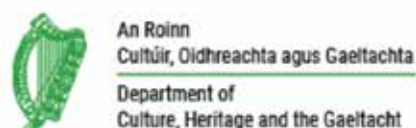


Reviewing Policy towards the Integration of Sustainable Tourism and Conservation Management

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Thank you to the GeoparkLIFE funding partners



May 2018

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Executive Summary

1. The purpose of the Review

- 1.1 The aim of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher (BCOM) GeoparkLIFE programme was to strengthen the integration of tourism and conservation, reconciling the development of tourism with management of natural and cultural heritage. The challenge of integrating tourism with conservation is a European challenge. It is a stated priority of the European Union to promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism. While European policy emphasises sustainability in tourism this has to be integrated with several European legislative and policy instruments, both in the environment (such as Natura 2000, the Water Framework Directive and other directives) and in development (such as the Structural and Cohesion funds).
- 1.2 The GeoparkLIFE programme builds on the important conservation work carried out to date in the region through projects such as The Burren Programme, developed through BurrenLIFE (an EU LIFE biodiversity project) and the sustainable tourism model developed through the Burren Connect partnership.
- 1.3 A key issue in achieving the aim of integrating tourism and conservation management is to focus on the policy context of the programme. It is important to address the challenge of recognizing and reconciling any potential conflicts between tourism and other policies, especially regulatory environmental and conservation policies in ensuring sustainability.
- 1.4 It is clear through the work of the GeoparkLIFE programme that the problem is not necessarily a lack of policy, but the need to recognize that there is a wide and diverse range of legal and policy instruments which may not always be in direct alignment. This also indicates that it is likely to be when international and national policies are actually implemented on the ground at local level that difficulties and friction may occur. This has an impact on the integration of tourism and conservation management to ensure a sustainable future both for tourism and the Burren landscape.

2. Format

- 2.1 The review process was composed of three sections; mapping policy, the perspectives of partners on the ground with regard to the current policy framework and finally the assessment of the main policy gaps and how a more coherent framework can be developed.
- 2.2 **Part 1:** the mapping policy report, aims to provide an overview of the legislation and policies which drive relevant strands of activity within the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark (and more broadly in Ireland) and how this impacts on the natural and built heritage, conservation management, the environment and tourism sectors generally.
- 2.3 The implementation of policy depends on institutions, the knowledge of people and decision-making on the ground. In this context policy can be seen as an active, ongoing and organic process, rather than simply the result of the carrying out of rational decisions. Central to the GeoparkLIFE programme was the adoption of a partnership model and approach, under the auspices of the Geopark management (Clare County Council), and including all the relevant state agencies, local organisations involved in tourism and heritage conservation, community groups and individuals. To gain a perspective on how policy works on the ground all the key policy actors were interviewed using a standardized structure. **Part 2** of the report consists of the analysis of these interviews. The interviews provided a range of valuable insights and perspectives on the implementation of explicit, and also less well-defined or implicit, policies in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark.
- 2.4 The approach in the final section of the review, **Part 3** was to build on the perspectives of project partners and other stakeholders as discussed in Part 2, to focus on policy needs and then to consider approaches to moving to a more coherent policy framework. The **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** was seen as providing a key policy context and framework.
- 2.5 Key policy needs were demonstrated using case studies from the GeoparkLIFE programme. Comparison with the management approach in areas that share similarities with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark were used to indicate the parameters of a best practice approach to implementing an effective policy framework.
- 2.6 On the basis of this analysis a number of policy choices were discussed and key recommendations made in relation to key policy gaps and an effective policy framework specifically for the Burren and more broadly at European level.

3. Part 1: Mapping policy

- 3.1 This provides an overview of the range of legislation and policies that are relevant to conservation management and sustainable tourism within the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. Legal instruments and policies are considered at four levels: international, with particular emphasis on the European Union and Council of Europe, national, regional and local levels. For example in relation to natural and cultural heritage there are at least 40 distinct and relevant legislative instruments at these various levels.
- 3.2 By contrast with the conservation of natural and cultural heritage where there is a strong legislative basis for policy, tourism is primarily driven by policy instruments. The European Commission refers to sustainability as one of the key pillars of tourism development, however there is no agreed definition, or legislative basis, for what sustainable tourism actually means. At national level the most important policy instrument is ***People, Place and Tourism, Growing Tourism to 2025*** (2015). This explicitly states that the focus of policy is to maximize the export contribution of tourism while protecting the natural, built and cultural heritage. The policy document explicitly recognizes that this involves a change of focus from overseas visitor numbers to overseas visitor revenue.
- 3.3 Given that the Burren and Cliffs of Moher is designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark, in assessing the relevance of the wide range of legislation and policy on conservation management and its relationship to sustainable development, it is appropriate to begin with the ***Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks***. The most important policy instruments and drivers on the ground at international level are those dealing with conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity such as the ***EU Directives on Habitats, Strategic Environment Assessment*** (SEA), and Appropriate Assessment (AA).
- 3.4 The ***Wildlife Act*** is a relevant and related national legislative instrument. However, the strength of the system for the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity is that it is underpinned by EU Directives. By contrast it is at national level that cultural heritage is most strongly protected in EU countries. In Ireland the ***National Monuments Act*** and its amendments provide the main legislative instrument.
- 3.5 At national level the ***Planning and Development Acts*** are critical in providing the framework for forward planning and development control. International and national designations under relevant legislation can be material considerations in planning decisions. The County Development Plan is recognised as the critical policy instrument which brings together and integrates international and national policies for the strategic management and sustainable development of a county, in this case County Clare.

4. Part 2: Perspectives of the project partners and other stakeholders on policy

- 4.1 While this legislative context may appear complex, at first glance it might also appear to be unambiguous. However, it is important to recognize that approaches on the ground to the implementation of policies can differ depending on the context of the partner or stakeholder – or actors as they are referred to in the literature. The character of the GeoparkLIFE partnership model, run under the auspices of Clare County Council, with the active engagement of various state agencies, means that the majority of the partners can be described as ‘state’ actors, but there is also active involvement of business (market actors) people, particularly through BEN (Burren Ecotourism Network) but also through farming and related enterprises, while community (citizen) actors are also strongly represented. It should also be recognized that individuals can participate under more than one of these headings.
- 4.2 The structured interviews conducted with all the relevant state agencies, local organisations involved in tourism and heritage conservation, community groups and individuals provided key insights into the complexity and ambiguities that can arise from the actual implementation of policy on the ground.
- 4.2 Through the GeoparkLIFE programme partnership structure there is an increasing awareness of the range of relevant legislation and policy. However, detailed understanding of the wider impact of specific policies tends to be restricted to the body or agency with particular responsibility for them. The organizational structure of relevant Government departments is perceived as being fragmented or ‘siloed’, which makes it difficult to establish an effective framework of communication and dialogue. This tends to impose constraints rather than actual conflict as individuals or agencies do not appear to regularly cross check with policies in other areas and to work within the confines of their own unit and direct policy concern. There is clearly a key issue here around communication and implementation.
- 4.3 A key issue that emerged across the board was the lack of resources and the perceived imbalance between national investment in tourism **vis a vis** investment in heritage and conservation management. This has led to a situation where tourism policy is seen as proactive and conservation management as reactive. This is to some extent being addressed by Fáilte Ireland through working in strategic partnerships with agencies such as the Office of Public Works in the management and presentation of sites. In working with tourism and conservation, it should be noted that there is a fundamental difference between market actors and citizen actors. Market actors do not actively see it as their role or responsibility to make themselves aware of policy. They comply with legislation through how they conduct their businesses and are concerned only with those policies that affect their businesses. Hence the importance of the development of the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism by Geopark LIFE partnering with the Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN). This translates the key principles of

sustainable tourism into clear action statements that facilitates implementation and greater engagement and understanding amongst tourism enterprises.

- 4.4 Community and citizen actors appreciate the Burren as a unique area, their place and home, which requires a specific management approach that recognizes the particular character of the Burren landscape and lifestyle, as is successfully demonstrated by the Burren Programme. The citizen actors probably have the greatest challenge when it comes to awareness and understanding of policy. It is really through active engagement in community projects that they get an insight into the complex myriad of policies that surround conservation, tourism and development. But unfortunately, as is illustrated by the experience of some of the community actors, it is often only after initial failure and frustration and with patience that capacity and knowledge are built. There is a strong perception, based on experience on the ground, that there is a lack of joined-up thinking by various state agencies, and a lack of guidance and advice for communities on the implications of conservation management policies.
- 4.5 The partnership model underpinning the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE steering committee and its collaborative approach to the management of the Geopark as a sustainable tourism destination is seen by all the actors as providing a good working model, although there was less confidence in the sustainability of this approach after the end of the GeoparkLIFE programme.

5. Part 3: Assessing policy and moving to a more coherent framework

- 5.1 In assessing the range of legislation and policies that are relevant to conservation management and sustainable tourism within the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark it became clear that there are two critical policy instruments that have the potential to underpin a more integrated approach. These are the ***Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023*** and the ***Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks***.
- 5.2 To illustrate how the partnership model underpinning the GeoparkLIFE programme has identified and is addressing policy gaps three case studies were discussed to illustrate relevant policy issues and the broad scope of the programme. It should be emphasized that these case studies were chosen as illustrative. The work of the BCOM GeoparkLIFE programme in looking at the role of the tourism enterprises in sustainable tourism, the management of demonstration heritage sites and community-based case studies promoting the sustainable integration of tourism and conservation management offered a wide range of work packages and implementation of policy on the ground to choose from.
- 5.3 A critical issue for tourist enterprises is transport policy and the role of day trip coach

tourism. The key problem is that the Burren has a finite capacity for tourism and the current level of coach visitors, with the Cliffs of Moher as the primary attraction, is increasing and becoming unsustainable. A do-nothing approach is no longer justified. This is an issue that needs to be urgently addressed as the current implementation (or more correctly perhaps non-implementation of stated national tourism policy) of policy runs directly counter to the objective of the Geopark to attract visitors that will stay longer and spend more.

- 5.4 St Mac Duagh's Hermitage, Slieve Carran is one of the seven demonstration sites where transferable approaches for the management of sites are being developed through the GeoparkLIFE programme. It is clear that a programme of conservation is required on this site, which in turn highlighted issues about the ownership of the site. This raised wider issues about the ownership, protection and management of archaeological sites within the area of the Burren National Park. A broader issue that this case study illustrates is a difference between an awareness of policy outside the direct remit of specific participants and a detailed understanding of its implications on their work. This applies to both natural and cultural heritage policy and legislation. Importantly the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) with responsibility for the National Park and the National Monuments Service (NMS) with responsibility for monuments are units in the same government department; the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Another complication that arises from a lack of legislative knowledge is the possibility that this can lead to non-compliance, particularly when it comes to the general public.
- 5.5 Internationally there is a growing focus on and recognition of active community involvement as providing the sustainable basis for heritage conservation. This is an underpinning principle of the management of UNESCO Global Geoparks. An Cabhail Mhór, a historic building in Killinaboy, is one of the case studies in the conservation management action of the programme. With the active support of the GeoparkLIFE programme the building has been extensively documented and training in skills provided but for a number of reasons, not least health and safety regulations, no actual work has been carried out. This case study illustrates the difficulties and frustrations a local community group (the Killinaboy History and Heritage Group) have faced in wishing to carry out an active conservation intervention on a standing structure. More broadly it demonstrates the challenges that are posed as we move towards a more community-focused and -led approach to conservation.
- 5.5 Alongside the policy gaps identified in the case studies and broader discussion in Part 2 of the review, it is clear that there is a recognition of the value of the partnership model underpinning the GeoparkLIFE programme. This illustrates that if there is the scope to engage at local level then difficulties can often be resolved to the satisfaction of parties involved. A common goal and the desire for a common good mean that, while frictions occur, everyone makes the effort to make it work. The letter of the law and the spirit of the law can be reconciled with a pragmatic approach. Against this background it is clear that a key policy requirement is to identify a best practice model for the future management of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher

UNESCO Global Geopark after the completion of the GeoparkLIFE programme.

- 5.6 One widely used policy approach to identifying best practice models is to carry out a comparative analysis. In this case four European sites were identified where integrated management processes and practice have been established. The four sites demonstrate an active and integrated management approach, combining natural and cultural heritage, active programmes of conservation, education and the promotion of sustainable tourism. They explicitly demonstrate consistency with the requirements of either the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* or the *Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks*.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 With the completion of the GeoparkLIFE programme at the end of 2017 the question arises as to how the Geopark will continue to deliver and sustain the aims and objectives of the programme and address the issues raised in the review?
- 6.2 The review makes recommendations specifically relevant to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and the development and implementation of the GeoparkLIFE programme in relation to key policy gaps identified in the process. The review addresses the need for the implementation of an effective policy framework. It also addresses the challenge of integrating tourism with conservation at a wider European level.

6.3 Addressing Policy Gaps

1. It is clear that as a high heritage value destination based on sustainable tourism a key objective of the Geopark is to attract visitors who will stay longer and spend more. However on the ground the reality is that tourism policy is still apparently focused on growing the number of visitors. As has been pointed out above this approach is not sustainable and prioritizes short-term (and limited) economic return over environmental impact and the need for conservation management.

It is **recommended** that the change of tourism policy articulated in the national policy instrument; *People, Place and Tourism, Growing Tourism to 2025* (2015), focusing on overseas visitor revenue and sustainability rather than visitor numbers should underpin the approach of all national, regional and local agencies to sustainable tourism in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. This should be implemented through a strategic regional plan for tourism which is a stated objective (CDP9.1) of the County Development Plan.

2. The most obvious policy dis-connect between what is explicitly stated as the national approach to sustainable tourism and what is happening on the ground in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark is in relation to transport policy. As stated above the Burren has a finite capacity for tourism and the current level of day trip coach visitors is problematic, with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre as the honeypot attraction having over 1.5 million visitors in 2017, reaching capacity at certain times.

It is **recommended** that a comprehensive, sustainable transport plan is developed for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. This should be developed in the context of the implementation of the strategic regional plan for tourism referred to above.

3. The analysis of the extent to which the integration of sustainable tourism and conservation actually works on the ground (Part 2 of the review) and the policy gaps identified in Part 3 through the discussion of case studies, and the broader scope of the GeoparkLIFE programme, has identified that there are problems with current policy approaches. These have tended to be compartmentalized, emphasizing the importance of individual policies and agencies rather than adopting an integrated approach.

There is a problem with the communication both of policy and the operational approach of different agencies. Tourism businesses and community groups can experience difficulty in understanding the complexity and diversity of policy. The structure and work of the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee, developed in the process of carrying out the LIFE programme, is seen as providing a model for a collaborative, inclusive and integrated management approach which resonates with changes in international approaches to conservation management.

It is **recommended** that all the stakeholders and partners involved in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark formally recognise and commit to the future sustainability of this landscape as a high heritage value destination through an integrated, proactive management approach.

6.4 An effective policy framework

4. It is clear from the views of the partners and stakeholders in the LIFE programme, as expressed in Part 2 of the policy review, and recommendation 3 above, that there is a need and support for a suitable management structure.

It is **recommended** that the current partnership model involving the active participation of all the relevant agencies involved in heritage conservation and sustainable tourism should be continued and developed in accordance with the best practice models

identified in the comparative analysis.

5. Under the ***Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks*** the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark is required to have a management plan that provides for the social and economic needs of local populations, protects the landscape in which they live and conserves their cultural identity.

It is **recommended** that a comprehensive, strategic management plan is developed for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, based on the ***Organisational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks***.

6. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, and the GeoparkLIFE programme, are run under the auspices of Clare County Council. It is a specific objective of ***Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023*** to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing work of the Geopark and to secure the retention of its status.

It is **recommended** that the management plan for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark should be fully and formally incorporated into the next iteration of the Clare County Development Plan. The management plan should be added as an appendix to the County Development Plan.

6.5 The wider challenge of integrating tourism with conservation

7. The GeoparkLIFE project illustrates how an informal structure of agencies working with communities can bring together expertise and knowledge at a local level. This is a good way of creating collective responsibility and an ability to address local needs. The GeoparkLIFE structure also illustrates how a locally based approach is the way towards resolving conflict. The notion of a collaborative and integrated approach to management is essential if sustainable tourism and conservation management are to sit side by side.

It is **recommended** that the core principle of the need for effective local management as essential to successfully and sustainably integrating tourism and conservation is recognised as an approach to meeting the European challenge of achieving this integration.

8. A critical European wide issue is whether we can move from processes focused on expert-led and centralized approaches to the integration of tourism and conservation to those where expertise feeds into and informs community involvement and initiatives.

Successful community projects need accessibility to experts who understand the needs of projects (from health and safety to environmental legislation) and who will guide them through a structured process.

It is **recommended** that programmes seeking to have active community involvement in the integration of tourism and conservation have two core elements:

- (a) effective local management structures to integrate sustainable tourism and conservation, building on the public, private and community sectors.
- (b) a community liaison officer with the requisite skills and expertise ideally located within the competent local authority and in the type of management structure recommended above.

These two measures would add strength and assist with specific projects. It would also help to build social capital in strengthening connections and relationships between groups. Furthermore it would integrate such informal social networks with the capacity and the strategic development function of the local authority.

1. Introduction and the purpose of the Review

- 1.1 The aim of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher (BCOM) GeoparkLIFE programme was to strengthen the integration of tourism and conservation, reconciling the development of tourism with management of natural and cultural heritage. The challenge of integrating tourism with conservation is a European challenge. It is a stated priority of the European Union to promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism. While European policy emphasises sustainability in tourism this has to be integrated with several European legislative and policy instruments, both in the environment (such as Natura 2000, the Water Framework Directive and other directives) and in development (such as the Structural and Cohesion funds).
- 1.2 The GeoparkLIFE programme builds on the important conservation work carried out to date in the region through projects such as Burren Farming For Conservation Programme (BFCP), developed through BurrenLIFE (an EU LIFE biodiversity project) and the sustainable tourism model developed through the Burren Connect partnership.
- 1.3 A key issue in achieving the aim of integrating tourism and conservation management is to focus on the policy context of the programme. It is important to address the challenge of recognizing and reconciling any potential conflicts between tourism and other policies, especially regulatory environmental and conservation policies in ensuring sustainability.
- 1.4 It is clear through the work of the GeoparkLIFE programme that the problem is not necessarily a lack of policy, but the need to recognise that there is a wide and diverse range of legal and policy instruments which may not always be in direct alignment. This also indicates that it is likely to be when international and national policies are actually implemented on the ground at local level that difficulties and friction may occur. This has an impact on the integration of tourism and conservation management to ensure a sustainable future both for tourism and the Burren landscape.

2. Format of the Review

- 2.1 The review process was composed of three sections; mapping policy, the perspectives of partners on the ground with regard to the current policy framework and finally the assessment of the main policy gaps and how a more coherent framework can be developed.
- 2.2 **Part 1:** the mapping policy report, aims to provide an overview of the legislation and policies which drive relevant strands of activity within the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark (and more broadly in Ireland) and how this impacts on the natural and built heritage, conservation management, the environment and tourism sectors generally.
- 2.3 The implementation of policy depends on institutions, the knowledge of people and decision-making on the ground. In this context policy can be seen as an active, ongoing and organic process, rather than simply the result of the carrying out of rational decisions. Central to the GeoparkLIFE programme was the adoption of a partnership model and approach, under the auspices the Geopark management (Clare County Council), and including all the relevant state agencies, local organisations involved in tourism and heritage conservation, community groups and individuals. To gain a perspective on how policy works on the ground all the key policy actors were interviewed using a standardized structure. **Part 2** of the report consists of the analysis of these interviews. The interviews provided a range of valuable insights and perspectives on the implementation of explicit, and also less well-defined or implicit, policies in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark.
- 2.4 The approach in the final section of the review, **Part 3** was to build on the perspectives of project partners and other stakeholders as discussed in Part 2, to focus on policy needs and then to consider approaches to moving to a more coherent policy framework. The **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** was seen as providing a key policy context and framework.
- 2.5 Key policy needs were demonstrated using case studies from the GeoparkLIFE programme. Comparison with the management approach in areas that share similarities with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark were used to indicate the parameters of a best practice approach to implementing an effective policy framework.
- 2.6 On the basis of this analysis a number of policy choices were discussed and key recommendations made in relation to key policy gaps and an effective policy framework specifically for the Burren and more broadly at European level.

3. Part 1: Mapping policy

This mapping report aims to provide an overview of the current state of the policies which govern the various strands of activity in the Burren and wider area, both in a direct and indirect way, affecting the natural and built heritage, the environment and the tourism sectors respectively. The policies in operation can be as direct as those affecting day to day farming activities or can be as wide-ranging so as to determine the development of large scale infrastructural projects. There is a clear link between international and national legislation and the aims and targets agreed at world level through agreements such as the Rio Earth Summit and the Kyoto Protocol, which filter through to eventually reach local level where they are played out in policy development and decision-making.

Hence this is a complex and broad topic and there is a significant overlap of relevant legislation and policies between the sectors, with actors in different areas being aware of and implementing policies in line with their own specific needs. Alongside policy, there is also a large quantity of best practice in place, developed to attempt to bridge gaps which may arise from lack of policy. Best practice documents tend to be more specific in nature and targeted with specific groups in mind. Relevant best practice guidance is also considered in the mapping process.

This report presents a wide survey of policies, best practice, legislation and guidelines relating to cultural heritage, environment and tourism.

3.1 The Global Context:

3.1.1 World Heritage Convention

The role of the UNESCO *World Heritage Convention* (1972), under Article 5, is to ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated in the territory of State Parties and the transmission to future generations of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value. Each State Party to the Convention endeavours, in so far as possible, and as appropriate for each State Party, to adopt a general policy which aims to give cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive national planning programmes. However, the text of the Convention, adopted in 1972, does not make any specific mention of the term “sustainable development” or of sustainability in general since this concept was only introduced in 1987 in *Our Common Future* (World Commission on Environment and Development). Subsequently, as the international community embraced the concept of sustainable development the concept of sustainability entered the *Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* in 1994 (latest edition 2017). In 2002 the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO adopted the *Budapest Declaration*,

defining its four strategic objectives, the four “Cs”, which are Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building and Communication (with Community added as a fifth “C” in 2007 to enhance the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention). The aim of this strategy is to ‘ensure an appropriate and equitable balance between conservation, sustainability and development, so that World Heritage properties can be protected through appropriate activities contributing to the social and economic development and the quality of life of our communities’ (UNESCO WHC 2015; ***World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme***).

In Ireland, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) is the lead agency for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention working in partnership with the Office of Public Works which has responsibility for the management and conservation of World Heritage Sites in Ireland.

The Burren is on Ireland’s Tentative List for World Heritage nomination. It was on the original list submitted to UNESCO in 1992 and the revised list submitted in 2010 (***Burren Tentative List Submission*** 2010).

