

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.

Visitor Interpretation - Outdoor

Heart of Burren Walks, Killinaboy

Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Award Winner



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Who they are: Heart of Burren Walks is a walking tour company operated and run by walking guide Tony Kirby. Heart of Burren Walks offers a wide variety of guided walks in the Burren landscape. The walks feature commentaries on the geology, flora, archaeology, fauna, farming and folklore of the Burren. Heart of Burren Walks has been a member of the Burren Ecotourism Network since 2009. Guide Tony Kirby undertook ecotourism training provided as part of network membership including the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism in 2012.

What they did: Heart of Burren Walks has built a reputation for providing high quality interpretation experiences in the Burren. Guide Tony Kirby possesses excellent knowledge and understanding of the region. As well as imparting his knowledge and insights verbally on his walks he also provides printed interpretive materials to walkers. With visitor satisfaction at the centre of the experience Tony abides by appropriate guide to visitor ratios to ensure a high quality interpretive experience is received by the entire group.

Heart of Burren Walks has developed a number of programmes which offer high quality interpretive experiences in the landscape. Two recent programmes deliver heritage education in the landscape to groups who were not previously catered for; primary school pupils and people with physical and intellectual disabilities. While a third product offers walks that interpret the very rich pilgrimage landscape that the Burren is home to.

Outcome: By providing excellent interpretation and insight to the Burren region Heart of Burren Walks has earned a wealth of media coverage. It been featured in many international guide books (Frommers, Fodors, lonely planet, Guide de Routard, and Rick Steves). It been named as number one TripAdvisor activity to do in Co. Clare. Through delivering a memorable experience and being recognised for this Heart of Burren Walks has attracted visitors to the region.

Top Tip: Excellent interpretation enhances the visitor experience. The visitor understand more, and enjoys their stay more. Moreover they are more likely to recommend the experience and destination.

Visitor Communication Web & Social Media Award

Sea View House, Doolin

Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Award Winner



Our location in the Geopark at the edge of the Burren allows us take advantage of some of the best Burren produce. Jenken family provide us with wonderful True Burren Goats Cheese from their farm in the Burren National Park. The Burren smoke house in Lisdoonvanna supply us with delicious organic smoked salmon, while the Ailwea Caves produce the famous Burren Gold a gouda type cheese which goes well with the grapes from our Polly tunnel.



Local Handmade Cheese part of our breakfast buffet



Making Wild Blackberry Jam

Have a look at our breakfast menu: www.seaview-doolin.ie/breakfast/



Click on the arrow above to
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Who they are: Sea View House is a four star bed and breakfast based on a family farm in Doolin village. Niall and Darra Hughes have been running Sea view House in an environmentally conscious manor for many years. In 2014 they joined the Burren Ecotourism Network and through attending the Geopark Code of practice training they developed their sustainable message and to begun to communicate it to their guests through their website, in their marketing and also on the ground.

What they did: Recognising that the majority of their visitors book online, Niall and Darra designed their website to include details of the environmental policy, practices and achievements to give potential guests a good feel for Sea View Houses ethos. They Joined the TripAdvisor Green leaders programme and were certified Gold members, this distinction is included in their TripAdvisor online profile, on their own website and promoted through social media. Niall and Darra's real focus has been to communicate their ethos through their food story. By including the food mile on their menus, which feature on their website, they are drawing attention to their use of local and home grown produce. In 2014 Niall and Darra started a food blog to further share their recipes, to promote the use of local ingredients and to highlight their sustainability ethos. The content from their website and blog along with their awards successes are promoted through Facebook and Twitter.

Outcome: By promoting their sustainable ethos through their food message and focusing on the use of local ingredients Niall and Darra are showcasing their sustainable ethos in a palatable way. Critically, they are supporting this message with the Green Leaders programme and with policies on their website. This means that information is easily accessible for guests who want to know more, allowing them to easily understand and evaluate Sea View House's sustainable ethos and practice in advance of their stay.

