of visitors throughout the year. Many of these visitors wander down onto the limestone pavement to the coastal edge. Due to this recreational pressure, the drystone boundary wall was constantly being damaged and knocked. Following an approach from the local community group, GeoparkLIFE in partnership with the Engineering section of Clare County Council and with permission from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and funding from Fáilte Ireland, rebuilt and strengthened the wall using the original local stone.

Remedial Work at Carran Medieval Church (pictured right)

Following the preparation of a Conservation Plan and Method statement for repair work to the damaged NW corner of Carran medieval Church, approval was received by GeoparkLIFE from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to carry out the work.

Conservation Officer with Clare County Council, Risteard UaCróinín sourced medieval cut and dressed stone from around the site. This original stone was used to rebuild the apex of the west gable and the machicolation in the north-west corner. Sections of the west gable were then pointed and grouted on both facades with lime based mortar.

The GeoparkLIFE site monitoring programme identified that visitors to the site often fail to observe the roadside gate and tend to climb over the boundary wall and cross the field randomly. Working in conjunction with the landowner, a fence has now been erected to highlight the entrance path and to separate visitors from livestock. A new illustrated panel, interpreting the site, has also been installed in the graveyard by GeoparkLIFE.



Below: works taking place at Carran church

Right: picture after the completion of the works



GeoparkLIFE Signage



Signage has recently been erected at each of the GeoparkLIFE demonstration sites (Slieve Carran, Cahermore, Carran Church, Aillwee Cave, Fanore, Poul nabrone). The signs include visitor interpretation as well as details of the project.

Skills training in the community

Through GeoparkLIFE we undertook to develop the skills base of stakeholders, in working together and in the understanding and management of conservation activities.

In November members of the Killnaboy Historical and Heritage Society undertook training in lime mortar. The group are pictured here with Dick Cronin of Clare County Council (far left) who coordinated the training on behalf of the GeoparkLIFE project. The training will be used by local builders and community groups in future restoration projects.





North Atlantic Geopark Route

Hosting and knowledge sharing with European Partners

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark along with 13 of our European Geopark partners have successfully applied to the EU Interreg Atlantic Area Programme for funding to promote sustainable tourism between and across Geoparks and aspiring Geoparks along the Atlantic Area.



The 30 month project which began in July this year aims to forge new tourism links along a defined Atlantic route through highlighting the common interests and heritage of the destinations along the route.

The project is funded through the Atlantic Area section of the European Regional Development Fund and the aim of the project is the 'development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas, protection, development and promotion of public, cultural and heritage assets' to strengthen the integration of tourism and natural heritage, reconciling tourism development with conservation of geology, biodiversity and cultural heritage in several territories in the EU including Spain, Portugal, France, Ireland and the UK.

The innovative aspect of the Project will be to advance transnational Geotourism along the western margin of Europe using UNESCO Global Geoparks and aspiring Geoparks as best practice models for regional and local sustainable development, including development of a European Atlantic Geoparks Route which will be submitted as a candidate for a European Cultural Route. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark assumes the role of communicating the work packages of the project.

The group with representatives from all thirteen partners visited our Geopark for a study visit and co-ordination meeting in November. The group looked at the GeoparkLIFE project and explored the promotional opportunities, networking and IT infrastructure options the project could develop.



Above: members of the North Atlantic Geopark Route programme at the Falls hotel, Ennistymon during their study visit to the Geopark





Out and about



In early Autumn we launched four new heritage trails in the Geopark. The launch coincided with National Heritage Week. The opening walk at each of the four trails located in Doolin, Carran, Fanore and Killinaboy were guided by local heritage experts.
Top left: Agnes from the Michael Cusack Centre leading a walk from the centre to 9th Century cliff top fort of Cahercommaun

Above: Patsy Carrucan, left, lead a thoughtful and informative walk along the new Fanore Geopark Heritage

Above right: Archaeologist and guide Joe McCooley leading a walk on the Doolin heritage trail during heritage week



Visiting Delegations

This Autumn we hosted a number of delegations who were looking to find out about the work we do here in the Geopark.

Left: Carol Gleeson, left with representative from the South Savo Region (Finland)

Below left: Cllr Tom McNamara and Pat Dowling, centre with the staff from the LIFE13 NAT/PL/000038 project who are working on the protection of valuable natural habitats in Ponidzie, Poland

Below: Zena Hoctor, right with representative from Haksuan Geopark in Japan



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Burren and
Cliffs of Moher
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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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