3.1.2. UNESCO Global Geoparks

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher is a UNESCO Global Geopark and a member of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN). The GGN was founded in 2004 and works to raise the quality standards of all products and practises of a UNESCO Global Geopark. It comes together every two years and functions through regional networks, such as the European Geoparks Network, that meet twice a year to develop and promote joint activities.

The UNESCO Global Geopark designation was introduced in 2015, complementing the other two UNESCO site designations; Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites. UNESCO Global Geoparks give international recognition to sites that promote the importance and significance of protecting the Earth’s geodiversity through actively engaging with the local communities. Global Geoparks are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development; exploring, developing and celebrating the links between the geological heritage and all other aspects of the area’s natural, cultural and intangible heritages.

The designation is not a legislative one, though the defining geological heritage sites within a Global Geopark must be protected under indigenous, local, regional or national legislation as appropriate. UNESCO Global Geopark status does not imply restrictions on any economic activity inside a UNESCO Global Geopark where that activity complies with indigenous, local, regional and/or national legislation.

3.1.3 Making Tourism More Sustainable

Tourism is a major economic force whose development can have a fundamental impact on societies and the environment, both positive and negative. Globally the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) have put sustainable tourism on their agenda.

The UNWTO has been promoting the use of sustainable tourism indicators since the early 1990s. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) together with the UNWTO conducted a two year programme and published a report in 2005, ***Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers***. This presents a comprehensive set of instruments for governments, ranging from planning regulations to economic instruments and the application of certification and indicators, and a set of 12 aims which should be included in the scope of sustainable tourism development/management. These aims are all given equal importance and relate to a combination of environmental, social and economic issues and impacts. The report also described the collaborative structures and strategies that are needed at national and local level and identified ways to influence the development and operation of tourism enterprises and the activities of tourists. These 12 aims are incorporated into the three pillars of sustainability (environmental, economic, social).

The GSTC was established in 2010 as a body for establishing and managing standards for sustainable tourism. It has a global membership, including UN agencies, travel companies, hotels, country tourism boards, tour operators and communities. The GSTC was set up to identify the minimum sustainability standards required to achieve social, environmental, cultural and economic sustainability in destinations. To date two sets of GSTC criteria have been developed for hotels, tour operators and destinations.

The UNWTO guidebook on indicators of sustainable development for tourism destinations is designed to identify the key factors that make a destination sustainable. By 2030 the UNWTO aims to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism, creating jobs and promoting local culture and products (see UNWTO 2011; 2013). It also develops and implements tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism. The global mandate of UNWTO is to catalyse changes to tourism operations through evidence-based decision-making, efficiency, innovation and collaboration among stakeholders, monitoring and the adoption of a life cycle approach for continuous improvement.

It is recognised that tourism is an opportunity in that it can help to protect natural and cultural heritage, transmit conservation values and help to support research and the development of good environmental practices. Tourism can also help to enhance quality of life through improved infrastructure, enhanced intercultural understanding and the appreciation by local people of the value of their heritage. However, it is also increasingly realized that given the increasing scale of tourism it can be a major threat to heritage. Relevant issues include the impacts of tourist-related facilities, physical and environmental impacts, social impacts, including the exploitation of local populations and intrusive or excessive presentation and related work, including inappropriate reconstruction as discussed in ***World Heritage: Challenges for the Millennium*** (UNESCO 2007).

Against this background there has been significant work on principles and management guidelines to ensure that tourism is a positive force to retain site values and to help mitigate threats. The World Heritage Centre of UNESCO developed a **World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme** (UNESCO 2015). The UNTWO has addressed the issue of tourist congestion in **Tourism Congestion Management at Natural and Cultural Sites** (UNWTO 2004) and accessibility for visitors in **Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices** (UNWTO 2016).

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) published **Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Planning and Management** (Eagles et al. 2002). This draws on the widely referred to International Council on Sites and Monuments (ICOMOS) **International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance** (ICOMOS 1999).

The 1999 ICOMOS Charter is underpinned by six principles:

1. Since domestic and international tourism is among the foremost vehicles for cultural exchange, conservation should provide responsible and well managed opportunities for the host community and visitors to experience and understand that community's heritage and culture at first hand.
2. The relationship between heritage places and tourism is dynamic and may involve conflicting values. It should be managed in a sustainable way for present and future generations.
3. Conservation and tourism planning for heritage places should ensure that the visitor experience will be worthwhile, satisfying and enjoyable.
4. Host communities and indigenous peoples should be involved in planning for conservation and tourism.
5. Tourism and conservation activities should benefit the host community.
6. Tourism promotion programmes should protect and enhance natural and cultural heritage characteristics.

3.2 European Policy

3.2.1 EU Policy on Culture and Heritage

It is widely recognised that cultural heritage enriches the lives of citizens as well as being an important resource for economic growth and social cohesion, offering the potential to revitalise urban and rural areas and promote sustainable tourism. While policy in this area is primarily the responsibility of Member States and their regional and local authorities, the European Union's role is to assist and complement the actions of the Member States in preserving and promoting Europe's cultural heritage through a number of policies and programmes. The European Commission is committed to addressing common Europe-wide challenges such as limits to the mobility of cultural professionals, barriers to finance and skills deficits (**Supporting Cultural Heritage** http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/culture-policies/cultural-heritage_en.htm).

3.2.1.a The Valetta Convention

The position of archaeology in Europe has changed fundamentally over the last twenty five years. The adoption of the European **Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage** (also known as the Valetta Convention or the Convention of Malta: Council of Europe 1992) – was a watershed moment in the development of European archaeology. The 1992 treaty aims to protect the European archaeological heritage

'as a source of European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study. All remains and objects and any other traces of humankind from past times are considered to be elements of the archaeological heritage. The archaeological heritage shall include structures, constructions, groups of buildings, developed sites, moveable objects, monuments of other kinds as well as their context, whether situated on land or under water' (COE 1992).

Ireland ratified the Valetta Convention in 1997.

The Valetta Convention defines a standard for European states to manage their archaeological heritage and also provides an international frame of policy reference in this regard for other countries. It has placed archaeology firmly in the world of spatial planning, contracting and public decision-making (Willems 2007). The implementation of the Valetta Convention and its gradual incorporation into national legislation has had an important influence on archaeological heritage management in Europe. It has supported the development of procedures for the authorisation and supervision of excavation and other archaeological activities through a legal system which protects the archaeological heritage. The Convention invites States to reconcile and combine the respective requirements of archaeology and development plans through planning policies that are designed to balance development with the protection, conservation and enhancement of sites of archaeological interest, ensuring that there is

sufficient time and resources for appropriate scientific studies. States are also encouraged to conduct educational campaigns to develop public awareness of the value of archaeological heritage.

The basic principle which underlies the Convention is that the archaeological heritage is seriously threatened by major planning schemes and that the protection of the archaeological heritage should be reflected in town and country planning and cultural development policies. It should be noted that a number of amendments have been made to the **National Monuments Act** in Ireland, influenced by the adoption of the Valletta Convention.

These changes included the restriction of use of detection devices, conditions relating to archaeological excavations and where possible the preference for preservation *in situ* rather than excavation. A number of conditions relevant to the granting of licenses both for excavation and survey related directly to articles contained within the Convention. The Convention also influenced the **Planning and Development Acts** 2000-2015 in Ireland which requires that development plans include objectives for the protection of the archaeological heritage and conditions relating to archaeology to be attached to individual planning permissions, with larger scale strategic development projects requiring an accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This is also to comply with the **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive** (2014) which requires that certain developments be assessed for likely environmental effects (commonly known as environmental impact assessment (EIA)) before planning permission can be granted. Also proposed developments that are under the relevant EIS threshold may still be required to submit one if the planning authority consider the development to have a significant effect on the environment.

The **National Monuments Acts** and **Planning and Development Acts** are considered in more detail as national legislation below.

3.2.1.b European Landscape Convention

In 2002 Ireland ratified the **European Landscape Convention** (COE 2000), also known as the Florence Convention, which promotes the protection, management and planning of European landscapes and organises European co-operation on landscape issues. The Convention came into force in Ireland in 2004. The Convention is a key part of the Council of Europe's work on natural and cultural heritage, spatial planning and the environment. It takes a 'whole landscape perspective' and thus applies to the entire territory of the member states who have ratified the Convention. It therefore is concerned not just with special or designated landscapes but also with ordinary everyday landscapes. The **European Landscape Convention** introduces the concept of 'landscape quality objectives' into the protection, management and planning of geographical areas.

The general purpose of the Convention is to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing and planning landscapes throughout Europe to maintain and improve landscape quality and to assist the public,

institutions and local and regional authorities to recognise the value and importance of landscape. The Convention demands a forward-looking attitude on the part of all those whose decisions affect the protection, management or planning of landscapes.

In each area of landscape the balance between protection, management and planning will depend on the character of the area and the agreed objectives for its future. Some areas may merit the strictest protection, some have the capacity for some change which will not detract from the character of the landscape while at the other extreme there may be areas whose landscapes are severely damaged and would benefit from reshaping. Most landscapes need a combination of protection, management and planning, and some of them need some degree of intervention. In seeking the right balance between protection, management and planning of a landscape, it should be remembered that the aim is not the preservation or “freezing” of the landscape at a particular point in its lengthy evolution. The aim instead should be to manage future changes in a way which recognises the great diversity and the quality of the landscapes that we inherit and to preserve, or even enhance, that diversity and quality instead of allowing them to decline.

The **European Landscape Convention** has implications for many areas of official policy and official or private action, from the local to the European level. It is seen as being complementary to existing international legal instruments, such as:

- the UNESCO **Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, (1972);
- the Council of Europe **Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats**, (1979);
- the Council of Europe **Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe**, (1985);
- the Council of Europe **Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage** (1992).

It is also seen to complement international initiatives such as the **Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy** (1995). The **European Landscape Convention** facilitates the establishment of formal links where appropriate between the mechanisms of the Convention and these other instruments or initiatives. The **European Landscape Convention** provides states who have ratified it with the choice of means to be used within the internal legal, legal, administrative, fiscal and financial arrangements of each country to implement the Convention.

3.2.1.c The Faro Convention

The Council of Europe Framework *Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (2005), also known as the Faro Convention, provides a framework of reference for heritage policies, particularly in the context of rights and responsibilities in this area and the positive benefits which can be drawn from the use of the heritage as cultural capital, with a view to underpinning existing Council of Europe instruments concerning more specific aspects of cultural heritage. A sound and all-embracing framework was deemed necessary to ensure that cultural heritage and culture would be placed at the centre of a new vision for sustainable development. The Faro Convention complements the previous *Conventions on Architectural Heritage* (Granada) and *Archaeological Heritage* (Valetta) by changing the way practitioners and others think about heritage. It aims to create a pan-European reality commonly referred to as 'a Common European Heritage'. Signatories to the Convention recognise the need to put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage; they recognise that every person has a right to engage with the cultural heritage of their choice; and the need to involve everyone in society in the ongoing process of defining and managing cultural heritage. Ireland and a number of other Member States have not yet ratified the Convention, however it is changing the way heritage is defined, recognising that heritage should be inclusive not exclusive, and that the everyday and the ordinary has merit alongside the special and the iconic.

The Faro Convention could be seen as the most comprehensive and diverse international agreement on cultural heritage to date. The key objectives of the Convention include strengthening the connection between cultural heritage, quality of life, identity and sustainable development in society. The Convention emphasises cultural heritage as a resource, and specifically the diversity of cultural heritage and its significance as a key resource for sustainable economic development.

3.2.1.d Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development

About half of the population of the EU lives in rural areas and farming is the principal economic activity in most of these areas. However, many farmers carry out additional activities, such as food processing and providing accommodation for tourists. This diversification of the rural economy is a source of strength which the EU supports and encourages through its rural development programmes. Without farming in such areas there would be little to keep many communities alive and hold them together. If farming were to disappear, in many areas there would be a problem of land abandonment. The *Common Agricultural Policy* (CAP) gives farmers financial assistance to ensure that they continue working the land and to create additional jobs through landscape preservation or cultural heritage projects and many other tasks directly or indirectly associated with farming and the rural economy.

The CAP's rural development programmes will remain a significant driver of change and progress: they will continue to offer opportunities to farmers to improve their farms and, more generally, the countryside they live in. Now in operation for over 50 years, the CAP has evolved and undergone numerous reforms to adapt to the changing needs of farming and rural development. The principal aims of CAP were to improve agricultural productivity and ensure that EU farmers could make a reasonable living. This has now expanded to address challenges extending beyond food security such as climate change and the sustainable management of resources. Farming has shaped our environment and landscape over millennia and the biodiversity of the countryside habitat is critical for the sustainable development of the countryside. The **CAP Rural Development Policy** helps the rural areas of the EU to meet the wide range of challenges and opportunities that face them in the 21st century – economic, environmental and social. Known as the “second pillar” of the Common Agricultural Policy, it has been improved for the period 2014-2020 through the process of wider CAP reform, via a number of legislative acts.

In order to fit into the Europe 2020 strategy and the overall CAP objectives, three main long-term strategic objectives have been identified for the **Rural Development Policy**:

- improving the competitiveness of agriculture
- the sustainable management of natural resources and climate action
- a balanced territorial development of rural areas

This **Rural Development Policy** is managed through Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) which have 6 priorities to consider:

1. Fostering knowledge transfer in agriculture, forestry and rural areas
2. Enhancing the competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability
3. Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture
4. Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry
5. Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift toward a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors
6. Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

Each RDP priority identifies specific areas of intervention (focus areas). RDP priorities and focus areas provide the basis for programming and rolling out the European Agricultural Fund for Rural

Development (EAFRD) support to EU rural areas.

The LEADER Initiative, which became available in Ireland in 1992, was designed to aid the development of sustainable rural communities following the reforms of the **Common Agricultural Policy**. The LEADER element of the **Rural Development Programme** 2014-2020 (which focuses on Priority 6 above) provides €250 million in financial resources to address poverty reduction, social inclusion and economic development of rural areas. LEADER is a community-led approach to the delivery of rural development interventions that is supported by a Local Development Strategy (LDS) and implemented by interested groups of people at a local level called Local Action Groups (LAGs).

The EU regulatory framework governing the programme requires each EU Member State to conduct an open and transparent selection process to select both the Local Development Strategies and the Local Action Group for each sub regional area. Ireland conducts a two stage process; the first stage is an Expressions of Interest (EOI) stage and the second stage invites successful entities from stage one to join in the design of a Local Development Strategy for their area. Local Development Strategies that reach the required standard will then be given an allocation from the overall allocation for their county, to support the implementation of the successful strategy. Article 33 (2) of EU Regulation 1303/2013 states that it is the responsibility of the Member State to “define criteria for the selection of community-led local development strategies”.

3.2.1.e Promoting Cultural Policy at European Level

The Commission, whose role in heritage is based on Article 3.3 of the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), has developed a number of relevant policies and programmes as well as supporting and promoting policy collaboration between Member States and heritage stakeholders. The Commission is also committed to promoting cultural diversity, protecting cultural heritage, and supporting the contribution of cultural and creative industries to boosting growth and jobs across the EU, in line with the principles of the **European Agenda for Culture** (2014).

In 2014 EU Culture Ministers called for the ‘mainstreaming of cultural heritage in national and European policies’, and ‘the development of a strategic approach to cultural heritage’. Responding to this call, and the European Commission adopted a Communication: **Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe** (2014) and a mapping report, **Mapping Cultural Heritage Actions in European Union Policies, Programmes and Activities**, was published in parallel with this, which presents a wide range of useful information about EU policies, legislation, programmes and funding opportunities relevant to cultural heritage.

The focus of the 2014 Mapping Cultural Heritage report is on policies concerned with the preservation and promotion of European heritage. A number of incentives are highlighted, most notably European Heritage Days, launched in France in 1985 and since 1999 organised as a joint action of the European Union and the Council of Europe. The main aim of European Heritage Days is to promote awareness of our built, natural and cultural heritage and to promote Europe's common cultural heritage.

In Ireland European Heritage Days are celebrated with a full week of events. Organised by the Heritage Council, National Heritage Week takes place at the end of August with many national and hundreds of local community organisations participating by organising events throughout the country. There are over 1700 events nationally and many are free. The aim of the programme is to highlight the work that is carried out in communities across Ireland to preserve and promote natural, built and cultural heritage. Another initiative is The European Heritage Label, designed to highlight heritage sites that celebrate and symbolise European history, ideals, and integration.

The Directorate General for Education and Culture, or DG EAC, is the branch of the European Commission charged with Education, Training, Youth, Sport, Languages, and Culture. In addition to these, the DG manages a variety of initiatives of the cultural and creative sector. DG EAC's activities over the past few years have mainly focused on the implementation of the **European Agenda for Culture**, with the **2014-2020 Creative Europe programme** (2014), the European Commission's framework programme for support to the culture and audiovisual sectors. Within this programme there are two sub-programmes, with one focused on the promotion of the culture sector, which, among other things, works towards promoting cross-border cooperation and transnational policy cooperation. This programme provides a variety of opportunities for cultural sector organisations and professionals.

3.2.2 EU Policy on Environment

The most important legislation underpinning biodiversity and nature conservation in Ireland is the **Wildlife Act**, 1976, the **Wildlife (Amendment) Act**, 2000 and the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations, SI 94/1997.

The **Wildlife Act**, 1976 provided a good national legislative base for nature conservation. The species protection provisions are quite comprehensive, however, the habitat/site protection measures in the Act were recognised as being relatively weak, and were almost completely limited to measures which could be introduced in agreement with landowners. There was very limited power to ensure protection, even in the case of outstanding habitats or sites, where agreement of landowners was not forthcoming. Nature conservation legislation was substantially enlarged and improved by the **Wildlife (Amendment)**

Act, 2000 and the **Birds** (2009/147/EC) and **Habitats** (92/43/EEC) **Directives**.

This strengthening of the conservation of biodiversity in Ireland under EU law, is carried out under the following:

- **Birds Directive** [79/409/EEC as amended 2009/147/EC]
- **Habitats Directive** [92/43/EEC]
- **Water Framework Directive** [2000/60/EC]
- **EIA Directive** [85/337/EEC] and the **new EIA Directive** [2014/52/EU]

In 1997, the Habitats Directive was transposed into Irish national law and the relevant Regulations; Regulations 1997, SI 94/1997 represented a fundamental shift in nature conservation policy and law. Subsequently these Regulations were amended twice and then revised and consolidated into the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, SI 477/2011.

3.2.2.a The Birds Directive

Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds amends and updates the original Directive, 79/409/EEC. This was adopted unanimously by Member States in 1979, is the EU's oldest piece of nature legislation and one of the most important. It was a response to increasing concern about the declines in Europe's wild bird populations resulting from pollution, loss of habitats and unsustainable use. It was also a recognition that wild birds, many of which are migratory, are a shared heritage of the Member States and that their effective conservation required international co-operation.

The Directive recognises that habitat loss and degradation are the most serious threats to the conservation of wild birds. It therefore places great emphasis on the protection of habitats for endangered as well as migratory species, especially through the establishment of a coherent network of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) comprising all the most suitable territories for these species. Since 1994 all SPAs form an integral part of the NATURA 2000 network of nature protection areas in the territory of the European Union.

3.2.2.b The Habitats Directive

The **Habitats Directive** (92/43/EEC) together with the **Birds Directive** forms the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. It is built around two pillars: the Natura 2000 network of protected sites and the strict system of species protection. All in all the Directive protects over 1,000 animals and plant species and over 200 so-called habitat types (e.g. special types of forests, meadows, wetlands or other habitat), which are of European importance.

The Burren is internationally recognised for the uniqueness, wealth and diversity of its heritage. As a result, much of the Burren has been designated as part of the Natura 2000 Network under the EU **Habitats Directive**. These areas contain a variety of priority habitats including limestone pavements, orchid-rich grasslands and turloughs.

3.2.2.c NATURA 2000

Natura 2000 is the centrepiece of EU nature and biodiversity policy. It is an EU-wide network of nature protection areas established under the 1992 **Habitats Directive**. The aim of the network is to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. It is comprised of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated by Member States under the Habitats Directive, and also incorporates Special Protection Areas (SPAs) which are designated under the 1979/2009 Birds Directive.

In Ireland Natura 2000 sites comprise over ten per cent of the area of the country. While the network can and does include nature reserves most of the land is likely to continue to be privately owned and the emphasis is on ensuring that future management is sustainable, both ecologically and economically. The establishment of this network of protected areas also fulfils a European Community obligation under the UN **Convention on Biological Diversity** (1992). Natura 2000 sites have management implications for farmers with sites on their land, as well as planning restrictions.

The Natura 2000 network in Ireland is made up of sites which include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC)
- proposed Special Protection Areas (pSPA).

SACs and SPAs are fully protected by law in Ireland from the date when the Minister gives notice of intention to designate the sites. Candidate and proposed sites are included as part of the Natura 2000 network. Indeed, potential SPAs enjoy protection from the time when they are identified as meriting consideration for designation. It should be noted that in some areas, SAC and SPA designations overlap.

3.2.2.d Water Framework Directive

The **Water Framework Directive** (WFD, 2000) established an integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater within Europe. It impacts on the management of water quality and water resources and affects conservation, fisheries, flood defence, planning and environmental monitoring. It requires the control of all impacts – physical, polluting or otherwise – on the water resource. The Directive requires that Member States achieve 'good' ecological status for all waters by 2015 and they must also ensure that ecological status does not deteriorate in any waters.

This Directive is unique in that, for the first time, it establishes a framework for the protection of all waters including rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater, and their dependent wildlife/habitats under one piece of environmental legislation. One advantage of this framework directive approach is the streamlining of legislation that will rationalise the Community's water legislation by replacing seven of the 'first wave' directives. Specifically the WFD aims to:

- protect/enhance all waters (surface, ground and coastal waters)
- achieve 'good status' for all waters by December 2015
- manage water bodies based on river basins (or catchments)
- involve the public
- streamline legislation.

The WFD has been transposed into Irish law by means of the following Regulations. These Regulations cover governance, the shape of the WFD characterisation, monitoring and status assessment programmes in terms of assigning responsibilities for the monitoring of different water categories, determining the quality elements and undertaking characterisation and classification assessments:

- European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations, 2003 (S.I. No. 722 of 2003)
- European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations, 2009 (S.I. No. 272 of 2009)
- European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 9 of 2010)
- European Communities (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations, 2010 (S.I. No. 610 of 2010)
- European Communities (Technical Specifications for the Chemical Analysis and Monitoring of Water Status) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 489 of 2011)
- European Union (Water Policy) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 350 of 2014).

The Directive requires an integrated approach to managing water quality on a river basin basis with

the aim of maintaining and improving water quality. The Directive requires that management plans be prepared on a river basin basis and specifies a structured approach to developing those plans. River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) are to be prepared and renewed in six year cycles and the first plans covered the period 2009- 2014, with the second cycle covering 2018-2021.