Top Tip: Choose one initiative in your business to shout about in your social media and on your blog and make your it your USP, if customers want to delve deeper into your ethos ensure you have your policies embedded in your website

"The training we received from the Geopark has helped us bring everything together to get our sustainable message out to our guests through our website, marketing and to guests on the ground" **Niall Hughes, Sea View House Doolin**

Leave No Trace Award

The 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 Manager Mary Bermingham completed the Leave no Trace train the trainer training programme provided under the Geopark Code of practice programme. Mary used her knowledge and certification to train all the Nature Sanctuary staff in the principles of Leave No Trace and then went on to develop a programme for primary school children which includes a visit to the nature sanctuary along with pre and post visit lesson plans on Leave No Trace and the natural history of the Burren. They lesson plans were developed in line with the curriculum with input from a teacher.

Outcome: The staff training has lead to a greater understanding of conservation among staff and an ability to communicate the principles to the visitors to the sanctuary which enhances their experience and understanding of the area.

The Leave no Trace school tours have added extra revenue with 1000 children undertaking the tour in June 2014. As a result of the tours the Burren Nature Sanctuary has been featured on national television on RTE 1 'Countrywide' and 'Ear to the Ground' as an example of successful sustainable agritourism- filmed in June

Top Tip: Delivering conservation education in a fun and hands-on way has lead to a greater understanding and a memorable experience.

Geopark Code of Practice Case Study

Contribution to Community

Kilshanny House, Kilshanny



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Who they are: Kilshanny House is owned and run by Mary Butler and Aidan Galvin. It was built in the early 1800s and during this time it has been home to four families, it became a county pub in 1997 with Aidan and Mary. With Mary originally growing up in the Burren and being aware of the fragile nature of the landscape they decided to make Kilshanny house a sustainable business and became a member of The Burren Ecotourism in 2012 and completed the Geopark Code of Practice for sustainable tourism in 2012.

What they did: Kilshanny House have consistently supported their local community (and the wider Burren community) by continually creating new and innovative events, evenings and craft fairs that showcase local musicians, food producers and craft businesses. By creating a calendar of events that showcase local and authentic talents Kilshanny House are offering an insightful cultural experience to visitors to the area as well as a promotional platform to the musicians, producers and crafts people. Being a rural pub means they have to work even harder to bring customers in and have created an event space to celebrate and showcase local culture and achievements, they have created a business that maintains a real rural pub in a sustainable, community oriented way.

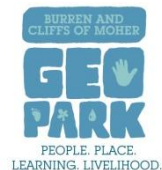
Outcome: By recreating the purpose of the local pub to not only bring the community together but as an event space to showcase the talents of the community Mary and Aidan have created a successful local business. They provide a place where the community can gather to celebrate their achievements, their culture and each other.

Top Tip: Getting involved with and networking within the local community has allowed Kilshanny House to diversify their business

Waste Management Award

Burren Free Range Pork, Kilfenora

Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Award Winner



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Who they are: Eva and Stephen Hegarty run a small eco friendly sustainable farm where they rear free range, rare breed pigs, beef cattle and grow vegetables. Their ethos is to keep everything as natural as possible. Dealing with waste has become a passion for the Hegarty's, they are trying to create a place where there is no such thing as waste and where everything is considered a resource. Burren Free range Pork joined the Burren Ecotourism Network in 2012 and undertook the Geopark Code of Practice for sustainable tourism in the same year.

What they did: Reusing, recycling and upcycling have all become part of the daily routine on the farm and taking simple actions like the following have an impact on the level of waste the farm generates:

- Choosing to buy loose items instead of pre-packed with Styrofoam
- Feeding food waste where possible to the animals
- Using garden and polytunnel waste as extra feed for the pigs and as mulching and composting material, which is later reused in the garden to enrich the soil quality.
- Reusing used animal bedding and pig manure as natural fertilizers, compost and mulching
- Hard plastic containers are cleaned out and reused as animal feed troughs, for water harvesting, as plant or vegetable containers and general storage.
- Cardboard (non coloured) and paper feed bags are used in weed control around trees and in the garden and in the hen cabin to collect manure, that is ultimately added to the compost heap to increase nitrogen levels.
- Waste metals are reused and repurposed where possible: An old metal gate became part of a concrete bridge to strengthen the structures. and an old horse truck has been converted to accommodation (Glamping), using recyclable and second hand materials to a large extent allowing the Hegarty's to diversify their business.