There were eight IRBDs (International River Basin Districts) identified on the island of Ireland for the purpose of implementing the Directive; three of these are shared with Northern Ireland (Shannon, Neagh-Bann, and North Western), four IRBDs are wholly within the state (Eastern, South Eastern, South Western and Western) and one is wholly within Northern Ireland (North Eastern). Development of the river basin management plans involves a coordinated effort across a wide range of organisations, including a high level of coordination with the authorities in Northern Ireland in relation to the cross-border IRBDs.

A key requirement of the Directive is public participation in the development of the management plans (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government 2017). The RBMP describe the main pressures and activities affecting water status, set out the environmental objectives to be achieved up to 2021 and identifies the measures needed to achieve these objectives. The RBMP was to be finalised by the end of 2017 with publication in early 2018.

In reviewing the first cycle of management plans it is generally accepted that top-down approaches do not work and there is a move towards supporting Integrated Catchment Management (ICM), whereby policy, research and community action are brought together at regional and local levels to develop a real, shared understanding of the challenges facing individual catchments in order to then agree specific actions and implement them. Part of the proposed new governance model is a Water Policy Advisory Committee to advise the Minister on water policy issues relating to achieving the objectives of the WFD (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government 2015).

The **Water Framework Directive** is also linked to a number of other EU directives. These include:

- Directives relating to the protection of biodiversity (**Birds and Habitats Directives**)
- Directives related to specific uses of waters (**Drinking Water, Bathing Waters and Urban Waste Water Directives**)
- Directives concerned with the regulation of activities undertaken in the environment (**Industrial Emissions and Environmental Impact Assessment Directives**).

Directives on topics such as **Floods and the Marine Strategy Framework** have significant linkages with the WFD which is also supplemented by the **Priority Substances Directive** and the **Groundwater Directive**.

The **Nitrates Directive** forms an integral part of the **Water Framework Directive** and is one of the key instruments in the protection of waters against agricultural pressures.

The **Sustainable Use of Pesticides** and the **Sewage Sludge Directive** also provide for the control of materials applied to land.

Floods pose a risk to human life and well-being, property and the environment. In Ireland, the Office of Public Works (OPW) is the Competent Authority for the implementation of the **EU Floods Directive** (see below). The National Flood Policy Review and the EU Floods Directive require a more proactive, sustainable flood risk management approach with an increased consideration of non-structural flood protection and flood impact mitigation measures. It is foreseeable that conflict might arise between the objectives of flood risk management and the WFD.

The WFD requires an integrated approach (i.e. across all sectors including agriculture, industry and spatial policy) to the sustainable management and protection of water resources. It impacts on, and is equally impacted by, a diverse range of environmental plans and regulations. Ensuring the integration of these plans is a particular challenge.

The ultimate objective of river basin management plans should be to achieve beneficial outcomes for the environment and for society in a manner that is consistent with long-term environmental goals and that is fair and cost-effective for society as a whole. However, the water sector has many external links and is affected by, amongst others, policies related to energy, agriculture, land-use, economic development and public finance. Coherence in policy goals can be undermined by conflicting objectives and coordination across water-related sectors is essential if strategic goals are to be met. Stakeholders must therefore be engaged with the process so that solutions can be found to deal with these areas of conflicting interest.

3.2.2.e Environmental Impact Assessment

EIA Directive (85/337/EEC as amended by 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2014/52/EU) requires that certain developments be assessed for likely environmental effects, commonly known as environmental impact assessment (EIA) before planning permission can be granted. When submitting a planning application for such a development, the applicant must also submit an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Irish projects needing environmental impact assessment are listed in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. In the case of development which is under the relevant EIA threshold, planning authorities may request an EIS where it considers that the proposed development is likely to have significant environmental effects.

The EIA Directive underwent review between 2009 and 2014. As a result in 2012 the Commission adopted a proposal for a new Directive to amend the current one. The intention was to lighten unnecessary administrative burdens and make it easier to assess potential impacts, without weakening existing environmental safeguards. Emerging challenges that are important to the EU in areas like resource efficiency, climate change, biodiversity and disaster prevention would be reflected in the assessment process. New elements to be introduced include a one-stop shop for assessments deriving from **EIA** and **Habitats Directives**, quality control mechanisms, mandatory assessment of reasonable alternatives, monitoring, broader scope of the EIA covering new issues (climate change, biodiversity,

risks prevention), as well as justification of screening/EIA decisions.

The newly amended **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive** (2014/52/EU) entered into force in 2014, it is in line with the drive for smarter regulation and also improves the level of environmental protection, with a view to making business decisions on public and private investments more sound, more predictable and sustainable in the longer term. Member States have to apply these rules from 16 May 2017 at the latest. They must communicate to the Commission the national legislation adopted in order to comply with the Directive.

.2.2.f Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is an important mechanism in promoting sustainable development, raising awareness of significant environmental issues and ensuring that such issues are addressed within the capacity of the planning and programming system. It is a more proactive approach than EIA and is designed to complement that process. SEA seeks to inform the decision-making process before a decision is made to adopt the plan. The **SEA Directive** (2001/42/EC): **Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment**, places a duty on Member States to '**monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes**' (Article 10(1))

The overall aim of SEA is to:

- Provide a high level of protection to the environment
- To integrate environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of Plans and Programmes
- To promote sustainable development
- To increase public participation in environmental decision-making.
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Article 1 of the SEA Directive states:

'The objective of this directive is to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development, by ensuring that, in accordance with this Directive, an environmental assessment is carried out of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.'

The **SEA Directive** was transposed into Irish Law in 2004 through the following Regulations:

- European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes)

Regulations 2004, S.I. No. 435 of 2004

- Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004, S.I. No. 436 of 2004.

An SEA is mandatory for plans/programmes which:

are prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste/ water management, telecommunications, tourism, town & country planning or land use and which set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in the EIA Directive.

or

have been determined to require an assessment under the Habitats Directive.

This assessment process is a key mechanism in promoting sustainable development; in raising awareness of significant environmental issues and in ensuring that such issues are properly addressed within the capacity of the planning system. The SEA legislation and guidelines indicate that there should be integration between the preparation of the plan/programme, the SEA process and Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment (see below).

The preparation of a County Development Plan (see below) requires a full Strategic Environmental Assessment. This statutory Environmental Report can be divided into a number of stages:

- Screening
- Scoping
- Consultations with environmental authorities
- Scoping report
- Preparation of Environmental Report & County Development Plan.

This process involves consultation with various government agencies within Ireland. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must be consulted, as should relevant Government departments. For example, the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the plan effects architectural or archaeological heritage or nature conservation, the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the plan might have significant effects on the environment, fisheries or marine environment. Other non-statutory bodies, interested parties and Local Authorities may also be consulted as part of the process, providing a wide-ranging and well informed report. The SEA also needs assessment of Alternative Scenarios and Mitigation Measures.

The Directive applies across a wide range of sectors; agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism and land use planning. The requirement to carry out SEA of plans/programmes in the sectors mentioned above arises where

they 'set the framework for future development consent of projects' which are listed in the **EIA Directive** (85/337/EEC, as amended by Directive 97/11/EC and 2014/52/EU).

Responsibility for implementation of the Directive within each sector rests primarily with the relevant government department.

3.2.2.g Appropriate Assessment

The Appropriate Assessment (AA) requirements of the **Habitats Directive** in respect of plans and projects are similar in many respects to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of projects, and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of plans and programmes. However, the focus of AA is targeted specifically on Natura 2000 sites and their conservation objectives.

Appropriate Assessment is a process to assess the likely significant effects of every plan or project on the Natura 2000 network. Not only are new plans and projects captured by this requirement but all plans and projects, when being considered for approval, must take into consideration the possible effects they may have in combination with other plans and projects.. The results of each step of the assessment must be documented and recorded so there is full traceability and transparency of the decisions made. These results also determine the decisions that ultimately may be made in relation to approval or refusal of a plan or project. AA is not a prohibition on new development or activities but involves a case-by-case examination of the implications for the relevant Natura 2000 site and its conservation objectives.

There is no prescribed method for undertaking AA, or form or content for reporting. No definition of the content or scope of AA is given in the **Habitats Directive** but the concept and approach are set out in Commission guidance (EC 2000, 2002, 2006). Case law has established that assessments should be undertaken on the basis of the best scientific evidence and methods. It comprises two main elements. The first element is the responsibility of the proponent of the plan or project which requires them to have the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) prepared for submission to the competent authority, i.e. the consent authority. Having satisfied itself that the Statement is complete and objective, the competent authority carries out the second element, the AA, on the basis of the Statement and any other necessary information.

The Commission's methodological guidance (EC, 2002) promotes a four-stage process to complete the AA, and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. The outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

Stage 3: Alternative Solutions

Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI)/Derogation.

There are clear links and analogies between AA and SEA. The focus of AA is on the impacts of a plan on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites and the Natura 2000 network. In contrast, SEA assists in formulating plan policies and objectives that provide for a more strategic level of protection of the environment. Nonetheless both SEA and AA contribute to the integration of environmental considerations in the adoption of a plan and promote sustainable development.

3.2.3 EU Policy on Sustainability of Tourism

The European Commission recognises that the tourism sector's competitiveness as a major economic force is closely linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and the attitudes of the local community. There is growing recognition that public and private tourism actors need to consider the equal distribution of maximised economic benefits, minimisation of sociocultural impacts on hosts and tourists as well as the protection and enhancement of the environment through tourism activities. In general one of the major issues is the complexity of the concept of sustainable tourism and its translation into practice, it continues to be a debated and contested concept.

The European Commission refers to 'sustainability' as one of the 'four pillars of tourism development' (Brand, 2011), however, there is no universally acknowledged definition of what sustainable tourism actually is. Generally speaking, an unspoilt environment/landscape is seen as a prerequisite for tourism into the future and it should be embedded in a sustainable, regionally-specific networking economy, with a focus on people and local population.

At a wider policy level while the Lisbon Treaty acknowledges the importance of tourism and the role of the EU in this field, Article 195 specifies that the Union will 'complement the action of the Member States in the tourism sector', therefore, the main competence still rests with the Member States. Hence, in looking at national policies, it is important to identify if there is a strategy for sustainability in tourism. European funds and subsidies, the biggest motivators for development, usually lack clarity in defining sustainable tourism (Brand, 2011).

Specific policies and initiatives at European level complement and mirror the UNWTO and GSTC approach at global level. The European Commission has long been committed to promoting sustainable development of tourism in Europe and it is advised by the Tourism Sustainability Group (TSG), public and private sector experts in sustainable tourism. In 2001 the Commission published a Communication: ***Working together for the future of European Tourism and Movement***, in 2006, ***A Renewed EU Tourism Policy: towards a Stronger Partnership for European Tourism*** and the ***Communication: Europe the World's Number 1 Tourist Destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe*** (2010). Under action

11 of this Communication the Commission committed itself to develop a system of indicators for the management of destinations.

This system, the ***European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Destination Management*** (ETIS) was launched in 2013 with the aim of helping destinations to monitor and measure their sustainable tourism performance, by using a common comparable approach. It is intended as a voluntary management tool, a monitoring system based on self-assessment, data collection and analysis by the destinations and an information tool to assist policy makers, tourism enterprises and other stakeholders. ETIS does not set minimum standards to be achieved and it does not provide certification. In identifying a set of core indicators it provides destinations with the basic information they need to monitor sustainability and to manage tourism activity more effectively.

The 2013 edition of the ETIS toolkit was based on 27 core indicators and 40 optional indicators, subdivided into four categories; destination management, economic value, social and cultural impact and environmental impact. Based on the feedback from over 100 destinations who implemented and tested ETIS the toolkit was revised. The current 2016 edition of the toolkit features 43 core indicators, sub-divided into the same categories as in the first iteration and with the opportunity for individual destinations to consider relevant supplementary indicators. The ETIS now provides destinations with a fully tested system and a more realistic set of core indicators.

The European Union provides a number of funds which can aid both sustainable tourism and nature conservation. Successful integration of these two objectives is of increasing importance, requiring strategic planning. There are five European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds which complement each other and seek to promote a growth and job based recovery in Europe. Three of these funds (ERDF, EAFRD, EMFF), together with other EU funds aid sustainable tourism and conservation in Ireland at the moment:

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supports more sustainable patterns of tourism to enhance cultural and natural heritage and to develop accessibility and mobility related infrastructure.

The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) encourages tourist activities as part of diversification of the rural economy. It also provides support for improving the environment and the countryside.

The European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is the fund for the EU's maritime and fisheries policies for 2014-2020.

The 7th EU Framework Programme for Research, Technological Development and Demonstration and The Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) are two other funds that may enhance sustainable tourism.

LIFE is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects

throughout the EU. LIFE encourages many direct biodiversity projects and nature promotion activities which help to find compromises between tourism and conservation goals.

The Structural Funds (ERDF and Cohesion Fund) can fund nature conservation activities, and if well designed can reduce visitor pressure on natural areas.

The aim of the EU regional policy is to promote coherent development within the EU and reduce the gaps between the poor and rich regions within the Community area; however, this regional policy has paid little attention to issues related to nature conservation and biodiversity. Furthermore, the initiatives supported by Structural and Cohesion Funds have frequently been criticized for having negative impacts on biodiversity (WWF 2006). Although many Regional Competitiveness and Employment Programmes identify nature as an asset for development, little co-financing for biodiversity and nature protection is provided. However, some programmes support indirect nature protection measures such as sustainable use of cultural and natural areas as regional resource. As investments are primarily focused on income generation and promotion of new economic activities, nature conservation is mainly addressed through promotional or awareness activities.

3.2.3.a EUOPARC Federation

The EUOPARC Federation is the network for Europe's natural and cultural heritage. The Federation works to improve the management of Protected Areas in Europe, in 36 countries, through international cooperation, exchange of ideas and experience and by influencing policy. The Federation is dedicated to practical nature conservation and sustainable development of Europe's biodiversity, fostering holistic landscape approaches to its management.

The ***European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas*** (EUOPARC 1999) is a practical management tool that enables Protected Areas to develop tourism sustainably. The core element of the Charter is working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to develop a sustainable tourism strategy and an action plan.

The Charter proposes five principles for how tourism should be managed in protected areas:

1. Giving priority to protection
A fundamental priority for the development and management of sustainable tourism should be to protect the area's natural and cultural heritage and to enhance awareness, understanding and appreciation of it.
2. Contributing to sustainable development
Sustainable tourism should follow the principles of sustainable development, which means addressing all aspects of its environmental, social and economic impact in the short and long term.

3. Engaging all stakeholders
All those affected by sustainable tourism should be able to participate in decisions about its development and management, and partnership working should be encouraged.
4. Planning sustainable tourism effectively
Sustainable tourism development and management should be guided by a well-researched plan that sets out agreed objectives and actions.
5. Pursuing continuous improvement
Tourism development and management should deliver ongoing improvement in sustainable environmental practices, visitor satisfaction, economic performance, local prosperity and quality of life, requiring regular monitoring and reporting of progress and results.

3.3 National Policy

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is the government department which has, among other missions, responsibility to contribute to the economic, social and cultural progress of Irish society and the enrichment of its quality of cultural life, protecting and facilitating greater access to and preservation of Ireland's natural and cultural inheritance and promoting sustainable tourism. It is led by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht who is assisted by a Minister of State with responsibility for Gaeilge, Gaeltacht and the Islands. In carrying out its mandate the department undertakes a variety of functions including the protection of Ireland's heritage and cultural assets and the provision of financial resources and appropriate policy framework within the various cultural institutions, while at the same time facilitating the continued development by the tourism industry of an economic and environmentally sustainable and spatially balanced tourism sector.

3.3.1 National Policy on Heritage

It has been the direct intent of legislation dealing with the physical environment that both public and private stakeholders must take responsibility for their stewardship of the heritage and put conservation measures in place, and apply those measures to best effect. Since the 1990s, the planning process has become a central element in the protection of immovable tangible heritage. Local authorities have direct legislative responsibility for protecting the architectural heritage under the consolidated ***Planning and Development Act*** 2000 and subsequent amendments, which recognises the importance of preventing damage to architectural heritage as a result of development or due to endangerment. The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has direct legislative responsibility for protecting the archaeological and natural heritage, and for supporting the national cultural institutions.

3.3.1.a National Monuments Service

The protection, preservation, conservation and presentation of Ireland's heritage and cultural assets are a major objective of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht through the National Monuments Services. A number of state bodies and agencies with responsibilities relating to various aspects of the Department's remit are funded from within the Department and it works with these bodies to ensure a co-ordinated approach to fulfilling the Department's mandate. The main heritage institutions involved are the National Museum of Ireland and the Heritage Council. The policy of the Department is to legislate for the protection of the country's heritage through the provision of the **National Monuments Acts** 1930 to 2014 and related legislation.

The **National Monuments Acts** provides the legislative basis for the policies adopted by the National Monuments Service. Monuments are protected in one of four ways, with each category providing a different level of protection. The four categories are; 1) the Record of Monuments and Places; 2) the Register of Historic Monuments; 3) a national monument subject to a preservation order (or temporary preservation order); 4) a national monument in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht or a Local Authority. Enforcement of the legislation is the responsibility of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht.

Specific policy on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP):

It is the policy of the Minister for Culture, Heritage, Gaeltacht that the Record of Monuments and Places will be updated, take account the work of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland.

Specific policy on the Register of Historic Monuments (RHM):

Areas containing no known archaeological monuments may be included in the Register of Historic Monuments as archaeological areas if the Minister for Culture, Heritage, Gaeltacht has reason to believe that such an area is of archaeological interest, including on the grounds of (i) its potential for containing archaeological monuments or objects, or (ii) its interest in respect of palaeo-environmental studies or (iii) its importance in respect of protecting the amenities of an archaeological monument.

Specific policy on preservation orders and temporary preservation orders:

Preservation orders and temporary preservation orders will be made whenever necessary to secure protection of national monuments of archaeological interest, such protection being in accordance with the provisions of the **European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage**.

Amendments to the **National Monuments Act** in 1994 made further provision for the protection and

preservation of archaeological objects and defined archaeological objects to include treasure trove. A further amendment in 2004 included provisions for the partial or complete removal of National Monuments if this was deemed to be in the “public interest”. These provisions were included to facilitate approved road development.

Inconsistencies caused by successive amendments to the **National Monuments Act** prompted a Review of Archaeological Policy and Practice in 2007-2008. A complete draft Bill has been prepared (2017). Major aspects of the Monuments Bill include:

A single register of monuments consolidating the RMP and RHS with two levels of protection

Integrated licensing system

Recognition of World Heritage Sites in domestic law

Statutory basis for Guidelines and Policies to be issued by Minister for CHG - which may include landscapes.

3.3.1.b Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage

The general policy mandate of the Department in relation to the protection of Irish archaeological heritage is set out in the document **Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage** (1999). This outlines a set of broad policy principles aimed at complementing the **National Monuments Acts** and its role in protecting the archaeological heritage of the country;

It emphasises the policy aim to avoid developmental impact on archaeological heritage

It presumes the preference for *in situ* preservation of archaeological sites and monuments but that if excavation is necessary, then preservation by record be applied

It addresses the topic of costs and encourages mitigation to be regarded as a legitimate part of developmental costs.

The Framework and Principles are directly linked to the 1992 **European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage** (Valletta Convention) which was ratified by Ireland in 1997. The aim of the Convention is to ‘protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study’ (Article 1).

Although now almost 20 years old, many of the policies set out in the 1999 Framework document still apply today. It should be noted that it is heavily weighted towards infrastructural development and

construction projects/site specific works and not very well tailored to suit the needs of the tourism sector, for example the management of the potential impacts of tourism on monuments and the historic landscape. The draft Monuments Bill includes provision for a statutory basis for guidelines and policies to be issued by the Minister.

3.3.1.c The Heritage Council

The Heritage Council was established in 1995 as a statutory body under the **Heritage Act** 1995, with a Council (the Board) appointed by the Minister. Its functions as set out in the Act are to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage, both cultural and natural (including, inter alia, monuments, archaeological objects, landscapes and wrecks). The ethos of the Heritage Council is to promote interest, education and knowledge and facilitate the appreciation and enjoyment of the national heritage. This is done through co-operation with communities, public authorities, educational bodies and other organisations. It should be noted that the broad remit of the Act gives the Council a wide scope. For example, the Council can establish committees with specific functions allocated to them.

One key advantage of the Heritage Council is its ability to address landscape issues. As indicated above, national legislation and policy is focused on a site-specific basis rather than landscapes. The Heritage Council bridges this gap and while it operates within the same policy and legislative framework as the National Monuments Service and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (see below), it has scope to take a more holistic approach (e.g. 2009; 2013).

The Heritage Council's role in relation to planning is to ensure that local, county, regional, national and trans-boundary planning policies, objectives and programmes include stipulations for the proper planning, conservation and management of national heritage. To this end, and in accordance with the provisions set out by the **Heritage Act**, 1995, the Heritage Council provides strategic policy advice to various levels of Government and prepares detailed submissions to Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála in relation to planning applications which impact on heritage assets. It also provides professional planning and multi-disciplinary landscape management training.

The Council commissioned a set of guidelines for developers – **Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for good practice for developers** (2000). These guidelines aim to produce a better understanding of the needs of archaeology in Ireland and to improve co-operation between developers (with their consultant archaeologists, architects, engineers and planners) and the statutory authorities in protecting the archaeological heritage, often saving both time and money through applying best procedure. They were intended to be complementary to the published policies of the Department on the protection of the archaeological heritage and help improve professional practice and procedures, and anticipated the development of codes of practice between the National Monuments Service and specific cohorts of developers.

The guidelines and Schedule of Work Activities recommend that a qualified archaeologist should prepare an archaeological assessment for each development site in a zone of archaeological potential and in proximity to recorded monuments. The assessment should be made as part of the planning submission; very often it is either made a condition of planning approval for development in archaeologically sensitive areas in any case, or it may be requested as additional information after a planning submission has been lodged and before a planning decision.

The concept of environmental impact assessment (EIA) is now established in Irish planning law; and it should be borne in mind that the **EIA Directive** requires the planning authority to require an environmental impact study (EIS) to accompany the planning application for any project, coming within a class of development listed in the **EIA Directive**, where it considers that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, in addition to those applications for which the Directive make it mandatory in all cases.

The Heritage Council in terms of both its grant programmes and its own operational programmes has emphasised the importance of working in partnership in communities, focusing on the relationship of people and place. One aspect of this has been the development of community archaeology programmes. **Adopt a Monument: Guidance for Community Archaeology projects** (2017) provides a framework and guidance to community groups who wish to actively engage with their heritage.