Outcome: Reusing and upcycling waste has contributed to fewer bags of waste going to landfill. As a result waste costs have been reduced by €230 per year and operating costs have been reduced thus contributing to the commercial viability of the farm.

Top Tip: Everybody can start thinking of more reusing, upcycling and recycling. It might take a little bit longer, but in the long run it's a win-win situation for all. It is simply a change of mindset.

Geopark Code of Practice Case Study

Water Management

Linnalla Ice-cream, New Quay



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Who they are: Linnalla Ice-cream is owned by Brid and Roger Fahy and run from their family farm on the Finaverra peninsula in North Clare which has a history of water shortage until the 1970's. Traditionally a dairy farm from the mid 1800's Brid & Roger started making ice cream in 2006 using the milk from their shorthorn cows which are native to the Burren. The Fahy's are committed to the preservation and sustainability of the coastal Burren, joining the Burren ecotourism network in 2012 and undertaking the Geopark code of practice for sustainable tourism in 2012 has provided them with some tools to take actions in conservation.

What they did: The Fahy's developed and implemented a water management policy which includes leak detection, water tracking and harvesting actions along with the championing of water saving measures to all residents on the Finaverra Peninsula.

The installation of pressure valves ensures that water flow rates are controlled while under sink heaters ensure only the required amount of water is heated. Cafe toilets have been fitted with a short-flush option to conserve water while rainwater harvesting actions sees roof rain water being diverted to a trough for drinking water for the cattle with excess water drained through a gravel and sand bed. All water consumption and flow data is monitored and recorded through two water meters.

Outcome: Linnalla Ice-cream has seen a marked decrease in their annual water consumption and bill along with improvements in water pressure on the Finaverra peninsula.

Top Tip: installing pressure valves means lower pressure and less water used which leads to less energy consumed and lower bills, as up to 30% of household water is heated.

Energy Management Award

The Boghill Centre, Kilfenora

Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Award Winner



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Who they are: The Boghill Centre is a residential venue Situated in 50 acres of natural bogland in the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark. Boghill is a small innovative company on the cutting edge of Ecotourism in Ireland who offer a residential venue for learning, training events, retreats and functions. They are committed to running a low cost and low impact ecological activity venue. Making the most of their natural resources their mantra is reduce, reuse, recycle. They are committed to a process of monitoring and measuring their environmental impacts with a view to continual improvement. Members of the Burren Ecotourism Network since 2009, The Boghill Centre participated in ecotourism training provided as part of network membership including the Geopark code of practice for sustainable tourism in 2012.

What they did: The Boghill centre developed an eco-diversification plan following involvement in the Burren Ecotourism Network and conducted an **energy audit** in 2012. The audit gave them a chance to rethink their whole energy use and research indicated the best and most economical solution for Boghill was a **wood gasification boiler system** to eliminate the facility's over dependence on fossil fuels. The audit advised that an integral part of this new system should include **thermostatic radiators valves**, hot water cylinder thermostats and **zoned heating controls** to enable the heating for the centre to be controlled more efficiently. The recommendations were implemented in 2013 and the centre invested in a wood boiler that heats the entire complex.

Outcome: All heating and water is now fuelled by sustainable locally sourced logs rather than oil, thus reducing carbon emissions and the centre's carbon footprint. Visitors also enjoy the pleasant wood smoke and the feel good factor of visiting a place no longer dependant on oil.

The centre is heading towards its goal of being fully independent of fossil fuels and is saving €5,000 per year on their energy bill – the difference between oil and wood costs and including their energy initiatives.

Top Tip: Conducting an energy audit will help you understand where energy is used and which areas are worth focusing on to achieve the greatest savings.

Geopark Code of Practice Case Study

Best Improvement

Doolin Hostel, Doolin



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Who they are: Doolin hostel believe in doing business in an environmentally conscious way. They are continually improving the hostel buildings putting the needs of their guests and their local environment first. Doolin Hostel became a member of the Burren Ecotourism network in 2014 and undertook the Code of practice training in 2013

What they did: Since taking over the properties in February 2012 they have continually renovated with an environmentally conscious ethos and made major developments in the areas of energy, waste and water management.:

Energy: Achieved a reduction of 21% in 2014 from 118240kwh to 93668 kwh by installing 2 x 50kw high condensing gas boilers with a highly insulated 1000l twin coil tank, zoning the heating, adding thermostat controls to all radiators and switching lighting to LED sensors where possible.