Heritage Officers

The Heritage Council operates at a local level through a network (normally around 28) of Heritage Officers employed by the Local Authorities. County Heritage Officers provide a structured and co-ordinated approach to managing and promoting local heritage and have played an important role in Local Authorities since 1999. Heritage Officers ensure that heritage receives due consideration at local level and they provide a valuable connection for the Heritage Council to local communities. They carry out strategic, operational, promotional, co-ordination and facilitation roles in both the Local Authority and in their county at large.

Heritage Officers play a crucial role in drafting and implementing Heritage Plans for a County/City. These County Heritage Plans outline policies and strategies being employed in a given area, which when successful can then be developed at national level.

Field Monument Advisor Scheme

Day to day management of the landscape in rural Ireland is predominantly in the hands of private landowners and farmers, who hence are largely responsible for the majority of archaeological sites.

The Heritage Council works in partnership with local government and the farming community to provide

advice to farmers on the management of archaeological monuments on privately owned land, on foot of survey results pointing to significant damage due to land reclamation and intensive agriculture. There are currently only a few Field Monuments Advisors in Ireland, with Clare County Council being one local authority which has employed a Field Monument Advisor under this scheme.

The Field Monuments Advisor in Clare deals primarily with the Burren and acts as an advisor to the farmers involved in the Burren Programme, formerly known as the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP). The role of the advisor is to support landowners in the care of archaeological monuments in their ownership by providing information and contributing to training programmes aimed at farmers. The advisor actively visits farms to assist with management issues surrounding archaeological monuments on the land with the intention of increasing the farmers' interest and enthusiasm so that the care of the sites becomes part of the day-to-day farming process.

The Field Advisor works under the National Monuments Acts and also on the premise of raising the awareness, not only of monuments themselves, but also their context within a given landscape. The Field Advisor also monitors the status of sites on the RMP on an ongoing basis. These monuments can be under threat not only from agriculture, but also due to other factors such as climate change, erosion, weather events and flooding (Baker 2013).

Community Archaeology

The Heritage Council's commitment to working with communities and creating partnerships between local community groups and archaeologists, state organisations and other experts working in the heritage sector underpins its approach and is exemplified in two recent initiatives.

One is its support for the appointment of Community Archaeologists in local authorities and second is the development of an Adopt a Monument Scheme (2016) and publication of ***Adopt a Monument: Guidance for Community Archaeology Projects*** (2017). The Adopt a Monument Scheme, based on a model developed in Scotland, is to help community groups build capacity through understanding and negotiating funding, organisational and legislative matters. The scheme aims to empower communities to become more involved in the conservation and protection of their heritage.

3.3.1.d The Office of Public Works (OPW)

The Office of Public Works (OPW) has responsibility for the day-to-day management and conservation of all monuments in State ownership, including some of Ireland's most iconic sites such as Poulnabrone portal tomb, Co. Clare. OPW maintains and operates the country's most important heritage sites with a duty to conserve as well as encourage the public to visit them. Some of the sites are staffed either on a full-time or seasonal basis while others are unmanned. While focused on conservation and management, the OPW is a key player in cultural tourism as it facilitates the millions of Irish and foreign

visitors to these sites where it provides information about Ireland's culture and heritage through guided tours, interpretive signs and printed literature.

The key OPW objectives on heritage management are:

- To adopt a sustainable approach to the management and conservation of the State's heritage sites with an emphasis on quality and standards
- To present heritage sites to the best advantage ensuring that their potential contribution to tourism is maximised and that visitor enjoyment and education experiences are enhanced.

OPW carries out its heritage function through units in its Heritage Services; the National Monuments Service and the National Historic Properties Service. As well as working with local groups and societies, the OPW also works with other official agencies and partners who have key roles in promoting Ireland's heritage. In relation to its heritage functions the OPW's most important partner is the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Other relevant partners include Fáilte Ireland, Local Authorities the Heritage Council and Heritage Officers.

OPW Flood Management

The OPW is the lead State body for the coordination and implementation of Government policy on the management of flood risk in Ireland. The OPW is also the national authority for the implementation of the EU **Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks** [2007/60/EC] which was transposed into Irish law by the EU (Assessment and Management of Flood Risks) Regulations SI 122 of 2010. The main objective of the **Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme** is to achieve the requirements of the EU 'Floods' Directive.

In 2009, functions and responsibilities in relation to coastal protection, i.e. coastal flooding and coastal erosion, transferred from the then Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the OPW. The main roles for the OPW in this area are:

Undertaking risk assessments associated with coastal flooding and coastal erosion and further developing the Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS).

Provision of an advisory service in relation to coastal flooding and coastal erosion to support the preparation of annual coastal protection funding programmes, the CFRAM programme, and to inform broader policy development.

Maintenance of coastal protection schemes is covered under the Coast Protection Act, 1963.

3.3.2 Planning and Development

The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (formerly titled as Minister for the Environment, Planning and Local Government) is responsible for developing planning policy and legislation. The physical planning system in Ireland is operated on the ground by 26 County Councils, 3 City Councils and 2 City and County Councils. It should be noted that under the new **Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework** (2018) there is the intention to restructure/streamline local government structures and reduce the number of planning and regional authorities. Local authorities are grouped into three regional assembly areas; Eastern and Midland, Northern and Western, and Southern. Forthcoming legislation will also see the establishment of an Office of the Planning Regulator. It is recognised that the success of the **National Planning Framework** depends on its policy reflection and programme delivery at national, regional and local level.

A recent **Planning Policy Statement** (2015) has been guided by a number of existing policy drivers: The **National Landscape Strategy**, the County Development Plans, Local Area Plans and Regional Planning Guidelines. The planning legislation:

“seeks to ensure in the interest of the common good proper planning and sustainable development of urban and rural areas” (Planning Policy Statement, 2015)

The 10 key principles of the Planning Statement centre around the themes of sustainable development, enhancing the environment and cultural heritage and the overall improvement of a sense of place.

The new **National Planning Framework** (2018), in conjunction with the **National Development Plan 2018-2027** (2018), provides the context for national spatial planning for the next decade and beyond. The framework:

- Identifies ten strategic outcomes around the overarching themes of wellbeing, equality and opportunity
- Identifies 75 National Policy Objectives
- Identifies national priorities with regard to future employment growth and development
- Distinguishes between the role of the larger cities and regional towns
- Establishes a clear policy framework within which there will be more dynamic participation by rural areas in overall regional development.

Planning authorities and those interacting with the planning process have to address a wide range of new policy and legislative requirements such as:

- National Planning Framework
- Planning Policy Statement
- EU Directives
- Introduction of Core Strategies in the 2010 Planning and Development Act
- Flood risk assessment and management.

As well as the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, under the Planning and Development Regulations any planning applications that might have a significant effect on either architectural heritage, archaeology and/or nature conservation, must also be referred to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In relation to the protection of the archaeological heritage the Planning and Licensing Unit of the National Monuments Service, DCHG provides input and advice to planning and other authorities in respect of individual planning and other development applications, projects and plans.

3.3.2.a Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010

The planning process plays a significant role in promoting patterns of development which help Ireland meet its international obligations. The core principal objectives of the 2010 Act were to amend the **Planning Acts of 2000 – 2009** with specific regard given to supporting economic renewal and sustainable development. The Act envisaged a closer alignment of the **National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020** (the predecessor of **Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework**) with Regional Planning Guidelines, Development Plans and Local Area Plans, while also clarifying the key obligations required of Planning Authorities under the **Birds and Habitats Directives**. The Act also aims to improve the performance of An Bord Pleanála (which is responsible for the determination of appeals and certain other matters under the **Planning and Development Act 2000**) and strengthen the enforcement controls of Planning Authorities.

It should be noted that a Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill is intended to provide a legislative basis for the **National Planning Framework**, a monitoring process in relation to its implementation and a statutory requirement for regular reviews and updates into the future, together with the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR).

3.3.2.b Planning and Development Acts & Built Heritage

Under the **Planning and Development Act 2000** the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is a statutory consultee in relation to developmental impacts on the archaeological heritage. This allows the Minister to recommend that archaeological conditions be attached to grants of planning permission, or recommend refusal of planning permission by the planning authority to ensure the protection of the archaeological heritage.

The Environmental Impact Assessment process is central to the protection of the archaeological heritage in respect of large-scale development projects. The “Developer Pays” principle applies in relation to archaeological costs arising from a development. National Monuments Service, DCHG provides expert advice to planning and other relevant authorities in respect of individual planning, development applications and other projects and plans, ensuring that developmental impacts on the archaeological heritage are mitigated.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has also put in place Codes of Practice with agencies involved in the delivery of large-scale infrastructural projects, which can have significant archaeological implications.

Built heritage is protected through the ***Planning and Development Act 2000*** (as amended) and some older historic properties are also protected through archaeological legislation. The County Development Plan is a key document, as it not only includes the Record of Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas but also includes objectives to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the architectural heritage through the planning process and specific objectives to protect the archaeological heritage.

International Influence on Planning and Development

UNESCO's ***Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*** was drawn up in 1972 and ratified by Ireland in 1991. This convention noted that the cultural and natural heritage is increasingly threatened with destruction. Each State Party to the Convention recognises that the duty of ensuring identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of this heritage belongs primarily to that state. The ***Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe***, drawn up by the Council of Europe and signed at Granada in 1985, was ratified by Ireland in 1997. Commonly known as the Granada Convention, it provides the basis for the national commitment to the protection of the architectural heritage. The convention is a means of proclaiming conservation principles, including a definition of what is meant by architectural heritage such as monuments, groups of buildings and sites. It seeks to define a European standard of protection for architectural heritage and to create legal obligations that the signatories undertake to implement. It stresses the importance of 'handing down to future generations a system of cultural references'. It relies for its effectiveness on its signatory countries implementing their own national protective regimes.

It is in the context of international initiatives such as the Granada Convention, as well as increasing awareness nationally, that Ireland has legislated for the increased protection of the architectural heritage. This wider acknowledgement of the need to conserve the built heritage recognises the social and economic benefits of conserving this inheritance and also the place of conservation in policies of sustainable development.

3.3.2.c Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework

The ***National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020*** was a 20-year national planning framework for Ireland. It has been superseded by the ***National Planning Framework*** in tandem with and supported by a 10-year ***National Development Plan*** as the framework for capital investment to 2027. Underpinning both documents is a shared set of National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). These are (with those considered

particularly pertinent to this review highlighted):

1. Compact growth
2. Enhanced Regional Accessibility
3. **Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities**
4. Sustainable Mobility
5. Strong Economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills
6. High-Quality International Connectivity
7. **Enhanced Amenity and Heritage**
8. **Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society**
9. **Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources**
10. Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health Services.

It is recognised that for successful implementation of the *National Planning Framework* (NPF), alignment with the 75 National Policy Objectives and achievement of the 10 National Strategic Outcomes not only requires investment but more effective planning and co-ordination processes. This is needed to ensure that the NPF shapes the policies and deliverable actions of Government departments and Agencies, State Bodies, local government and infrastructure providers, working in conjunction with communities, civic society, the private sector and neighbouring administrations.

Implementation of the NDF will be through the statutory planning process, through new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and local authority statutory planning processes, using a set of indicators to be developed to assist effective monitoring.

Within the *National Planning Framework* County Clare is identified as being within the Southern Regional Assembly area. Specific Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) are to be developed for each Regional Assembly Area. This will put in place a regional co-ordination framework for the statutory development plans at local authority level. The *National Planning Framework* presents key approaches as the tools to move towards more balanced growth between Ireland's three regions. These include; a new Rural Regeneration and Development Fund of €1 billion to invest in rural renewal, the delivery of the National Broadband Strategy, regional and local roads, tourism development and Greenways. See discussion of the 2017 *Action Plan for Rural Development* below.

It is argued that the Project Ireland represents a new approach to long-term planning strategy in three ways:

- In starting with a set of social objectives consistent with prudent economic and budgetary decision-making
- In proactively intervening by using investment to support planning objectives
- In being a framework to enable long-term sectoral planning for key areas alongside major national projects.

As part of the assessment of the NPF the accompanying **SEA Environmental Report**, **AA Natura Impact Statement** and **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment** proposed mitigation measures and text alterations to the draft Framework. These include appropriate siting of key development areas, the carrying capacity of development lands in the wider environment and increased disturbance of sensitive habitats as a result of development/intensification. In response the text of the Framework now has new and revised policies, outcomes and commitments to protect the environment.

3.3.2.d Action Plan for Rural Development

The Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) was established in 2012 to examine and report on the medium-term economic development of rural Ireland to 2025. The Commission published its report, **Energising Ireland's Rural Economy** in 2014. This made a series of recommendations to Government that the Commission believed would support its vision of rural Ireland becoming a dynamic, adaptable and outward looking multi-sectoral economy, supporting vibrant, resilient and diverse communities experiencing a high quality of life.

Building on the work and approach of CEDRA **Realising our Rural Potential: An Action Plan for Rural Ireland** was published by the then Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (now the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht) in 2017. This Plan contains more than 270 actions to support the economic and social development of rural Ireland. These actions are aligned to the five pillars of the Plan, each with a series of key objectives. The five pillars are:

- Supporting Sustainable Communities
- Supporting Enterprise and Employment
- Maximising Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential
- Fostering Culture and Creativity in Rural Communities
- Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity.

The key objectives for Pillar 3: Maximising Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential are:

- Increase tourist numbers to rural Ireland by 12% by 2019
- Support sustainable jobs through targeted rural tourism initiatives
- Develop and promote activity tourism in rural areas
- Develop and promote natural and built heritage.

Achieving the objectives of the Plan will be supported through targeted investment by the Government under the **National Planning Framework** and through the **National Development Plan 2018-2027**. It is stated in the Plan that it provides for the first time a visible, cohesive and co-ordinated approach across the whole of Government to rural development.

3.3.2.e The Role of An Taisce

An Taisce (The National Trust for Ireland) has a prescribed role in the planning process in Ireland as set out primarily in the **Planning and Development Act 2000**, amended and enforced through the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. The **Planning and Development Act** stipulate when prescribed bodies should be notified or referred to, however, the Planning and Development Regulations state which specific prescribed bodies are being referred to, as there are several such bodies which are only concerned with specific forms of development.

An Taisce's prescribed functions can be divided into two elements:

- Development Plans and Guidelines
- Planning Applications for Development.

Additionally, An Taisce is a statutory consultee in the forestry consent system under Environmental Impact Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 2001 (S.I. No 538 of 2001). Forestry in Ireland operates within a number of relevant Irish and European legal and regulatory frameworks. The Forest Consent System is the licensing system for afforestation which, in theory, incorporates all relevant legal and policy requirements relating to afforestation in Ireland. The forest consent system is run by the Forest Service, part of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, to regulate land afforestation.

An Taisce aims to ensure implementation of EU environmental law protecting habitats and biodiversity, particularly Natura 2000 sites. It also encourages climate change resilience policy, reduction in Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions and protection of water quality and wetlands. An Taisce promotes policies which prevent inappropriate development on floodplains and works towards conserving the Irish landscape, archaeological monuments, built heritage and protected structures.

It is the policy of An Taisce to protect the Irish taxpayer from the long-term economic, social and environmental costs of bad planning.

3.3.3 National Environmental Policy

The **National Planning Framework** does not replace or re-state environmental policies generally. However, development arising from the NPF will be implemented within the framework of strong policies for protection of the environment and policies to integrate environmental considerations in sectoral policies (NPF, Chapter 11, Section 11.4). It should be noted that the National Strategic Outcomes include:

7. Enhanced Amenities and Heritage

8. Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society
9. Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources.

The quality and character of Ireland's environment make a major contribution to national identity and to the 'green' image of the country. Ireland's national aims for achieving sustainable development point to three policy issues relating to environment:

- A responsibility to present and future generations which combines the concepts of sustainability and good stewardship
- The role of the environment in economic development
- The role of the environment in contributing to the wellbeing and quality of life of people.

The environment is a strategic and valuable asset for Ireland and as such it must be protected and proactively managed to ensure it forms the basis of Ireland's economic wellbeing and a healthy society, now and into the future.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) produces a state of the environment report every 4 years. Ireland's Environment 2016 is the sixth such report. Although the overall finding of ***Ireland's Environment 2016*** shows that Ireland's environment remains in a good condition, Ireland faces a number of key challenges in the coming years and sustainability needs to be at the centre of any plans into the future.

The EPA's report has identified 7 key challenges for Ireland:

1. Environment Health and Wellbeing: Recognition of the benefits of a good quality environment to health and wellbeing
2. Climate Change: Accelerate mitigation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement adaptation measures to increase resilience
3. Implementation of Legislation: Improve the tracking of plans and policies and the implementation of environmental legislation to protect the environment
4. Restore and Protect Water Quality: Implement measures that achieve ongoing improvements in the environmental status of water bodies from source to the sea
5. Nature and Wild Places: Protect pristine and wild places that act as biodiversity hubs, contribute to health and wellbeing and provide sustainable tourism opportunities
6. Sustainable Economic Activities: Integrate resource efficiency and environmental sustainability ideas and performance accounting across all economic sectors
7. Community Engagement: Inform, engage and support communities in the protection and improvement of the environment.

3.3.3.a National Parks and Wildlife Services

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is part of the Heritage Division of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht.

The role of National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is:

- To secure the conservation of a representative range of ecosystems and maintain and enhance populations of flora and fauna in Ireland
- To designate and advise on the protection of Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) having particular regard to the need to consult with interested parties
- To make the necessary arrangements for the implementation of National and EU legislation and policies including the EU **Habitats and Birds Directives** and for the ratification and implementation of the range of international Conventions and Agreements relating to the natural heritage. To manage, maintain and develop State-owned National Parks and Nature Reserves.

NPWS is divided into four working areas:

1. Policy and management of National Parks and Reserves, Nature Services strategy, Finance and Regional operational procedures
2. The **Wildlife Acts** and EU Directive transposition, NATURA Policy, modernisation of property management, policy on residential properties in National Parks and the Development Applications Unit
3. Peatland Policy, turf compensation and relocation schemes, Land Designation, Land restoration/cross compliance
4. Scientific support, biodiversity policy and international issues, CITES and exotic species, Agri-Environment policy and schemes, Marine and aquaculture issues, Education Service and Data management.

There are 6 national parks in Ireland, including the Burren National Park. The policy of the NPWS on National Parks is based on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) definition of a 'National Park' (1969). Under this definition National Parks are areas sharing the following characteristics:

- Where one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation; where plant and animal species, geomorphological sites and habitats are of special scientific, educational and recreational interest or contain a natural landscape of great beauty
- Where the highest competent authority of the country has taken steps to prevent or eliminate as soon as possible exploitation or occupation in the whole area and to enforce effectively

the respect of ecological, geomorphological or aesthetic features which have led to its establishment

- Where visitors are allowed to enter, under special conditions, for inspirational, educational, cultural and recreational purposes.

The NPWS manages NHAs, SPAs and SACs in accordance with the EU directives and National legislation.

3.3.3.b National Biodiversity Action Plan

Ireland has international and legal obligations to protect biodiversity. These include a commitment to halt biodiversity loss. Protection of biodiversity within and outside protected areas is necessary and will require greater integration of biodiversity concerns in sectoral policy development and implementation, at local and national levels.

Ireland's 3rd **National Biodiversity Action Plan (2017–2021)** published by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht includes a programme of objectives and targets aimed at meeting Ireland's biodiversity obligations. This helps to ensure the sustainable management of biological resources and protection of biodiversity for future generations. Establishing a sustainable pattern of development is a key challenge for Ireland, and improving resource efficiency is a top priority to achieve this goal. Resource efficiency is also one of the key environmental priorities at EU level and is one of the seven flagship initiatives within the Europe 2020 Strategy. The challenge is to utilise resources in a sustainable manner throughout their life-cycle, avoiding over-exploitation and reducing the environmental and social impacts of their use. Transforming the economy onto a resource-efficient path requires policies that recognise the interdependencies between the economy, wellbeing and natural capital and the removal of barriers to improved resource efficiency. To achieve a resource-efficient and green economy, there is a need to make a transition across all sectors of the economy and, in particular, the energy, agricultural and transport systems, to change the behaviours of producers and consumers and to mainstream biodiversity into decision-making across all sectors.

Globally, species are currently being lost at up to 1,000 times faster than the natural rate, primarily as a result of human activities. It is estimated that in the EU, only 17% of habitats and 17% of species protected under the **Habitats Directive** (92/43/EEC) are in a favourable state. The evidence indicates that Ireland's biodiversity capital is still dwindling rapidly. Unsustainable exploitation of Ireland's habitats and species includes many activities, including recreational pressure. Indirect pressures such as population growth, limited awareness about biodiversity, and the fact that biodiversity's economic value is often not reflected in decision-making are also threats to biodiversity.

At EU level the **Habitats Directive** and **Birds Directive** create a comprehensive scheme of protection

for wild species and habitats. The full implementation of these Directives, along with other Directives including the **Water Framework Directive** (2000/60/EC) and the **Marine Strategy Framework Directive** (2008/56/EC), contribute significantly to biodiversity protection. The **Environmental Impact Assessment Directive** (85/337/EEC) and the **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive** (2001/42/EC) require the consideration of potential development impacts on biodiversity. The most important pieces of national legislation on nature conservation are the **Wildlife Act, 1976**, the **Wildlife (Amendment) Acts, 2000–2010**, and the EU (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997–2011. Under the Wildlife Acts nearly all bird species and some 60 other animal species are afforded protected status, as are some 90 plant species. Substantial changes were made to the planning code in 2010, which included obligations on local authorities to ensure protection of Natura 2000 sites and species listed in the **Habitats and Birds Directives** (see above).

The **National Biodiversity Plan 2017–2021** is the main tool by which Ireland seeks to meet its commitments under the **Convention on Biological Diversity** and the **EU Biodiversity Strategy**. Reviews of implementation of the previous National Biodiversity Plan have reported mixed success (DEHLG, 2005, 2010, DAHG 2015).

Local and public authorities and Government departments were required under previous plans to make local/ sectoral biodiversity action plans. The EPA and Bord na Móna have published biodiversity action plans and while some local authorities have produced biodiversity action plans, most have been incorporated into the Heritage Plan process. The response of most Government departments was that at a time of limited resources pursuit of the actions in the National Biodiversity Plan was a more effective use of those resources than the preparation of sectoral biodiversity plans.

It should be noted that much of Ireland's biodiversity lies outside protected areas and effective conservation. The steps required to provide legal protection to Ireland's terrestrial network of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) have been largely completed. Conservation objectives for sites within the Natura 2000 network have to be set for the habitats and species for which the sites are selected. These objectives are used when carrying out appropriate assessments for plans and projects that might impact on these sites. The process is underway for setting detailed site-specific conservation objectives for these habitats and species. Generic conservation objectives have been compiled for the remaining SAC and SPAs.

Other site-specific conservation objectives, dealing with habitats and species other than those for which a Natura 2000 site has been selected, may be set when a conservation management plan is compiled for that site. Conservation plans have been drawn up for number of sites.