Waste: reviewing how they were doing businesses the Moloney's looked at the cafe menu, cleaning products and all regular purchases to find ways in to reduce and control waste. They also introduced waste segregation in bedrooms and public areas. In 2013 landfill waste was 0.2kg per sleeper, Food Waste 0.14kg/sleeper, Recyclable Waste was 0.22kg/sleeper.

Water: they are currently in the process of refurbishing bathrooms to reduce water usage by adding single level taps with low flow aerators, low flush toilets, thermostatically controlled showers with low flow shower heads while penny valves are being fitted to all sink taps and toilets to isolate leaks, identify possible faulty equipment and to control the flow of water.

Outcome: In 2014 they became the first hostel in Ireland to achieve the following

- 1) Gold Award with Green Hospitality Awards
- 2) Gold level with Trip Advisors Green Leader Programme
- 3) Responsible Travel and Tourism Awards: Winner of Responsible Accommodation Provider, Winner of Best Energy management improvement and were Highly Commended for Best Waste Management Improvement

Top Tip: Make changes as you go; doing a little each day has a big impact on the environment

“Our green ethos although not perfect has seen improvement day on day and has being a significant contributor to increase visitor numbers, increased customer spend and increase customer satisfaction with many reviews and customer feedback noting our environmental ethos as a very positive experience” **Anthony Moloney**

Geopark Code of Practice Case Study

Promotion Of Sustainable Transport

St. Tola Goats Cheese, Ennistymon



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Who they are: St. Tola Irish Goat Cheese is owned and run by Siobhan Ni Ghairebhith of Inagh Farmhouse Cheese Ltd, it is known as one of the premium artisan products in Ireland and has garnered an international following. Believing passionately in sustainable farming and ecotourism Siobhan has adopted policies and practices in both areas. St. Tola undertook the Geopark Code of Practice for sustainable tourism in 2014 and as a result developed a policy to promote sustainable transport throughout the business.

What they're doing: Adopted initiatives targeted at both staff and visitors. Staffs are encouraged to travel to work by foot or bicycle and to carpool while visitors arriving on foot or by bicycle are given a 10% discount. In the daily operations of the business deliveries are combined with collections and driving routes are planned efficiently. Promoting the schemes has been key to its success, the visitor discounts are advertised through the website, social media and in promotional material and farm tours are used to emphasis to our guests how we as a business promote sustainable travel and they are encouraged to do so also. St. Tola host events on the farm to tie in with National Bike week to further promote sustainable travel and their ethos.

Developments: St. Tola have seen a number of tours in 2014 arriving on foot and by bike and have seen good improvements being made by staff in the use of sustainable transport and efficient route planning. We have recently co-ordinated deliveries, with The Burren Smokehouse to prevent an articulated truck having to come to us from Limerick once a week. With further promotional activities planned they expect to see more tourists coming on board by travelling sustainably as these are rolled out.

Top Tip: Getting involved in national events like bike week is a cost efficient and targeted way of promoting your initiatives to both staff and visitors

"The code of practise training helped us with our sustainable transport initiatives by getting us to highlight and focus on where we could improve our efforts regarding improving our sustainable travel efforts." **Siobhan Ni Ghairebhith**, St. Tola's Goats Cheese

Geopark Code of Practice Case Study

Contribution to Conservation

The Cliffs of Moher



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Who they are: The Cliffs of Moher are Ireland's most visited natural attraction and are home to one of the major colonies of cliff nesting seabirds in Ireland. Over 30,000 pairs of seabirds can be found here during the nesting season from April to July and it is possible to view over 20 species of birds in the area. The area is of special importance due to the presence bird species such as Chough, Fulmar, Kittiwake, Guillemot Razorbill and Puffin. The site is also of conservation interest as a breeding site for over 30,000 seabirds. As one of the founding members of the Burren Ecotourism Network the Cliffs of Moher undertook the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism in 20012.