3.3.4 National Landscape Strategy

A **National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015–2025** was published by the then Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in 2015. The National Landscape Strategy aims to promote increased public

awareness and understanding of the landscape, including its value as a cultural and economic resource and its role in promoting Ireland's attractiveness as a tourist destination. The strategy was developed as part of the responsibilities assumed by Ireland as a signatory to the **European Landscape Convention** (Florence 2000). This Convention recognises that our landscape has, and continues to, evolve through time but change needs to be managed to ensure a sustainable future for the landscape, balancing social, cultural and economic needs.

The National Landscape Strategy aims to:

- Provide the data that will assist in future decision-making processes regarding landscapes and ensure that decisions are made on the basis of a sound evidence base
- Assist in the achievement of greater consistency in decision-making across the country when dealing with landscape issues, in particular through the use of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)
- Ensure compliance with the **European Landscape Convention** and establish principles for protecting and enhancing the landscape while positively managing change.

The Strategy will inform and assist in the resolution of challenges arising from competing priorities in the landscape during the decision-making process. It underpins the commitment to meeting the provisions of the **Water Framework Directive**, the **Floods Directive** and the **Birds and Habitats Directives**. It also underpins the commitment to the management of the Natura Network, NHAs, pNHAs and National Parks. While landscape considerations are included in some existing sectoral strategies, plans and policies they are not currently a requirement in many sectors. This should change through the implementation of the Strategy.

A National Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), including Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) will be undertaken as part of the National Landscape Strategy. This will provide the data and qualitative information required to evaluate the sensitivity of landscapes and effective planning at landscape scale. The Strategy will also work to increase public awareness and understanding about landscapes as well as seeking effective methods of partnership, engagement and agreement between public authorities; Government departments and local authorities, the general public, voluntary organisations to promote sustainable landscape change, protection and planning. Implementation of the Strategy will require collaboration of Government departments and agencies and the integration of a broad range of policy areas.

3.3.5 National Tourism Policy

Tourism is one of Ireland's most important economic sectors and for that reason has been placed at the centre of the economic recovery plan since 2011. The long term vision for the tourism sector is set out

in the policy statement – *People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025* (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport 2015). The focus of tourism policy is to “**maximise the export contribution of tourism, while protecting the invaluable assets that are our natural, built and cultural heritage**”. The policy provides an agreed framework with a detailed action plan which specifies measures that will be implemented to achieve policy objectives.

To set the background, the White Paper on Tourism Policy 1985 was the first comprehensive statement on tourism policy in Ireland and set the following objectives:

'To optimise the economic and social benefits to Ireland of the promotion and development of tourism both to and within the country consistent with ensuring an acceptable economic rate of return on the resources employed and taking account of tourism's potential for job creation; the quality of life and development of the community; the enhancement and preservation of the nation's cultural heritage; the conservation of the physical resources of the country; and tourism's contribution to regional development.'

Since the late 1980s the prime objectives of national tourism policy have been articulated in successive national partnership development plans, and within the EU Community Support Framework for Ireland. From the early 2000s with the establishment of Fáilte Ireland there has been a vision that Ireland would be a destination of choice for discerning international and domestic tourists and it would exceed their expectations in terms of friendliness, quality of environment, diversity and depth of culture.

The policy objective set out in the early 2000s, by the then Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism was to facilitate the continued development of an economic and environmentally sustainable and spatially balanced tourism sector, through formulating, monitoring and reviewing a range of supporting policies and programmes, particularly within the framework of the National Development Plan and North/South co-operation. Policy would be implemented by state-sponsored bodies and executive agencies (OECD, 2004). However there was criticism of the approach of using a centralised approach to tourism development and local marketing (Casey and O'Rourke 2013; Limerick Chamber 2013).

The immediate background to the 2015 policy statement: *People, Place and Policy* was an policy approach that recognised the economic and employment potential of tourism, the success of specific measures such as; the Gathering (2013), lowering the VAT rate and encouraging new airline routes, and the need for a coherent strategy, focused on the development of the tourism sector by supporting sustainable growth in visitor expenditure with an emphasis on a wider regional and seasonal spread of business (Programme For Government Annual Report, 2014).

It is worth reiterating that there is a complex two-way relationship between tourism and the environment. There is a need for tourism that is compatible with ensuring the long-term sustainability of the reality of the images of beautiful scenery and an unspoilt environment. Tourism does not operate in isolation. Given the diverse nature of tourism-related economic activity, it is affected by a wide range of policies, both at domestic and EU level. Policies, for example, that could impact on the natural and built environment, also impact on the prospects for the sector, because of the landscape based character of the tourism product.

The corporate plans of tourism agencies, actions by the public and private tourism industry, for example operators in tourist destinations seeking to find a balance between their economic, social and environmental aspirations and the policy priorities of government all come together to provide what constitutes 'destination management' at a national level.

3.3.5.a Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland

The main body responsible for tourism in Ireland is Fáilte Ireland. Fáilte Ireland was established under the **National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003** to encourage, promote and support tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy. As well as its broad strategic and wide operational roles, Fáilte Ireland has specific responsibilities that directly impact on the sustainable quality and characters of tourism. For example, it has responsibility for regulation of the various categories of accommodation. In addition to statutory regulation, there are also voluntary non-statutory listings for accommodation. There are also other aspects to the regulatory environment for the tourist sector.

Tourism Ireland, the all-island tourist marketing company, was formally incorporated in 2000, following designation of tourism as an area for cooperation under the Good Friday Agreement (1998). Its function is to develop Ireland's tourist industry abroad, as well as acting as a North-South cross-border body developing the whole island of Ireland in tourism terms. The company has responsibility for all-island destination marketing, Tourism Brand Ireland, the delivery of regional and product marketing and promotion activity on behalf of Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism NI) and an overseas office network.

Tourism is an export service and one of the primary issues is how to entice residents from other countries to visit Ireland. At a national level this is about marketing the destination, the quality of the tourism offer including; the landscape, culture and visitor attractions and events. These all contribute to the overall attractiveness of the destination. Economically speaking, it is not a viable model to have single players investing in interest-building as competition locally doesn't exist when marketing a destination, therefore Tourism Ireland takes responsibility for this, creating the 'purchase funnel'. The role of Tourism Ireland is to funnel and move potential visitors through active planning. Fáilte Ireland also works with Tourism Ireland on international marketing activities for certain specialist areas of tourism and the two bodies coordinate to ensure no duplication.

At a national level, the two agencies appear to work effectively. While the agencies are bound by overarching Government policy, they exercise discretion and operational independence. They work together and with other State agencies where appropriate to maximise efficiencies and provide the best possible service in line with Government policy priorities. Tourism does not operate in isolation and given the diverse nature of tourism-related economic activity, it is affected by the wide range of policies that impact for example on the natural and built environment, both at domestic and EU level, as outlined above.

The EU Commission has developed a number of tourism-related initiatives to be implemented in collaboration with national, regional and local public authorities, for example the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) awards. While the EU is no longer a source of major funding for capital investment in tourism, funding for rural development, provided under the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), continues to provide opportunities for diversification of the rural economy into areas such as tourism.

3.3.5.b People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025

This policy maps out the long term vision for the sector. It provides the framework for a programme to 2025 which aims at putting tourism at the centre of an economic strategy for Ireland. In 2025 the aim is to have a 'vibrant, attractive sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country, helps promote a positive image of Ireland overseas and is a sector that people wish to work in (*People Place and Policy*, 2015,3).

The goals set out for 2025 are:

- Tourism related revenue to increase to €5 billion in real terms
- Employment in the sector to increase to 250,000 (an increase of 50,000 from present figures)
- 10 Million visitors annually.

In order to achieve this, government will place tourism as a key element in its economic strategy, recognising the responsibilities of Government agencies, local authorities and other stakeholders and the key contribution of communities.

Planning the preservation and presentation of heritage assets, i.e. the landscape, seascape, natural and built heritage, is intended to be a major aspect of this programme. The policy objectives in relation to the promotion of 'place', seek to heighten visitors' anticipation of Ireland as a place and the desire to visit. They also seek to maintain and enhance the quality of the sense of place that is experienced during their visit, which includes protecting assets for the future. To this end, Fáilte Ireland has a role as a statutory consultee in planning legislation and will continue to engage with Government departments that have policy responsibility in relation to infrastructure as well as the appropriate regulatory bodies.

The tourism policy statement also addresses the need for a dynamic tourism industry which can meet the changing needs of visitors, but is underpinned by a clear and coherent framework for development

and the intention that the highest standards of environmental and economic sustainability will be placed at the centre of the strategy.

Visitors to Ireland come with certain expectations, most notably the perceived friendly hospitable people, the quality of the environment, the range of activities to participate in and history and culture. The State has a key role to play in preserving natural and built heritage as these are the irreplaceable assets that are needed to enhance the visitors overall experience.

The policy on tourism recognises that preservation and conservation of our natural and built heritage are crucial for continued growth of tourism and it looks to the legislative and regulatory role of the planning process and associated Departments and public bodies to formulate their own strategies in this area. The NPWS and the OPW both work closely with Fáilte Ireland through strategic partnerships to manage and present state-owned national parks, nature reserves and heritage sites, optimising these assets for the benefit of visitors. In addition to this, the DCHG has an important role in protecting landscapes and historic sites. The **National Landscape Strategy**, discussed above, aims to promote the sustainable management and planning of the landscape.

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, along with the various tourism agencies will be key partners in the implementation of this strategy. Tourism is also a key component of the draft national **Culture Policy; Culture 2025** (DAHRRG 2016) and its implementation vehicle, the **Creative Ireland Programme 2017-22** (Government of Ireland 2017). These policy documents set out the high-level aims and policies of the Government in the area of culture and creativity, for the period up until 2025. Cultural heritage, the arts and creative industries also make a major contribution to the economy and to sustaining and creating jobs, with cultural tourism being a significant contributor to Ireland's economy and reputation on the international stage.

There has been substantial capital investment in tourism in Ireland over the past decade or more and this has dramatically improved the range and quality of activities for both overseas and domestic tourists. New destination frameworks such as the Wild Atlantic Way, recreational infrastructure and improved signage in historic areas are some of the results of this investment. **People, Place and Policy** is underpinned by a Tourism Capital Investment Programme. It has to be recognised that public tourism infrastructural projects require upkeep which is beyond the initial capital investment. Policy here is leaning towards upkeeping funded projects from non-tourism funding streams such as the community and voluntary sectors. There is also a shift taking place from the previous emphasis on 'capital investment in physical assets' to the idea of the 'visitor experience'.

The Irish tourism industry has shown an increasing ability to innovate and build co-operation between State bodies, public agencies and private landowners to develop national products such as the Wild Atlantic Way that can be marketed internationally. The economic difficulties of recent years have also encouraged private enterprises to devise more efficient ways to operate and converge with other areas of economic activity giving rise to new forms of tourism, for example food tourism or farm tourism.

Local Authorities play a very active part in many aspects of tourism and often work closely with Fáilte Ireland in development of projects that benefit the local community and visitors alike. Local communities have contributed to tourism over the years with community initiatives such as Tidy Towns benefiting the localities for the people living there and visitors. The success of the Gathering in 2013, encouraging the international Irish diaspora to visit Ireland, showed how local communities can contribute to tourism in rural communities, bringing some economic sustainability at a local level throughout the country. It is envisaged there will be an enhanced role for Local Authorities in the management of the tourism destinations and the tourism experiences in their areas, with integration of new spatial and economic strategies across regions and administrative boundaries planned under the **National Planning Framework**.

3.3.5.c Tidy Towns

The national Tidy Towns initiative was launched in 1958 by Bord Fáilte, the Irish Tourist Board (now Fáilte Ireland). Tidy Towns rapidly developed its own identity and has gone on to become Ireland's best-known and popular locally implemented environmental initiative.

Following the restructuring of Bord Fáilte in 1995, what is now the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government assumed responsibility for Tidy Towns and organises the initiative with the support of national sponsors and a number of other agencies. While it has moved with the times, it still retains the same core founding principle - "make your place a better place."

There are publications available on the Tidy Towns website which detail how the competition operates and its policy context. The handbook for the competition suggests that any group should discuss the scope of the Local Area Plan (or Village Design Statement if one exists) with the local authority, to see where synergy between work programmes and actions can be realised. It is expected that the Tidy Towns competition would operate under existing legislation and policy guidance from EU, national, regional and local levels.

3.3.6 Geological Survey of Ireland

The Geological Survey of Ireland as the national earth science agency supports the appreciation of geological heritage within Irish society in a number of ways. Along with the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland it co-chairs the Irish UNESCO Global Geoparks Committee (IUGGC) and the two agencies are the main sponsors of the UNESCO Global Geoparks programme in Ireland.

The core policy for the Geological Survey of Ireland is to '**maximise the benefit to Ireland of providing high quality geoscience information to customers, in a cost effective manner, that is relevant to the sustainable economic development of our natural resources and the wider societal issues concerning environmental protection and quality of life**' (GSI, 2010).

The strategic objectives of the GSI are:

- To support the sustainable development of Ireland's earth resources
- To provide reliable geoscience support for environmental protection and effective spatial planning.
- To complete strategic geoscience surveys in priority areas (both onshore and offshore) in response to the needs of specific sectors and customers
- To support the knowledge economy through the provision of open access to modern geoscience databases and through supporting priority research themes and educational services.

The Irish Geological Heritage programme is a partnership between GSI and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Since its launch in 1998, the IGHP aims to:

- identify and document the wealth of geological heritage in the Republic of Ireland
- protect and conserve it against ever increasing threats through local authority planning
- promote the value of geological heritage with landowners and the public.

Geology is recognised as intrinsic component of natural heritage in three pieces of legislation or regulations which empower and require Government and statutory agencies to consult and take due regard for the conservation of geological heritage features. These are: **Planning and Development Act 2000**, **Planning and Development Regulations 2001** and the **Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000** (enabling Natural Heritage Areas).

The legislative requirement for Environmental Impact Statements to address geological heritage was not mentioned in the **EIA Directive** 85/337/EEC nor is geology. The same applies to the directive amendments 97/11/EC and 2003/35/EC. However, geological heritage is considered in the directive's transposition into Irish Law where geological heritage (described as geological feature/geomorphological feature) is afforded protection if it has the status as a European site of 'Special Area of Conservation' (SAC) under the **Habitats Directive** 92/43/EEC, or is proposed as a designated Natural Heritage Area, nature reserve and/or refuge (all under the **Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000**). At European level, SACs have mainly been designated for their ecological importance. However, for some of them, geology represents a strong component: habitats such as limestone pavement, active raised bogs, blanket bogs (if active) or turloughs are listed as priority natural habitats (Annex I of 92/43/EEC). Local Authorities have responsibility to consider geological heritage when devising their Development Plans through the inclusion of national heritage policy and planning regulations.

There is an ongoing County Audit of County Geological Sites (CGS). County Geological Sites should be included in County Development Plans and County Heritage Plans. It should be noted that unlike NHAs County Geological Sites are not afforded statutory protection, but the inclusion of CGS in County Development Plans ensures that they are taken into account as heritage assets. Due regard should be given to sites of geological importance at all stages of planning, particularly in the development of quarries, wind farms and roads.

The Irish UNESCO Global Geoparks Committee (IUGGC) supports Ireland's three Geoparks (Burren and Cliffs of Moher, Copper Coast and Marble Arch Caves) and Geopark projects. The IUGGC meets twice a year and has an annual Forum.

The third relevant element of the GSI's programme of work and strategy is its promotion of geotourism, tourism related to the natural environment, which is the origin of most tourism in Ireland. The aim of the GSI is to encourage the use of geoheritage in enhancing the tourism product.

3.4 Regional Policy

At a regional and local level, international and national policies are used as an umbrella to recognise, protect and manage the natural and built environment. These are tailored and incorporated into regional plans for a given area. In the Irish planning system the crucial policy document at local authority level is the County Development Plan. When making a development plan the **Planning and Development Act 2000** (as amended) requires planning authorities to consider the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. While there is no definition of the term 'sustainable development' in the Act, variations on the definition used by Clare County Council would widely apply. In the **Clare County Development Plan (2017-2023)** it is defined as...*achieving the correct balance of economic, social, cultural and environmental considerations in the interests of the common good and securing long term benefits to County Clare.*

A development plan must respond to changing circumstances within its lifetime. For example, the **Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework** (2018) and the **National Development Plan 2018-2027** (2018) were published after the publication of the current Clare County Development Plan. Hence regular monitoring of the relationship between a county development plan and changes within a wider EU and national policy context, development pressures and varying local priorities are important if the policies and objectives are to remain effective and relevant throughout the lifetime of the plan.

Under the framework of the County Development Plan and in common with all other local authorities a **Local Community and Economic Plan for County Clare** was published in 2016. This provides a framework for the delivery of initiatives designed to improve local areas as places to live, work, invest in and visit.

3.4.1 Clare County Development Plan

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 nestles within a clear hierarchy of spatial policy documents. As the County Development Plan, it is both crucial in terms of the development of County Clare, and must adhere to policy, plans and strategic options which are pre-determined at EU and national levels. The Plan is affected by, and will affect a wide range of other relevant plans and programmes, and environmental objectives.

The 20 main goals for the Clare County Development Plan include the following that are deemed particularly relevant to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoPark and Geopark LIFE Programme:

- I. A County Clare that drives local and regional sustainable growth by harnessing the potential of its unique location, quality of life, natural resources and other competitive advantages.
- IV. A County Clare where healthy and sustainable communities are developed and integrated with the timely delivery of a wide range of community, educational and cultural facilities and where, through a commitment to equality, participation, accessibility and social inclusion, the county develops as a unique location with an enhanced quality of life for its citizens and visitors.
- VIII. A County Clare in which tourism growth continues to play a key role in the future development of the county, adapting to the challenges of competing markets by maximising the development of a high quality, diverse tourism product.
- IX. A County Clare with diverse and strong rural communities and economy, where its natural resources are harnessed in a manner that is compatible with the sensitivity of rural areas and the existing quality of life.
- XII. A County Clare of 'living landscapes' where people live, work, recreate and visit while respecting, managing and taking pride in the unique landscape of the county.
- XIII. A County Clare which protects and enhances the County's unique natural heritage and biodiversity and recognises the potential for green infrastructure development, while promoting and developing its cultural, educational and eco-tourism potential in a sustainable manner.
- XIV. A County Clare that affords protection and conservation to buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest and recognises them as a social, cultural and economic asset to the county.

- XVII. A County Clare that is resilient to climate change, manages flood risk, facilitates a low carbon future, supports energy efficiency and conservation and enables the decarbonisation of our lifestyles and economy.

(Extracts From Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 <http://www.clarecoco.ie/planning/planning-strategy/development-plans/clare-county-development-plan-2017-2023/>)

The Development Plan is the single most important policy document for the county as it represents an agreed economic, social, cultural and environmental blueprint for the future planning, growth and development of County Clare. The County Development Plan is proofed to ensure that all aspects of its goals and objectives reinforce a commitment to equality, accessibility and social inclusion. Among the key goals of the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** is the commitment to promote tourism development and maintain a high quality environment.

Tourism will continue to be one of the key sectors in the future economic development of County Clare over the period of the plan. The tourism product is built on the bedrock of a unique and diverse built and natural landscape, including the Burren, the Atlantic coastline, Shannon Estuary and Lough Derg, together with a network of vibrant and attractive historic towns and villages. The county is also home to some of Ireland's premier tourist attractions, including the Cliffs of Moher and Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. The Clare County Development Plan recognises that these resources must be supported by excellent transportation infrastructure, including Shannon International Airport and an accessible road and rail network, and by a cohesive well-marketed and high quality tourism product.

Specific Development Plan Objectives that are relevant include:

- CDP9.24 Development Plan Objective: Tourism in North Clare and the Burren
 - The objective will be to capitalise on the county's diversity to try and ensure a strong year-round sustainable tourist economy. The Cliffs of Moher will be maintained as one of the country's premier tourist attractions, (although as discussion in Sections 4 and 5 (see below) demonstrates it is experiencing capacity issues, particularly as a result of day coach visitor numbers). Sustaining the tourism sector depends on safeguarding the built and natural environment, ensuring the highest quality in all new development and also affording appropriate protection to structures, sites and landscapes of intrinsic heritage value.
- CDP14.22 Development Plan Objective: Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark
 - The objective is to continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to support the on-going work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and to secure the retention of Geopark status into the future. In addition to seek on an ongoing basis new funding mechanisms for the work of the Geopark e.g. from national and EU sources.

- CDP14.23 Development Plan Objective: World Heritage Site Status
 - The objective is in collaboration with landowners, local communities and other relevant stakeholders to achieve World Heritage Site status for the three sites identified in County Clare – which includes the Burren in Co. Clare and Co. Galway. The Burren is on the UNESCO Irish Tentative List (2010) of sites which are viewed as having the potential to be nominated for inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List. A draft technical evaluation has been prepared to assist in the assessment of the Outstanding Universal Value(OUV) of the Burren and its potential for innovation.

3.4. 1. a North Clare Local Area Plan

North Clare has both a distinct topography and geology due primarily to the location of the Burren within the area. The **North Clare Local Area Plan 2011-2017** set out the land use plan for the proper planning and sustainable development of each settlement in the area of the Plan in accordance with the **Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017**. The Plan provided a framework for the development of the North Clare area over the period 2011-2017, incorporating the relevant strategic objectives at a national and regional level into a format specific to the Plan area. This was for the purpose of guiding development in the Plan area in terms of the provision of residential accommodation, adequate services and infrastructure and how this could be balanced with the protection of the local environment.

Settlement plans for all the settlements in the County are contained in Volume 3 of the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023**. It is not clear if there is an intention to prepare a North Clare Local Area Plan 2017-2023.

3.4.1.b Clare County Heritage Plan

The **County Clare Heritage Plan 2017-2023**, building on the two previous Clare County Heritage Plans, aims to create awareness and understanding, leading to greater appreciation, enjoyment and ownership of natural, cultural, built and community heritage to optimise the opportunities that derive from the unique character of the county's heritage. The County Clare Heritage Plan will collect and make available heritage information, raise awareness through education initiatives, surveys and research. It will inform public policy on heritage matters and support the strategic and integrated management of heritage issues at a local level.

In addition, the implementation of specific actions will optimise the unique character of County Clare's heritage and promote best practices in its conservation and management. The plan has six themes: community, training and education, sustainable tourism, biodiversity, climate change and green infrastructure planning, built heritage and cultural heritage.

3.4.1.c Strategic Plan for Tourism

It is recognised in the **County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023** that the sustainable and successful development of the tourism industry is critical to the economy of County Clare and the wider region. There is a **2010-2014 Clare County Council Tourism Strategy** but this has not been updated or revised. Clearly the context of tourism has been transformed since then and an updated strategy is required to ensure that infrastructure and resources are used to support sustainable tourism.

It is an objective of Clare County Council in the County Development Plan (CDP9.1) to support the preparation, adoption and implementation of a strategic regional plan for tourism, covering County Clare and the wider Shannon Region, which will provide a framework for the sustainable and efficient provision and management of the tourism resource in the area.

It is also an objective in the County Development Plan (CDP9.2) to support Clare Tourism in their work promoting and marketing tourism, to work in partnership with local, national and international agencies/bodies to promote County Clare as a tourism destination, to support cohesion and linkages to implement the key tourism objectives and to access, and assist community groups and tourist providers to access, funding for appropriate and beneficial tourism developments.

3.4.2 Regional Planning under the National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) identifies three regions; Eastern and Midland, Northern and Western and Southern, each with a regional assembly for planning purposes. County Clare is located in the Southern Regional Assembly Area. To ensure balanced growth at national level it is a key objective of the NPF to target a level of economic and population growth in the Northern and Western and Southern Regions combined to at least match that projected in the Eastern and Midland region. Under the NPF a Regional Spatial and Economy Strategy will be prepared for the region by the Southern Regional Assembly. This will supercede the Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines (MWRPGs—for Counties Clare, Limerick and South Tipperary) discussed below.

At regional level, Regional Planning Guidelines have provided a key policy bridge between national development priorities and local planning and have been in place in various formats since 2004. The RPGs provide detailed regional level guidance, assisting planning authorities in framing County, City and Local Area Development Plans.

3.4.2.a Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022

The **Mid-West Regional Planning Guidelines (MWRPGs) 2010-2022** for Counties Clare, Limerick and South Tipperary give effect, at a regional level, to the planning framework that had put forward in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), the predecessor to the NPF. The MWRPGs provide a regional

framework for the formulation of policies and strategy in the County Development Plans and seek to ensure the proper balance between the different settlements in the region with regard to development, population and services. It should be noted that as they are still current they informed the core strategy adopted in the **County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023** (chapter 2).

The Guidelines present a regional settlement and development strategy and identify strategic infrastructure investments for the region. This regional guidance has directly informed the development of the settlement strategy for County Clare. The MWRPG's set out a 'zone' based strategy (Zone 1 – Zone 8), outlining the development potential and needs of each zone in turn. North Clare, including the Burren, falls into Zone 1 and 3.

Renewable and sustainable energy lie at the heart of both the NSS and the NPF. The Guidelines proposes that the Mid-West region has high potential for the provision of renewable energy. The Mid-West region is particularly well placed to make use of these policies with a wide range of renewable resources such as wind and wave power and forestry. With these policies in mind, it is the intention that County Development Plans should identify areas where renewable energy proposals could be considered.

The MWRPGs identifies the need for a common approach to landscape management across the region which will identify landscapes of similar character and adopt policies as appropriate to them. Landscape protection policies should take into account protection of ecological sites, habitats and species of ecological value and ecological corridors and networks to ensure the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network. Development Plans should include policies for linear landscapes such as water courses and hedgerows, which provide pathways for the dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species. The detailed management of individual landscape units is the responsibility of the individual planning authorities.

The implementation of the Regional Planning Guidelines lies largely with the semi-state bodies charged with the provision of social, economic and physical infrastructure and the protection and enhancement of natural and human resources. These include:

- Regional Authorities/Assemblies and their operational structure
- Local Authorities
- County and City Development Boards
- Other standing and ad hoc committees.

Coordination Groups for Special Areas identified in the MWRPGs include a specialist group for the Burren area which has responsibility to set criteria and parameters for local authorities (in this case Counties Clare and Galway) and other bodies. Specialist groups are designed to provide policy consistency across administrative boundaries that arise in these special areas. In the MWRPGs there are also specialist groups for cross-regional policies relating to issues such as renewable energy, landscape management and transport integration.

3.4.3 Good Farming Practice

Agriculture is the principal land use in Ireland and is of vital importance for maintaining much of Ireland's biological and landscape diversity, the primary custodians of the rural landscape are farmers. With that in mind, it is relevant to look at farming practices in County Clare and the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark region and the policies which influence them. The Burren LIFE Project dealt in detail with this aspect of farming for conservation and led to the development of the Burren Farming for Conservation Project (BFCP) and in turn to the Burren Programme (see discussion below).

The rural landscape has been shaped by farming over millennia, which has created diverse environments and its varied landscapes. Biodiversity is critical for the sustainable development of the countryside. Through the **Common Agriculture Policy** (CAP) the EU provides incentives to farmers to work in a sustainable and environmentally-friendly manner, mainly through income support payments for the adoption of environmentally sustainable farming methods. In addition, the CAP promotes agricultural practices such as maintaining permanent grassland and safeguarding the scenic value of the landscape. Protecting biodiversity and wildlife habitats, managing water resources and dealing with climate change are other priorities that farmers are required to respect. Compliance with the EU's Natura 2000 programme is relevant. Other policies impacting on farming include the **EU Rural Development policy 2014-2020** and the **EU Forest Strategy**.

There is an increased recognition of the need for incentives for farmers to adopt sustainable farming methods. These challenges are recognised in the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the development at national level of agri-environment schemes. In Ireland the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine in 1994 established and ran a number of tranches of the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS, REPS 2, REPS 3, REPS 4) over the next two decades. Current major components of agri-environmental action in Ireland are the current agri-environmental scheme: GLAS, and Cross Compliance.

GLAS (Green, Low-Carbon, Agri-Environment Scheme) is part of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. The Scheme is **green** as it preserves hay meadows and low-input pastures, **low-carbon** as it retains carbon stocks in soil through habitat preservation and practices such as minimum tillage and **agri-environment** as it promotes agricultural actions, which introduce or continue to apply agricultural production methods compatible with the protection of the environment, water quality, the landscape and its features, endangered species of flora and fauna and climate change mitigation.

Cross Compliance is the linkage of direct financial support under the **Common Agricultural Policy** (CAP) to the observance of environmental and other law. It aims at ensuring the safe production of food, the welfare of animals, the sustainable use of land, the maintenance of natural resources and limiting climate change.

Cross Compliance is implemented under two main areas; Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) standards. There are thirteen SMRs which

refer to 13 legislative requirements in environment, food safety, animal and plant and animal welfare. GAEC requires land to be kept in good agricultural and environmental condition and consists of seven standards related to soil, protection and maintenance of soil organic matter, protection of habitats and protection of water sources.

3.5 Burren Specific Initiatives

3.5.1 Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark

Clare County Council manages this geopark, first designated as the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark in 2011. With the recognition of this designation by UNESCO in 2015 the Burren and Cliffs of Moher is now a UNESCO Global Geopark, part of a worldwide network of 140 Geoparks. The designation is a global recognition of the geological and broader natural and cultural heritage significance of this area and its landscapes. It is also a recognition of an ongoing, managed programme of environmental protection, education and sustainable development.

It has the following characteristics:

- A defined geographic boundary, managed by Clare County Council in partnership with national agencies and local stakeholders
- Over 1.4 million visitors per year
- International recognition of the special landscape with UNESCO Global Geoparks designation, 85% of the area is SPA and also several SAC and NHA designations
- Iconic sites of natural and cultural significance
- Intangible heritage of international significance
- The Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN), an award winning network of high quality sustainable tourism businesses
- International recognition and external validation, for example through awards in international competitions.

The Geopark is managed by Clare County Council and currently employs one full time manager, one geologist and a part-time administrator.

The Geopark work programme is guided by the criteria of the UNESCO Global Geoparks, which combines community development, sustainable tourism, research, education and the conservation of geological and heritage landscapes, sites and culture. The retention of the UNESCO label is evaluated every four years.

Since its inception, the Geopark's programme has had the participation of all of the agencies involved

in the management of elements of the heritage and tourism of the region, of tourism businesses and community groups. The programme has to date been steered by a committee comprising this partnership.

The Geopark participates actively in the broader network of UNESCO Global Geoparks, by submitting annual reports, attending two network meetings a year, engaging in the peer evaluation of other UNESCO Global Geoparks and in participating in collaborative projects.

Funding has traditionally been secured through EU Interreg and LIFE programmes and grants from Fáilte Ireland and the Geological Survey of Ireland. The Geopark team has just completed a five year EU LIFE programme (GeoparkLIFE <http://www.burrengeopark.ie/geopark-life/>) and has recently commenced an Interreg programme with 12 other UNESCO Global Geoparks.

3.5.2 Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE programme

The precursor to the current GeoparkLIFE programme was Burren Connect. The Burren Connect project worked with local stakeholders and community groups on environmental protection and sustainable visitor management in the Burren region of County Clare. That project was supported by Clare County Council, Shannon Development, Geological Survey of Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Services, National Monuments Service, Fáilte Ireland, BurrenBeo Trust and the Burren Connect Advisory Committee.

In June 2012 the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark secured funding under LIFE+, the EU's environmental fund, for a comprehensive programme of actions aimed at protecting the rich heritage and landscape of the Burren while supporting local employment and economic activity. Co funding was provided by Clare County Council, Geological Survey of Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, National Parks & Wildlife Service, National Monuments Service, Office of Public Works, Heritage Council, National University of Ireland Galway and University College Dublin. This project ran from 2013 to 2017.

The Geopark LIFE Project's objective was to strengthen the integration of tourism and heritage, reconciling tourism development with conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage in the Burren region. It aimed to achieve this through a number of principles devised for sustainable tourism:

1. Working together to collectively develop and promote the Geopark as a sustainable tourism destination.
2. Caring for the landscape by participating in conserving natural and cultural heritage in accordance with the European Geoparks Network (EGN) Charter and Leave No Trace principles, and in compliance with relevant legislation.
3. Understanding heritage and communicating the unique character of the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher, emphasising the particular attributes and strengths of the Geopark.

4. Sustainable tourism management by building capacity in destination management and stewardship, focusing on enhancing the quality and standards of visitor experiences and tourism products and services.
5. Vibrant communities to optimize tourism's potential as both an economic and social development tool which benefits hosts as well as visitors.
6. Strengthened livelihoods to create strong economic benefits through product development, marketing and promotion, cost and energy savings, local sourcing and the creation of local employment.

GeoparkLIFE provided a framework for a sustainable destination management programme for the Geopark region. This programme was broad and holistic in focus and through its partnerships it contained actions related to tourism enterprises and also to monuments and habitats, learning, conservation management, monitoring, measuring and evaluating. The project was designed to ensure that the achievements were tangible and that outcomes on sites, resources and heritage would be structured to ensure that they are self-sustaining and lasting.

The outcomes will also be mainstreamed into the local organisational systems, community groups, operators and funding organisations and will, themselves, be capable of stimulating further action.

3.5.3 Burren EcoTourism Network

The Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN), originally established through Burren Connect, and a key partner in the GeoparkLIFE programme, is a network of tourism enterprises with the objective of establishing the Burren as an internationally-recognised sustainable tourism region, ensuring future economic and social growth and the sustainable development of its communities, environment and heritage. BEN seeks to support continued training, mentoring and accreditation in sustainable tourism for its members and for businesses interested in joining the network.

BEN aims to be a recognisable network of sustainable tourism enterprises in the Burren, have achieved independent accreditation, demonstrate ecotourism 'best practice', positively discriminate in each other's favour, provide 'one voice' representation on issues impacting the Burren (where appropriate), and inspire conservation activism.

The sustainability of a destination begins with the sustainability of the businesses operating within it and the sustainability of the products and experiences they offer. Therefore, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark has partnered with the Burren Ecotourism Network to develop the region as a sustainable tourism destination.

BEN members show a commitment to ecotourism principles by:

- Using environmentally sustainable practices

- Bringing people into nature
- Promoting the natural and cultural heritage
- Contributing to conservation
- Maximising benefits for local communities
- Ensuring visitor satisfaction
- Marketing responsibly
- Increasing cultural respect and awareness.

The Geopark, particularly over the last five years through the GeoparkLIFE programme, offers extensive managerial, administrative, training and marketing support to members of the Network, who engage in constructive networking and collaboration across environmental, social and economic indicators. This happens through a three-stage process of training, adoption of the code of practice and then joining the network. There are incremental benefits accruing to businesses at each stage of this process.

3.5.4 The Burren Programme and the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme

The Burren Programme (<http://www.burrenprogramme.com/>) started in 2016 and is a progression from the Burren Farming Conservation Programme (BFCP). Taking a longer term view the programme is the outcome of an important, long-term policy and practical initiative to understand and sustain the role of farming in supporting the value and diversity of the natural and cultural heritage of the Burren.

The Burren Farming for Conservation Project (BFCP) which ran from 2010- 2015 emerged from the BurrenLIFE Project (2005-2010). The BurrenLIFE project was the first major farming for conservation project in Ireland and one which placed farmers at the centre of the conservation agenda, with the support of the Burren branch of the Irish Farmers Association (IFA). In turn the BurrenLIFE programme built on research in the 1990s which highlighted the important role that farming plays in supporting the rich biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Burren and also the breakdown in traditional farming systems and the habitats dependent on them (Dunford 2001).

In 2004 the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Teagasc and the Burren IFA secured EU LIFE funding to address some of the problems identified in the initial research and the sustainable agricultural management of the Burren. The BurrenLIFE project worked with 20 Burren farmers in an area extending over 2,500 ha to test and develop a blueprint for a specific approach to farming and conservation on the Burren.

Emerging from the BurrenLIFE project the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP) was funded from 2010 by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It worked with with 160 farmers on 15,000 ha, building directly on the lessons learned through the BurrenLIFE project, supporting and incentivising farmers to maintain and enhance the habitats of the Burren.

The Burren Programme started in 2016, works with 200 farmers and as noted above is a natural progression from the Burren Farming Conservation Programme (BFCP). The Programme works closely with farmers, advisors and the EU, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and National Parks and Wildlife Service to implement solutions to help manage and protect the Burren (Dunford 2016).

The Burren Programme is farmer-led. Farmers nominate and co-fund conservation actions on their own farms and are generally free to manage the land as they see fit. Administrative assistance and policy guidance and securing permission for actions is provided by the Programme. It is results-based, flexible and adaptable where farmers create their own simple farm plan which is tailored to suit the needs of the individual farm and outlines the two payment categories: Payments for Actions and Payment for Results.

3.5.5 Burren National Park

The Burren National Park is located on the east side of the Burren. It was established in 1991 and is one of six national parks in Ireland. The park is managed for nature conservation and public access by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The park includes portions of both the upland and lowland areas of the Burren and has a total area of just over 2000 ha. It is composed of five land blocks (Cahercommaun, Mullaghmore, Ballyeighter, Lough Bunny/Boston and Keelhilla) with the Mullaghmore block forming the largest block, comprising two thirds of the area. The park represents 2-3% of the area of the Burren and includes representative examples of the range of Burren habitats. All of the park and adjoining areas are part of the East Burren Complex SAC and a high proportion of it is considered as priority habitat.

While the whole of the park is open for public access only about half the park is readily accessible, with basic infrastructure in the form of parking laybys, walking trails and information boards at the west end of the Mullaghmore block, Keelhilla and Cahercommaun. There is seasonal traffic and parking congestion in the access area to Mullaghmore. There is a small information centre for the park in Corofin. This is staffed by guides in the summer season with a free bus service provided by NPWS to the park. It is estimated that about 75,000 people visited the park in 2016.

As noted above it is an objective of the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** to advocate the preparation by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of a Conservation Management Plan for the Burren National Park, incorporating traffic management and parking solutions (CDP14:20). The **draft Burren National Park Management Plan 2017-2030** (McGrath et al. 2017) provides a policy framework for the strategic management of the Burren National Park by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It is intended to be an integrated management plan with objectives for conservation, recreation and tourism development.

The strategy has five goals:

1. To conserve the native species of the park and to conserve its natural habitats and landscapes
2. To foster social and economic development
3. To preserve and improve the quality of life of local residents
4. To protect and enhance the quality of the visitor experience
5. To implement an integrated management plan which has a broad base of public and institutional support.

3.5.6 Burrenbeo

The Burrenbeo Trust is membership-based charity founded in 2008 to create greater appreciation for the Burren landscape, and its programmes are all based around a model of community-led conservation. The aims of Burrenbeo are:

- To promote sustainable communities through the concept of the Burren as a learning landscape
- To develop models of best practice for community stewardship, place-based and community-based learning as means of sustainable conservation
- To disseminate knowledge, develop resources and continue to learn and grow as an organisation through the shared knowledge of others regionally, nationally and internationally.

Burrenbeo has a primary objective of education and awareness of the Burren with a particular emphasis on acknowledging and supporting the positive contribution of the local farming community to the natural and cultural heritage of the area. Through their work, Burrenbeo often engage with partners, including Clare and Galway County Councils, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Heritage Council, Teagasc and Fáilte Ireland.

Burrenbeo also seeks to promote the Burren as an eco-tourism destination through education and marketing. The Burrenbeo website contains information for visitors on the local environment, as well as news and events and local amenities. Through the website, events and education courses Burrenbeo provide an important marketing and promotional facility for Burren tourist services.

Since 2010, with the support of the Heritage Council, Burrenbeo Trust have acted as lead partners on the Burren Community Charter with other Burren agencies and local authorities.

The Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers (BCV) is an active voluntary community group that works towards the sustainable management of the Burren by addressing key conservation issues and needs. They were set up by Burrenbeo in 2010 to answer a need for active conservation and so that people in the area could do something for the area.

3.5.7 Burren Community Charter

This was produced in 2010 by four Burren based organisations – the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP), the Burren Connect Project, the Burrenbeo Trust and the Burren IFA, working in conjunction with the Heritage Council, Galway County Council and Clare County Council, to develop a Community Charter which would support communities, sustain heritage and develop local business, farming and tourism in the Burren (<https://www.burrencommunitycharter.com/>).

The principle underpinning the Burren Community Charter is that success in protecting and managing the rich and valuable resource that is the Burren should be led by the people and communities of the Burren and not be imposed from outside. The Burren landscape requires an integrated approach to conservation and development.

In the Burren Community Charter a common vision for the future of the Burren was defined with each of the partners and communities aspiring to play a role in that vision, one:

- Where a high quality of life is enjoyed by all
- Where the natural, built and cultural heritage is protected and improved
- Where respect for the environment and local economic development are compatible
- Where there are recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike
- Where dynamic, engaged, sustainable local communities work together for shared benefits as they build a better future.

The guiding principles for the Charter are:

- that the Burren is an exceptionally rich natural and cultural landscape
- that the local community must be central to decision making with regard to the management of the Burren
- the wish of all signatories to the Charter to work in partnership to secure a more co- operative, productive and sustainable future for the Burren landscape and its people.

3.5.8 Leave No Trace

A Burren Code, which was first published in 2002 under the Burren Tourism and Environment Initiative as a joint initiative between Clare County Council, the Dept. and Shannon Development, was designed

to inform people as to appropriate behaviour when visiting the Burren.

The principles of the Burren Code were:

- Leave the limestone pavement as you find it
- Preserve natural habitats and leave wildflowers undisturbed
- Take care not to damage monuments, walls and buildings
- Respect landowners, their property and their livestock
- Park and camp in designated areas.

In practice the Burren Code has been superseded by Leave No Trace (Ireland), an Outdoor Ethics Education Programme which originated in the US in the 1990s. It is designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. The idea of Leave No Trace as an 'ethics' programme is that there is an intrinsic knowledge about knowing what the right thing to do is. The Leave No Trace programme depends on this attitude and awareness rather than trying to enforce rules and regulations. The programme operates under 7 principles designed to minimise the social and environmental impacts left by people, litter, vegetation, wildlife and livestock disturbance and water pollution in areas of outdoor recreation. These principles to protect natural and cultural heritage are:

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Be considerate of others
- Respect farm animals and wildlife
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Leave what you find
- Dispose of waste properly
- Minimise the effects of fire.

Leave No Trace Ireland strives to build awareness, appreciation and respect for Ireland's natural and cultural heritage and is dedicated to creating a nationally recognised and accepted outdoor ethic that promotes personal responsibility. It encourages all outdoor enthusiasts to do their part to maintain those lands used by the public for the benefit of the environment and for future generations.

In Ireland the Leave No Trace message has been adopted by many organisations from Government Departments, state agencies, sporting bodies, education and training organisations and range of tourism businesses who are members of Leave No Trace Ireland. It is this broad adoption and promotion that gives the message its strength.

In 2016 Leave No Trace Ireland launched a five-year strategy, entitled ***The Outdoors is Yours Protect It!*** This identified five strategic themes:

- Education
- Research
- Advisory
- Governance and administration
- Partnerships.

4. Part 2: Perspectives of the project partners and other stakeholders on policy

4.1 Introduction

'Analysis of government policies is an inexact process wrought with uncertainties. It is, however, an essential segment of social learning and adaptation that brings attention to the complex relationship between decision making and environmental outcomes. Policy analysis is rarely exhaustive and in most cases, cannot be prescriptive. It provides baseline information, points out major linkages between decisions and environmental outcomes, and provides a starting point for consideration of more sustainable policy options' (Pintér et al. 2007).

It is clear from Part 1 that the policy framework within which the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and the GeoparkLIFE programme operate is complex with multiple, inter-woven elements. It is also important to recognize that approaches on the ground to the implementation of policies can differ depending on the context of the partner or stakeholder – or actors as they are referred to in the literature. The character of the GeoparkLIFE partnership model, run under the auspices of Clare County Council, with the active engagement of various state agencies, means that the majority of the partners can be described as state actors, but there is also active involvement of business (market actors) people, particularly through BEN (Burren Ecotourism Network) but also through farming and related enterprises, while community (citizen) actors are also strongly represented. Individuals can participate under more than one of these headings.

To understand how the policy framework informs decision-making and influences outcomes, structured interviews were carried out with all the GeoparkLIFE programme partners and other stakeholders. The purpose was to gain different perspectives on how policy works on the ground and an understanding of the sources of potential conflict. A standard approach and set of questions were used in the interviews (Appendix 1). The interviews were recorded and the transcripts agreed with the interviewees. Here an overview is given of the main themes covered in the interviews.

4.2 Different perspectives of partners on policy: explicit and implicit

The implementation of policy depends on institutions, people and decision-making on the ground. It is against this context that the view of policy as an 'inherently political process rather than simply the instrumental execution of rational decisions' (Pintér et al. 2007) can be assessed. There is also a perception that the implementation of policy on the ground can be personality driven, hence changes in

personnel can bring about changes in policy. A variety of policy actors were interviewed as part of the project. This provided a range of informed perspectives on both explicit and implicit policies at play in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark.

As noted above the policy actors in the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark can be broadly divided into market, citizen and state actors. The nature of the GeoparkLIFE partnership model means that the majority of the project partners fall into the state category. In this context it was recognised that it was critically important to gain insights from the other sectors; market or business and citizen actors, through the process.

The market actors tend to be those managing attractions or providing food or accommodation services to visitors. The biggest player here is undoubtedly the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience (COMVE), which hosts over 1 million visitors annually, with 1.5m in 2017. As well as its responsibility as a tourism provider, the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience also has a role in conservation management as it is responsible for a Special Protection Area (SPA) and the explicit policy that goes with it in terms of EU Directives.