What they did: The Cliffs of Moher have been an environmentally conscious attraction since its opening. They have implemented a wildlife and biodiversity conservation programme which includes; their rangers **monitoring the wildlife** on a daily basis and keeping records on the plants, flowers and insects that make up part of the cliff top habitat. The Cliffs rangers work with Birdwatch Ireland reporting the details of their **annual bird counts** and providing information on the numbers of different bird species. The rangers at the Cliffs of Moher manage visitor flow to discourage visitors from entering the protected areas to aid the preservation of the biodiversity.

Other conservation initiatives the Cliffs of Moher participate in include an **'Adopt a Hedgerow'** initiative that was launched by the Burren Ecotourism Network in June 2014 and sees members of staff clearing litter from the hedgerows close to the cliffs and reporting on invasive species.

Outcome: Due to the conservation initiatives the bird population is thriving and the grassland on the cliff top, which is within the grounds of the visitor experience is seeing less wear and tear.

Top Tip:
Managing visitor footfall and has clearly directed paths which avoid conservation areas can contribute greatly to their preservation.

Sustainable Business of the Year

The Boghill Centre, Kilfenora

Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Award Winner



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Who they are: The Boghill Centre is a residential venue Situated in 50 acres of natural bogland in the Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark. Boghill is a small innovative company on the cutting edge of Ecotourism in Ireland who offer a residential venue for learning, training events, retreats and functions. They are committed to running a low cost and low impact ecological activity venue. Making the most of their natural resources their mantra is reduce, reuse, recycle. They are committed to a process of monitoring and measuring their environmental impacts with a view to continual improvement. Members of the Burren Ecotourism Network since 2009, The Boghill Centre participated in ecotourism training provided as part of network membership including the Geopark code of practice for sustainable tourism in 2012.

What they did: The Boghill Centre have incorporated sustainable practices and actions throughout their operations

Staff and visitor awareness - Eco-management is built into their staff training and all visitors are made aware of The Boghill Centre eco-practices and encouraged to play a part in their minimum impact approach. A Guest Code of Practice has been developed and is displayed throughout the venue.

Waste - operating a "reduce, reuse and recycle" policy, food waste is either composted or fed to their chickens Harvest overproduction is managed by food preserving and freezing and their rubbish disposal is measured and monitored with the aim of reducing weight year on year

Energy - Boghill is heated by a wood gasification boiler system thus eliminating over dependence on fossil fuels. All lighting is provided by low energy bulbs and they have a policy of stringent management of timers and thermostats. Cavity wall insulation has been installed in our 1960s hostel building and energy consumption is a factor in the purchase of all new equipment. The Boghill Centre purchase electricity from Airtricity who capture 79% of their power from sustainable energy sources. They monitor their power and strive to make consumption economies where practical

Top Tip: Introducing a Carbon offsetting programme for visitors by enabling them to sponsor tree planting on the estate is a great way of involving them and making them feel part of the movement.

"The code of practice training gave us an overview of the range of ecological options available to us and stimulating examples of good practice as well as updating us on the aims and activities of the Geopark and the part we can play in helping to achieve these."
Cari Ryan, the Boghill Centre

Sustainable Business of the Year

The Boghill Centre, Kilfenora

Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Award Winner



Water - Rain water is harvested for garden use while waste water and sewage are treated in a bio-digester tank.

Food - Food is sourced from the organic vegetable garden, fruit beds and orchard with all these areas being fertilised with their own compost and horse manure and managed without the use of pesticides or other chemicals.

Contribution to conservation – Cari and Sonja have recently created a 10 Point Eco-diversification plan which involves the development of the Boghill land in an innovative and environmentally friendly manner using sustainable building techniques, creating a nature reserve, planting indigenous trees and developing a series of educative and experiential activities which can be accessed by visitors and locals

Green purchasing and support of local businesses – the Boghill Centre aim is to integrate and work with the local community as much as possible and support the local hostelrys, restaurants, food producers, activity providers and attractions. The Boghill Centre cooperates closely with the Burren Ecotourism Network to develop sustainability efforts in the region. While much of their vegetables, bread and preserves are home grown and made, additional supplies are sourced from local market gardens and producers where possible. They are continually researching economic ways to source more food and cleaning products from local suppliers.

Outcome: The Boghill Centre have received many awards including The responsible Travel & Tourism Awards 2014 and the Green Hospitality Awards for Best Carbon Reduction Project and Best Customer Awareness Programme.