The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience is also the largest company in the Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN). BEN operates on the principle of an honour policy between its members; a commitment that all members will obey the laws of the land and specifically those related to conservation management and sustainable tourism. This implicit policy approach appears to be strong enough to build trust and confidence within the network.

The citizen actors see the Burren as a unique area which in their view is not being managed correctly by policy devised at EU, national or even regional level and which requires a specific approach, as has been proven by the BurrenLIFE programme, the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme and now the Burren Programme. The policy for managing the Burren is viewed as working best when it is developed locally and is led locally, in the case of the Burren Programme by farmers, as they are the caretakers of the land. A one-size-fits-all model for activities in the Burren is regarded as ineffective and the assumption that local communities will do damage if policy is not strictly enforced needs to change.

Voluntary groups also play a vital role in conservation management in the Burren. Sometimes these actors have a sense that there is a lack of joined-up thinking by various state agencies and on their part there a lack of detailed understanding of those linkages that actually exist. The main policy is seen as the tourism and marketing policy and its outcomes and programmes, notably the Wild Atlantic Way. Conservation management is seen to be playing catch-up most of the time. Complex legislation such as Appropriate Assessment associated with Natura 2000 sites causes issues and high costs for individuals and communities, but there is a view that clear guidance on this and other protection and management processes is not available for these groups.

“Many people know a lot of little bits about the Burren but very few have the big picture...apart from the farmers working the land and those living in it, however most of the policy comes from outside.”

Citizen Actor –
GeoparkLIFE partner

The majority of interviewees belonged to the state actors group. Each of these actors has their own perspective on policy, depending on their remit and area of interest. The main policy instruments that came up in discussion were the **County Clare Development Plan** and the EU **Directives for Birds and Habitats**.

Some of the project partners have legislative roles and responsibility to implement that legislation, as well as being statutory consultees in the planning process. Indeed planning and development tends to be the arena where many of the policies are brought into focus, as will be discussed below. The policies contained in the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** are generally reflective of the legislation that needs to be implemented within the county. The principles of the County Development Plan are regarded as being based around the concept of sustainable development, bringing together all facets of development from heritage to housing, environment to economics, tourism to transport. The planning policies contained in the County Development Plan can be quite broad, but the planning legislation and the consultation process surrounding planning applications are where practical implementation of these policies occurs. However, this case-by-case or response-based approach leads to a more reactive policy approach rather than a proactive one. What is perceived by some of the actors as lacking is a standard process. On the flip side, some of the statutory consultees see this as an opportunity to look at each case in detail, and to make decisions based on individual merits of a given development.

“The Burren by its nature is impacted by a lot of policies... It can be all things to all people if it is managed properly”

State Actor –
GeoparkLIFE partner

Most partners are reliant on explicit policy or policies that underpins their roles. For example, the legislative basis on which the National Parks and Wildlife Service operates is the **Wildlife Act** and also the European conservation legislation in the form of EU Directives. However, the Burren National Park does not have any dedicated legislation and does not feature prominently as perhaps might be expected in the CDP (although it is an objective under CDP14.6 to protect the Burren National Park and under CDP14.20 to advocate for the preparation of a Conservation Management Plan for the park). The National Park is also a Special Area of Conservation and this provides strong protection.

Other partners have developed shared policies with other agencies, not only in Ireland, but also internationally, an approach which is seen as a way of working towards best practice. For example, the Office of Public Works (OPW) adhere to the UK Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group guidelines (VSCG). This policy, together with Health and Safety policies guide most of the work of the OPW around visitor management. On the conservation side, OPW policy is governed by adherence to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with what is now the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) under the National Monuments Act on the conservation of national monuments. There is an implicit policy that good conservation practice will govern and guide all work on monuments. This SLA is considered to be dynamic and in development, with continuous liaison with peers and on-going training.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) is an interesting case study in that it is one of the few agencies that appears to be lacking a strong or specific legislative basis in the form of the designation or protection of relevant sites. However, geological sites can have protection through European Directives because of the fact that geology frequently underpins the biodiversity which is being directly afforded legislative protection. The Geological Survey of Ireland does not necessarily see this policy position as a weakness and focuses on raising awareness of geology and its protection and management through the County Development Plan process (including via Heritage Plans), with the recognition of County Geological Sites. The GSI is also a statutory body in the planning process.

Some positions in the County Council structure, such as the Heritage Office and the Conservation Officer, provide the opportunity to work with multiple stakeholders. It is widely recognised that this approach provides valuable linkages, as well as indicating gaps, in the policy framework. The planning legislation comes across as the most coherent and strongest policy on the ground, with a perception of a notable lack of facilitation and technical support for community groups who take part in conservation activities. What is seen as a complicated and bureaucratic process can create frustration among communities.

Fáilte Ireland's role is to develop tourism products on the ground in tandem with businesses and local government. The relationship between BEN and Fáilte Ireland, for example, is considered to be beneficial by both actors. The organizational structure of Fáilte Ireland is focused on marketing activity, but it does have a core group who are involved in the visitor experience at heritage assets and attractions and sustainable tourism. Key to this activity area are the new strategic partnerships being developed with other agencies such as NPWS, OPW, National Monuments Service and the Heritage Council. This appears to represent a major policy shift in Fáilte Ireland, and a commitment to investment has provided the space to allow for this increased focus on conservation management aligned with visitor experience and to build trusting relationships with other stakeholders. There is currently a very significant disparity on the spend for visitor management versus the spend on conservation management, but Fáilte Ireland see an opportunity for other agencies to use and develop the partnership potential and to provide resources for conservation management aligned to the quality of the visitor experience.

National government policy as reflected in the National Strategic Outcomes in the **National Planning Framework** has an overarching focus on economic gain and jobs. In relation to tourism policy this focus appears to have led to some policy confusion with increasing visitor numbers seen as an indicator of success, as for example in **Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development** (2017) while on the other hand in **People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025** (2015) there is also a focus on valuing visitor experience and the importance of revenue generation, rather than increasing numbers which can result in an increased scale of impacts. It is recognised by actors on the ground in the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark that increasing numbers of visitors, especially day coach tourism, is having an impact on the tourism asset.

4.3 Recognition of the key policy drivers – are there policy instruments at play?

Discussion and recognition of key policy drivers reflect the general perceptions and perspectives of the stakeholders who were interviewed. It was highlighted by some interviewees that what might appear to be minor elements of policy drivers can have important, direct consequences in terms of what actually happens on the ground. For example, the governance and policies that drive the practice and scale of impact of day coach tourism.

The top three most frequently referenced policy instruments referred to throughout the interview process (in order of perceived importance/relevance) were:

- *Clare County Development Plan*
- *Planning and Development Acts*
- *Appropriate Assessment and Habitats Directive*

The *Clare County Development Plan* was the most referenced policy driver and instrument for the county as a whole and for the Burren specifically, not only by actors working directly within or with the County Council but also by other state actors. It contains the policies and objectives for the development of the county as a whole. It is the key policy framework document which seeks to achieve compliance with the mass and range of legislation and policy that exists while managing development within the county.

“Our tourism policy in Ireland is a bit wishy-washy. Looking at the last policy document, sustainability is still not on the radar”

Market Actor –
GeoparkLIFE Partner

Some partners are of the opinion that their perspectives and interests are well presented in the County Development Plan, while others do not share this view. As one example The Geological Survey of Ireland relies on the County Development Plan and process to provide protection for County Geological Heritage Sites. Since these areas are not directly afforded any protection or designation under any other mechanism, the inclusion of County Geological Sites in the plan is important, for example they may be material considerations during the development process.

The main relevant policy drivers seen as reflected through the planning system are EU Directives, Appropriate Assessment and National Monuments legislation. While the County Development Plan is intended to work in alignment with these international and national policies through its development strategies, there is a perception that the national regulatory authority with direct responsibility for a specific policy sometimes may take a default position of saying ‘no’, with the local authority then being tasked with the job of making planning work on the ground. EU policies, as they are implemented locally, are becoming more costly and it is becoming more difficult to achieve compliance. With the implementation of Appropriate Assessment, Strategic Environment Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and Natura Impact Statements, the question was raised in the interview process as to

whether the bar is set too high in Ireland? This perception comes through in the analysis of policy conflicts and constraints.

Another issue that came across in the interviews is the widespread perception that national tourism policy is still driven by numbers. While it is acknowledged that ***People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025*** is a step in the right policy direction in terms of acknowledging sustainability, most partners dealing with the footfall of tourism suggest that the driver of visitor numbers rather than visitor spend is to the detriment of places like the Burren. Carrying capacity does not appear to be a real consideration at sites, even though attractions like the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience are exceeding its carrying capacity. The Wild Atlantic Way, despite the reservations expressed about it, is acknowledged as going some way towards spreading the load and extending the season, thus making tourism along the west coast more sustainable.

The partners responsible for the marketing of tourism feel that ***People, Place and Policy*** is an important step in the right direction and is now the driver for tourism in Ireland. In the policy there is an increased focus on visitor experience and conserving the assets of tourism. In alignment with this on the ground some stakeholders within the relevant state agencies are trying to shift the perceived national drivers and indicators for successful tourism away from numbers of people. However, at visitor attractions the justification for investment is still often being driven by popularity and numbers of visitors.

There was agreement that sustainable tourism and ecotourism are seen as a types of tourism rather than a condition of tourism. While this has been rectified in theory through the changes in tourism policy at a national level, it is not clear that it has trickled down to local level or laterally across to other agencies. The ***Clare County Development plan*** is the main policy driver. Is sustainable tourism integral to its tourism strategy?

The drivers for conservation of the built heritage come from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) (formerly and at the time of the interviews the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA)) through the ***National Monuments Act***, which governs activities at monuments, together with conservation management plans where they have been developed. The legislation surrounding conservation of the built heritage can seem cumbersome and excessive to actors on the ground at times. The drivers of natural and built heritage conservation operate in the context of Health and Safety legislation as well as the Planning and Development Acts. Best practice guidelines have been produced by DCHG but ongoing training and experience of what works best for each type of conservation activity appear to be a key driver of conservation at any given site. The lack of a clear procedural framework allied with complex legislative requirements mean that community groups often find it very difficult to understand the processes and how they can engage in conservation activities at sites and monuments.

“The WAW operational programme was based on the VICE model that sustainable tourism was an acronym of visitor, industry, community and environment and the need for a balance in the objectives across those four areas”

State Actor –
GeoparkLIFE Partner

4.4 Awareness and sharing of policy

It became very clear through the interviews that partners in the GeoparkLIFE are often not aware in any great detail of the policies of other relevant agencies or groups. One of the successes of the GeoparkLIFE programme has been an increasing awareness of the wider knowledge of policy that can be accrued from other partners. This happens because of the connections and linkages made through personal contact at Steering Committee level, but more significantly through the working group structure. There is also a marked difference between an **awareness** of legislation and policy outside the direct remit of specific partners and any detailed **understanding** of this wider policy framework on their work. This is probably most prominently seen in the field of environmental policy and legislation. Another complication that arises from a lack or very general understanding of legislative knowledge is the possibility that this can lead to non-compliance, particularly when it comes to the general public.

The organizational structure of Government departments with remits and statutory obligations which frequently change in detail and in name, does not lend itself very well to communication of key policy drivers. In a wider context of communication, a consequence of this somewhat fragmented structure at national level is that there appears to be is not so much an unwillingness to share information, but more a lack of opportunities and a clear framework to do so. This also impacts on the awareness of other agencies' roles and responsibilities.

Some departments/agencies have better links than others. It appears that in most cases this can be linked to historical reasons and past organisational structures, for example the Office of Public Works and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (National Monuments Service). Now these links are based on a formal policy link; a service level agreement (SLA), but in reality and on the ground it is based on personal and working connections. These are built on the closer organizational ties that existed in the past, but there is a strong possibility that they may be lost going into the future as personnel retire and their knowledge is not sustained within the organisations.

“The compartmentalization of organisations leads to a lack of communication and awareness of each other’s roles and activities”

State Actor –
GeoparkLIFE Partner

There is certainly considerable confusion among some stakeholders about the ownership of national monuments. The Office of Public Works manage and maintain national monuments, but ownership/guardianship rests with the Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. This confusion may not have any real impact as long as sites are being maintained/managed properly, but can arise as an issue when there is a problem. It is important to recognise however that there is a general awareness that sites and monuments are protected by legislation. It was suggested that the role of the local authority in integrating the roles and activities of national agencies within the county through the framework of the County Development Plan could be enhanced.

There are some roles within the local government structure which have a broad remit and work across a number of different agencies, such as a Heritage Officer or Conservation Officer. Individuals in these roles tend to have a broad awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the various units both within the County Council and Government departments, through contacts, work routine and experience. Engagement is the key to finding the common ground between partners and it takes time to communicate the role and importance of a given policy or law which may be in the direct remit of a specific partner but have implications for a range of actors.

Across the GeoparkLIFE stakeholders who were interviewed, it was clear that the market actors do not actively see it as their role or responsibility to make themselves aware of policy. They comply with policy and legislation through the appropriate conduct of their businesses and in that context are primarily concerned with those policies that directly affect their businesses.

The citizen actors probably face the greatest challenge when it comes to awareness and understanding of policy. It is really through community projects that they get an insight into the complex myriad of policies that surround conservation, tourism and development. Unfortunately it is very often only with initial failure that they build capacity, knowledge and patience and try again. Successful community projects need accessibility to experts who understand the needs of projects, from Health and Safety to environmental legislation and who will guide them through a process. The implications of this reality on the ground will be realized more as the notion of communities generating projects and the community-led approach takes hold on through initiatives under the ***Realising our Rural Potential: Rural Development Action Plan*** and the Visitor Experience Development Plans along the Wild Atlantic Way being developed by Fáilte Ireland working with local communities.

4.5 Value placed on integrating sustainable tourism and conservation management

Each of the interviewees was asked about the integration of sustainable tourism and conservation management. It quickly became apparent that the term 'sustainable' means different things to different people. The recurring theme in the interviews was the need for more effective and active processes to integrate sustainable tourism and conservation, but also that it is only possible to have both through effective management.

Despite the feeling by some partners that tourism has overtaken conservation as the policy driver, as a major player on the ground, Fáilte Ireland is consciously trying to balance this in its operational programmes. They base their work on the VICE model that sustainable tourism is an acronym of **V**isitor, **I**ndustry, **C**ommunity and **E**nvironment and the need for a balance in the objectives across those four areas. Keeping the balance between content visitors and local communities, a clean environment and a profitable business is constantly shifting and very difficult to maintain but all four must be achieved

because if one fails, the rest will follow. The quality of the asset is very much part of this sustainable model for tourism with the cultural and natural heritage requiring on-going monitoring and management.

Sustainable tourism for businesses in the Burren is seen as responsible tourism that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. The Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN)'s objective is to ensure the future economic and social growth and sustainable development of its communities and conservation of environment and heritage through continued training, mentoring and accreditation. In order to achieve this, continual monitoring and management is needed and this requires a strong commitment by the members. BEN places a very high value on integrating sustainable tourism and conservation with the view that it can still be achieved with economic gain, otherwise the business incentive would not be there.

One of the challenges of balancing the the impact of visitors and conservation is the establishment of carrying capacity at key sites, be it at discrete visitor attractions or destinations in general. As revealed in the Coach Tourism study (2014) discussed below, the capacity set at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience is on occasion being exceeded beyond what is sustainable. There are also clear capacity issues at places like Doolin, where there appear to be breaches of policy and legislation which are having an adverse effect on the area from both a tourism and conservation point of view. The general feeling is that with the exception of one or two sites (e.g. Newgrange), there has been a reticence as part of national policy in Ireland to set capacity at sites and turn away visitors. The irony is that setting capacity actually increases the quality (and value) of the visitor experience. Some stakeholders argue that carrying capacity indicators need to be implemented in the immediate future if sustainable tourism is to be achieved in the Burren. Increasing visitor numbers is seen as a benefit only if they can be managed and dispersed properly. Increased footfall can have positive economic effect on a rural area, but regular monitoring is needed to devise and implement good management practices. It should be recognised that not all the stakeholders recognise the need for or appear to be committed to measuring and controlling capacity.

**Good visitor
Management =
Good Visitor Behaviour**

State Actor -
GeoparkLIFE

By contrast to businesses, some other stakeholders feel that in order to balance tourism and built heritage, economics should not be the primary factor and the value of place is the most important thing. In relation to natural heritage and ecology, a view was expressed that the ecology of the Burren is resilient and that tourism-related issues and impact may possibly be more to do with visual impacts or economic development.

“All actions will have a positive and negative aspect. If you can accept that the negative impacts can be lived with because the benefits far outweigh them then they are not significant enough to counteract the positives in the overall conservation management context”

State Actor –
GeoparkLIFE Partner

The County Development Plan is meant to have sustainability at its core and all the related documentation refers to this principle. However, by its very nature, the County Development Plan is also about development and change. The County Development Plan is widely recognised and regarded as the correct mechanism to integrate sustainable tourism and conservation management, recognising that it is a plan for the next 5 years and investment in a longer-term process is needed to succeed in integrating the two.

“The ability to influence visitor behaviour is not as difficult as anticipated”

State Actor –
GeoparkLIFE Partner

The real value of integrating sustainable tourism and conservation is probably felt most at citizen level by the local community and farmers. These are the people who have to live in and on the resource which is used as the tourism asset. Farmers have pride of place and in places like the Burren, they are more than willing to play an active and central role in achieving this balance.

4.6 Arenas and impacts of policy conflicts (real/perceived)

The responses from interviewees tended to revolve around policy constraints and mis-alignment to some degree. There appeared to be very few explicit examples of real policy conflict. Issues seem to arise when people work in isolation or with different aims. Where people are working towards a common goal then it appears that no serious problems occur. Constraints rather than conflict usually occurs when individuals or agencies do not cross check with policies in other areas and operate within the confines of their own unit and direct policy concern. It is recognised that key issues are usually around communication and implementation as opposed to the impact of specific pieces of legislation.

The market actors in the tourism businesses found some difficulty with the certification model as there is no ‘one size fits all’, and there appeared to be a gap when it comes to sustainable tourism certification. This sector also questioned the tourism policies contained within the **Clare County Development Plan** because there still seems to be a focus on numbers and implicit support for the growth of day coach tourism and the promotion of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience, which has been proven to be at capacity.

The major issue that came up across the board was the lack of resources in all agencies and the imbalance between investment in tourism versus investment in heritage and conservation. This low level of investment in capital resources outside of tourism can fuel a perceived conflict between heritage and tourism, when in reality tourism policy and conservation policy should work together to result in better tourism experiences. The lack of resources is felt on the ground, for example in the day to day management of national monument sites where a reduced work force is now tasked for example with increased Health and Safety responsibilities, which although accepted as part of the job, are quite time

consuming and can eat into the limited resources that are available. This also has to be juggled with the fact that targets and indicators of success at sites are still numbers-driven, which can be difficult to balance with good conservation practice.

The state agencies and voluntary groups tasked with managing the natural and cultural landscape all refer to the restrictions imposed by the EU Directives and Wildlife Act, where again a 'one size fits all' model applies, which may not always seem to be the most practical solution to issues on the ground. These policies are perceived as being interpreted very rigidly in national policy in Ireland, which can create an impression that there is very little scope for any landscape change or development in the Burren or the possibility of 'local solutions to local problems'.

One perceived conflict which interviewees seem to be aware of as an issue, perhaps more than other elements of conservation policy is the protection of monuments and archaeology. When analysed, the problem seems to lie with the structure of the National Monuments Service system of permissions for activity at monuments that are protected under National Monuments legislation. Hence it is not necessarily a legislative issue but may be more the result of a lack of clarity about procedures. In many respects the legislation protecting buildings is actually stronger than that which protects archaeology, yet the National Monuments Acts is perceived as being more stringent. This can cause frustration when there is a lack of progress on practical issues.

In response to that, those with responsibility for the conservation and management of monuments feel that the perception that the policy is to say 'no' has become ingrained and this perception is hard to break, even though there have been significant operational changes in the relevant processes. At the core of the problem maybe that protection for monuments has been provided through functions set up as a response system with resources provided accordingly, it is very much a reactive rather than proactive policy. It is worth noting that the policy on the conservation of natural heritage appears to have more proactive elements. (Both units are within the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, there appears to be a 1:5 ratio of NMS:NPWS staff).

The various units within the County Council can have differing views on policy-related matters and the preparation of the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** provided the opportunity to identify these and work towards resolving them. Relevant issues include the compatibility of green infrastructure and sustainable transport with environmental policy.

From a citizen point of view, where policy language and procedure are unfamiliar and not part of everyday life, there is a strong perception that there is a lack of policy alignment with community needs, with some degree of policy conflict. An anecdotal case study demonstrates some of the issues.

Case Study: A mapping group had recorded the names of all the people that lived in the houses of a nineteenth century deserted village in Killinaboy. There was an idea to develop a short walk through this deserted village (known locally as the 'Famine village,' which was situated in woodland, but the old 'right of way' needed scrub removal to make it accessible. A Heritage Council grant was sought and granted for the work but the relevant permissions were not sought in time/in the right order and the Heritage Council grant ran out before all the licences were granted. Throughout the process there was consultation with an archaeologist who was happy with the proposed works, the NPWS had no issues but the problem was with the application for the felling licence which required approval of the Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. A protection order was placed on the scrub (delivered by Gardai, which caused its own degree of upset) prior to granting the felling licence. The felling licence came through but it was beyond the timeframe for the Heritage Council grant which could not be availed of.

It was recognised that the bottom line is that landscapes are dynamic and need conservation rather than preservation, with policies to reflect the sensitivity of the landscape and the type of changes it can sustain.

4.7 Approaches to resolving conflicts

The partners were asked how they felt policy conflicts are best resolved. There was a noticeable trend in the answers that came back with a common vocabulary:

- communication
- collaboration
- flexibility

There was a general consensus that policy conflict is best addressed at local level rather than needing or benefiting from top-down change. While environmental policy can be perceived as being very restrictive and costly to consider, there seems to be general acceptance of its importance and the value of the EU policy framework. However some examples of apparent conflict of European level policy were pointed out, such as the treatment of Red Valerian at Aillwee. It is considered an invasive species but the removal of it would damage the limestone pavement and spraying it would impact on water quality, demonstrating the potential for direct conflict between the European **Habitats Directive** and **Water Framework Directive**. Generally, however, policy conflicts tend to be at a local level and around the implementation of policy.

"A collaborative framework (that extends beyond a partnership) needs to have layers and be embedded at a local level"

State Actor -
GeoparkLIFE

The most readily identified constraint is lack of resources in state agencies and local authorities, and the urgent need for increased staffing across the board. The severe cuts made during the recent recession and the adjustment to it are now having a significant impact. Although recovery is evident and underpins the approach of the **National Planning Framework** and **National Development Plan 2018-2027**, there has not been a replacement of staff losses. Additional staff and improved resources are regarded as critical to facilitate more engagement and a more proactive approach to knowledge and enforcement of policy.

Policy issues at local level can often be about opinions and personalities rather than involving any significant policy conflict or legislative restriction. If there is the scope to engage at local level then these difficulties can often be resolved to the satisfaction of parties involved. A common goal and the desire for a common good, as is usually the case in the Burren, means that while frictions occur, at the end of the day everyone makes the effort to make it work. The letter of the law and the spirit of the law can be reconciled with a pragmatic approach.

The structure of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee (i.e. a partnership of national and local agencies and bodies with different foci) is also something that was seen as an effective way of resolving conflict. This was stated explicitly by some interviewees and implied, although not specifically stated, by others. The notion of a collaborative and integrated approach to management has been accepted by all the partners as crucial if sustainable tourism and conservation management are to sit side by side. It is also worth noting that friction can occur when only two partners are involved, but when three or more parties come together, the work dynamic changes and the structure appears to be much more successful.

The example of Adopt a Monument scheme in Scotland, now being developed in Ireland through a Heritage Council programme and with **Adopt a Monument: Guidance for Community Archaeology Projects** (2017), was given as a demonstration of how people interacting on the ground in community archaeology projects can be successful and how the Irish policy system is working towards acknowledging this and accepting that it is the important and useful way forward. It also needs to be borne in mind that the success of this type of approach very much depends on the personalities around the table and the need to adopt a 'can-do' attitude. This structure of agencies working with local communities, which brings together expertise feeding into knowledge at a local level, is a good way of creating collective responsibility and an ability to address local needs first (as demonstrated in the Burren Programme and its predecessor, the Burren Farming for Conservation Project). This could in turn work towards using this type of best practice local approach to influence national policy appropriately.

Of course, consultation and an integrated approach at policy development stage would reduce conflicts and lead to a better understanding around issues on the ground. It is at the implementation stage of policy where difficulties occur but better communication would assist with this. One example is the facilitation role of the field monuments advisor in the Burren Programme who is available to farmers in the scheme and can advise and assist with issues around archaeological monuments on farmland. This role bridges a gap that currently exists between communities and agencies, particularly in the area of cultural heritage, so further development of this type of service which provides awareness and clarity

as well as acts as a buffer would be a valuable investment. The National Monument Service struggles with very limited resources, so a visible presence on the ground, similar in nature to National Parks and Wildlife rangers, is not a possibility at the moment. If this were to change, the current difficulties that are experienced around the conservation of monuments could be improved. The National Monuments legislation needs to be strengthened with a clear policy around the conservation of monuments and landscape. The Office of Public Works resolve conflicts on a site-by-site basis and experience indicates that round-table discussions can help resolve issues at sites, as at Poul nabrone.

Overall, the feeling at community level is that more joined-up thinking at Government department and County Council level, together with a type of 'one-stop-shop' as a point of contact for community groups to help them work through difficult processes involving state agencies and to build knowledge capacity would be extremely useful. An experienced, skilled person capable of juggling the complexities of the relevant policies and the organisational structures and procedures of agencies could facilitate community groups, improve communication and develop a feeling of involvement and inclusion.

Once again, the simplicity of the Burren Programme is seen as its success and its ability to act as the buffer between the farmer and state agencies. There is also recognition of the need to respect communities as the caretakers of the land, carrying out this role long before any agencies were in control. A degree of flexibility and a better interface with the public would help establish better working relationships.

4.8 Success of the LIFE programme in the area of policy objectives

The GeoparkLIFE programme has played a significant role in supporting businesses through training, promotion of local produce and activities. Important linkages have been made locally because of this. If the future of the Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN) is self-sufficiency and self-management, this would be seen by some as an important measurement of success and a sustainable model which could be transferrable.

However, BEN is just one of a series of partners working to sustain the destination, and the benefits of BEN go beyond the businesses. Each partner plays a part in working towards a sustainable destination, with sustainable business being just one indicator. While sustainability in the trade, and the training provided, are recognized by the state actors, the market actors see the need for all agencies to play their role in integrating tourism and conservation.

A key success of the GeoparkLIFE programme has been the collaboration of partners and the holistic approach to the management of a Geopark and a destination. The GeoparkLIFE model has had the benefit of working at multiple levels, with each partner having an opportunity to see where they fit in to the bigger picture. This is developing a sense of collective responsibility for the area. A successful outcome would be the continuation of this partnership model beyond the LIFE programme.

The programme has collected a lot of valuable data about the demonstration sites which are of importance to partners such as National Monuments Service, the Office of Public Works, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Fáilte Ireland and are key to informing visitor management into the future. The figures on visitor numbers and effects/impacts will have wider long-term implications in terms of the preservation of the fabric of the sites. Local conservation groups would see success as 'Leaving No Trace', removing the negative trace of visitors altogether. The programme has achieved success in raising awareness of the need to achieve sustainable tourism, including raising awareness among the tourism community and also the local community and it has highlighted that everyone has a role in that.

It was recognised that as Clare County Council (working with Galway County Council) works towards World Heritage status for the Burren, it is important to reflect that the GeoparkLIFE programme has developed models for successful community-level partnerships with various agencies. A revision of the Burren Community Charter might be useful at this point to examine the status of the proposed actions. In the interviews the issue was raised as to whether the actions of the charter could be aligned with future developments, and help sustain the afterlife of the GeoparkLIFE programme? These actions might also be useful in satisfying some of the requirements for the process of the nomination of the Burren for inscription on the World Heritage List.

From a community perspective, a successful outcome would see the appointment of community group liaison officer person, perhaps based within the local authority. This would build on the hidden strengths and foundations of the GeoparkLIFE programme, which are the connections that have been made and the relationships that have built up over the five years that it ran.

“There is an element of learning involved for community groups and the problem is they have lives other than their community involvement so if processes involve such a steep learning curve for them and the need to essentially repeat the process due to lack of flexibility on the part of the agencies before anything can be achieved, then where should the change take place?”

Citizen Actor – GeoparkLIFE Partner

5. Part 3: Assessing policy and moving to a more coherent framework

5.1 Introduction

Part 1 of the report provided an overview of the range of legislation and policies that are relevant to conservation management and sustainable tourism within the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. In relation to heritage there are at least 40 distinct and relevant legislative instruments at international, specifically European Union and Council of Europe, national, regional and local level. Part 2 explored how this policy framework influences work on the ground as the review team engaged with partners on the GeoparkLIFE programme to understand their perspective on the implementation of policy.

It is clear from Part 2 that in the context of the implementation of policy on the ground the Clare County Development Plan can be considered to provide a key framework. As noted above three of the goals of the *Clare County Council Development Plan 2017-2023* are that it will result in:

A County Clare which protects and enhances the county's unique and natural heritage and biodiversity and recognizes the potential for sustainable green infrastructure development, while promoting and developing its cultural, educational and eco-tourism potential in a sustainable manner.

A County Clare that affords protection and conservation to buildings, areas, structures, sites and features of special architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest and recognises them as a social, cultural and economic asset to the county.

A County Clare in which tourism continues to play a major role in the future development of the county, adapting to the challenges of competing markets by maximizing the development of a high quality, diverse tourism product.

Directly relevant to the issue of policy the stated aim of the core strategy of the *County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023* is to demonstrate **how the plan is consistent with national and regional planning strategies, guidelines and policies** including national and regional population targets. The strategy of the plan is informed by and in compliance with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA). The requirements of the *Water Framework Directive* and the *Floods Directive* have been incorporated into the plan. This is the basis for the statement in the County Development Plan (2017, 36) that there is 'full integration of environmental issues throughout the plan-making process'.

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, and the GeoparkLIFE programme, are run under the auspices of Clare County Council. The integration of the Geopark into the **County Clare Development Plan 2017-2023** further emphasizes the importance of the Development Plan as a key integrating policy instrument. In Chapter 14 (14.3.19.3) of the development plan it is stated that:

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark is a designated UNESCO Global Geopark and, as such, forms part of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network. It also forms part of the European Geoparks Network. A Geopark is a unified area with geological heritage of international significance which is used to promote awareness of key issues facing society in the context of the dynamic planet we all live on. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark supports greater interpretation of the geological landscape, climate change awareness and the achievement of sustainable tourism and land use. It works towards scientifically-sound and sustainable visitor management and monitoring practices at key natural sites and cultural monuments in the Burren. The Burren Ecotourism Network comprises businesses that adhere to the Geopark Code of Practice. Heritage trails are also being developed in collaboration with local communities and landowners in the area.

Specifically there is a Development Plan Objective (CDP 14.22) in relation to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. This states that:

- It is an objective of Clare County Council
 - a) To continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and to secure the retention of the 'Geopark' status into the future.
 - b) To seek, on an on-going basis, new funding mechanisms for the work of the Geopark, e.g. from national and EU sources.

The commitment as an objective of the County Clare Development to support the work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark and to secure the retention of the Geopark status into the future is an explicit policy commitment to the **Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks** (2015) which provide the criteria for the evaluation of applications for this designation and its retention.

In the context of this policy review it is relevant to look specifically at three of the eight criteria in the **Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks**. These specify that:

- (i) UNESCO Global Geoparks must be a single, unified geographical area where sites and landscapes of international significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education, research and sustainable development. A UNESCO Global Geopark must have a clearly defined border, be of adequate size to fulfill its functions and contain geological heritage of international significance as independently verified by scientific professionals.
- (iii) UNESCO Global Geoparks should be areas with a management body having legal existence recognised under national legislation. The management bodies should be

appropriately equipped to address the area of the UNESCO Global Geopark in its entirety.

- (v) UNESCO Global Geoparks should actively involve local communities and indigenous people as key stakeholders in the Geopark. In partnership with local communities a co-management plan needs to be drafted and implemented that provides for the social and economic needs of local populations, protects the landscape in which they live and conserves their cultural identity. It is recommended that all relevant local actors and authorities should be represented in the management of a UNESCO Global Geopark. Local and indigenous knowledge, practice and management systems should be included, alongside science, in the planning and management of the area.

Taking criterion (iii) firstly it is clear that Clare County Council constitutes the management body having legal existence recognised under national legislation and is equipped to address the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark in its entirety.

It is in the context of criterion (v), the development of best practice governance and the active management process of the Geopark that the GeoparkLIFE programme reviewed sustainable tourism and conservation management policies with the specific objective of the social and economic needs of local populations, protection of the landscape in which they live and conservation of their cultural identity.

The Steering Committee of the GeoparkLIFE programme is composed of all the relevant actors and authorities that should be represented in the management of a UNESCO Global Geopark. One of the key strengths of the GeoparkLIFE programme was this wide range and diversity of partners and a partnership approach to decision-making based on the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) model of collective decision-making. The partners in the programme encompass all the key actors and stakeholders on the ground: national agencies, both in tourism and conservation management, the local authority, local communities, businesses, the farming community and voluntary organisations dedicated to the conservation of the Burren landscape.

The detailed foci of the GeoparkLIFE programme were on working with the Burren Ecotourism Network to balance sustainable tourism with conservation, a series of demonstration sites and monuments to develop best practice models of management and presentation and working with local communities on a range of projects relevant to the aims of the programme. These work areas have illustrated the impact of the array and diversity of relevant legislation and policy in the areas of heritage protection, environmental conservation and tourism on decision making and outcomes. They have also brought to light areas of potential conflict between policies and how these are played out on the ground. This can have a negative impact on the overall goal of reconciling conservation management, landscape protection, the economic and social needs of communities and sustainable tourism.

A key element of the policy review was to actively engage with the actors on the Geopark Steering

Committee and other stakeholders to explore and understand the linkages between policy, decision-making and outcomes on the ground. This was considered as an essential starting point for consideration of more sustainable policy options.

That engagement was the focus of Part 2 of the review. The methodology and results are presented in detail above. However, it is worth emphasizing here that the purpose was to understand how policies, both explicit or formal (for example those driven by legislative statements, regulations and laws) and implicit or informal (practice and perception on the ground) create 'the rules of the game.' Policies can be deeply ingrained and/or institutionally supported and are difficult to change unless we understand how they influence actors on the ground and motivate the decision-making process. Hence this engagement has been very helpful in understanding the organizational and individual contexts in which policies, both explicit and implicit, underpin practice on the ground.

The approach in Part 3 of the review is to build on the perspectives of the partners and other stakeholders that emerged from Part 2 to and to focus on policy needs. These are indicated using case studies from the GeoparkLIFE programme and comparison with the management approach with areas or properties that share similarities with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. On the basis of this analysis a number of policy choices are discussed. Finally a series of recommendations are made.

5.2 Policy Need

5.2.1 Policy Gaps and Coherence

Policy gaps could be said to occur where it can be recognised that relevant policies are not being implemented, if a policy type is under-represented, and if policies are not focused on the relevant drivers or pressure points. These issues are all relevant to understanding gaps in government, regional and local policy. The challenge is to develop a more coherent approach to the implementation of policy based on the analysis and identification of policy gaps.

A relevant case study which demonstrates the value of this approach is the Burren Programme and its predecessor, the Burren Farming for Conservation Project (BFCP). Research conducted by Teagasc, University College Dublin and the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the 1990s highlighted a policy need to identify the important role that traditional farming practices, specifically winterage, plays in supporting the rich biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Burren. From 2005-10 the Burren LIFE programme developed the first major farming for conservation project in Ireland which placed farmers at the centre of the conservation agenda. It provided a pilot study for the development of a specific, targeted agri-environmental scheme since 2011 that is funded through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine supported by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and managed by the Burren

Programme which works with 200 farmers applying the lessons of the policy gap analysis going back to the 1990s to support and incentivise farmers to maintain and enhance the habitats of the Burren (Dunford 2001; 2016).

To address how the partnership governance model adopted by the GeoparkLIFE programme identified and addressed policy gaps it seems appropriate to discuss three case studies that illustrate the broad range both of the programme and of relevant policy issues.

5.2.2 Case studies: Context within the GeoparkLIFE programme

One of the major actions of the programme related to tourism enterprises and aimed to strengthen the capability of enterprises in the use of natural resources, resource efficiency, use of renewable energy, energy efficiency, waste reduction and the reduction of the carbon footprint. In the context of the overall focus of the review on sustainable tourism and conservation management **transport policy** was examined as a case study. This is an issue that has been recognised by the Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN) as having major implications for tourism enterprises and is directly relevant to the focus of the review.

A key objective of the programme was to develop transferable toolkits for the monitoring and visitor management of sites and monuments through the development of a suite of integrated actions. Perhaps not surprisingly given the complexities of site management and presentation there are policy implications of relevant actions. This is the aspect of the GeoparkLIFE programme that dealt most directly with conservation management and the policy context of one of the demonstration sites, **Slieve Carran (St MacDuagh's hermitage)**, has been chosen as a case study.

It was an aim of the programme to develop the skills base of all the stakeholders in the understanding, management and conservation of natural and cultural heritage. In strengthening community support and capacity the approach was to work with groups and activities on the ground in a series of case studies. These were focused on needs identified by communities and also sought to inform policies and influence actual outcomes on the ground. **An Cabhail Mór, Killinaboy** is considered in detail here as a case study illustrating the challenges in achieving these aims.

5.2.2.a Transport Policy

What are the issues?

The overall conclusion of a 2014 study by a Burren Ecotourism Network working group was that:

As bus numbers (specifically day tours) are on a consistent upward trend and as capacity at a number of locations is close to being breached, a do-nothing scenario is no longer justified.

The conundrum and challenge is to define what is a sustainable transport policy. On the one hand there is the principle as articulated for example by Fáilte Ireland in its submission to the draft stage of the *Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023* that while recognizing that many visitors travel throughout the county by car, public and coach transport should be at the core of a tourism-specific policy and that this accords with the move towards more sustainable forms of travel.

On the other hand the reality is that the Burren has a finite capacity for tourism and that the current level of coach visitors is becoming problematic. As one indicator of this the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience reaches capacity at certain times during the peak visitor season. Over 1 million people visit the Cliffs of Moher per year. As indicated in the study carried out by the GeoparkLIFE programme in 2014 over 52% were fully independent travellers (FITs) and almost 48% travelled by coach, hence bus passengers, who predominantly come on a day tour from Dublin or Galway, comprise almost half of all visitors to COMVE. From 2011-14 bus passenger numbers increased by 53% at COMVE. Over 86% of coach traffic in the Burren goes to the Cliffs. Analysis and field observation indicates that the coaches follow a route which includes a lunch stop in Doolin and focuses on visits to 'free' sites such as Alladie on the R477 on the coast north of Doolin and Poul nabrone and An Rath on the R480.

Analysis of the 2014 study and other statistics by a BEN working group indicates that the average spend by a day coach visitor in the Geopark is €12 (compared with the average overall spend of overseas visitors who spend a night in Clare of €228). Hence there is a weak economic impact, with the majority of bus visitor spend taking place outside the region. By contrast there is a strong and increasingly negative impact on the environment and the quality of the visitor experience. Safety, access and capacity issues need to be addressed at sites on day coach tour routes, such as Alladie, COMVE, An Rath and Poul nabrone. As one example, the latter iconic archaeological site receives over 100,000 visitors per year but there are no toilet or other facilities at the site. There are growing traffic management issues at Doolin, Ballyvaughan and the R447 (Coast Road), R476 and R480 loop which are impacting on the quality of life of local communities. In the context of a goal of sustainable tourism and an objective of providing visitors with an exceptional quality of experience the heavy concentration of visitors brings potential for reputational damage.

If present trends continue and there is the same balance of FIT and day coach visitors, even a modest increase will breach capacity at several locations in the Geopark. Continuation of the current trend

would lead to peak attendances of over 200 buses daily at the COMVE, over 150,000 visitors to Poul nabrone and over 300,000 at Alladie, which is on private land with no staffing, signage or facilities. There were over 1.5 million visitors to the Cliffs of Moher in 2017.

How are the issues being addressed?

The immediate policy context for this issue is that the National Transport Authority provides route licenses for Public Day tours. Those licences are conditional on stop permissions being granted by the Clare County Council.

GeoparkLIFE Steering Group: Not surprisingly this issue and its impact on sustainable tourism and conservation management has been a persistent concern of the GeoparkLIFE Steering Group. Arising from the 2014 coach tourism study a Sustainable Tourism group was formed in 2016, to conduct further research, push for action and to support this using the European Tourism Indicator model of decision making by agreeing indicators and targets for sustainable transport. On the Sustainable Transport Group were representatives of BEN, Clare County Council, COMVE, Fáilte Ireland and the Geopark.

A meeting was held in August 2016 with the Roads Department of Clare County Council as the competent licensing (stop permissions) authority. The meeting focused on the need for a long term policy and planning around coach tourism. The view of Clare County Council was that this required a robust assessment of the current situation which could be carried out in the context of the Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) for the Burren being developed by Fáilte Ireland. If the VEDP provides clear recommendations on transport policy, this will help Clare County Council develop policy and procedures that will support the plan.

The GeoparkLIFE programme made a submission to the draft stage of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 requesting that all tourism policy relating to the Burren be underpinned by sustainable criteria.

Clare County Council: Specific policy initiatives undertaken by Clare County Council include the commission of a management plan for Doolin Pier and consultation on the proposal to reduce the speed limit from 100km to 60km on the N67 for health and safety reasons.

National Parks and Wildlife Service: With funding support from the GeoparkLIFE programme NPWS conducted work on visitor and traffic management for the National Park. In this regard it should be noted that it is an objective of the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** (CDP 14.20) to advocate the preparation by NPWS of a Conservation Management plan for the Burren National Park, incorporating traffic management and parking solutions. There is now a management plan at draft stage (McGrath et al. 2017).

Burren Ecotourism Network: BEN has established a sub-committee to discuss and make recommendations on Sustainable Tourism Management within North Clare. This recognizes the good match between fully independent travellers (FITs) and the small scale, geographically distributed nature of tourism attractions and businesses that make up the sector and the strong economic impact of FITs. Analysing the poor economic benefit of coach visitors to the region outlined above and their significant impact on the environment, traffic congestion and quality of life and experience, the sub-committee recommended that conditions and incentives should be created that encourages a change in the ratio of FIT : coach tourism. The primary mechanism they suggest is a combination of the use of stop permissions and pricing at COMVE to encourage more economic benefits from coach tourism (for example favouring coaches which stay overnight in Clare) and to reduce the environmental impact of coach traffic (for example promoting an agreed single direction of movement of coaches within the region). They suggest that coach tourism should be capped at its current level and that a full review should be carried out with strategies developed to mitigate the impact of coach traffic.

Comment on policy gaps:

It is clear that there is a major problem in relation to coach tourism, particularly day tours in the Geopark and the wider region. It is worth repeating the conclusion of the BEN **Study of Bus/Coach Tourism** (2014) that a do nothing scenario is no longer justified. Indeed four years on the indications are that the number of coach visitors actually continued to increase.

As a national policy background to this there has been a clear change in focus from increasing visitor numbers to increasing visitor revenue in **People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025** (2015). The ministerial statement at the beginning of this policy explicitly states that:

'The focus of tourism policy must be therefore to maximize the export contribution of tourism, while protecting the invaluable assets that are our natural, built and cultural heritage. This involves a change in focus from overseas visitor numbers to overseas visitor revenue.'

However, as noted elsewhere it has to be acknowledged that there is still inconsistency in this regard at both national and regional/local levels. For example **Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development** (2017) has an objective of a 12% growth in visitor numbers by 2019. The **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** discusses the potential to attract greater numbers of visitors (p.145) on the one hand and the objective of a integrated and co-ordinated tourism product underpinned by supporting sustainable travel in the tourism sector (CDP9.3) on the other.

The BCOM GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee and the Burren Ecotourism Network have shown that the management and development of the Burren as a sustainable destination requires a change in the current approach to coach tourism, specifically day coach tours, and that this change is also required to align with national tourism policy.

As set out in *People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025* (2015) Section 4 the role of local authorities is to support communities in tourism development and to act as a link between State tourism agencies and communities, having due regard for national tourism strategy.

Transport policy should be considered in the context of an overall strategy for tourism in County Clare. The current policy instrument, the *Integrated Tourism Strategy for County Clare 2011-2014* (prepared by the Clare County Development Board) is out of date and was prepared at a time of economic recession when the key threat was reduced visitor numbers. It is an objective (CDP9.1) of the County Development Plan to support the preparation, adoption and implementation of a strategic regional plan for tourism, covering County Clare and the wider Shannon region. It is an action of the *Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development* (2017, 42) to provide practical support to local authorities to develop comprehensive tourism strategies.

A key tool in managing coach tourism could be National Transport Authority route license conditions and the stop permissions granted by Clare County Council.

5.2.2.b Slieve Carran (St Mac Duagh's Hermitage)

What are the issues?

Slieve Carran is one of the seven demonstration sites where transferable approaches and toolkits for the monitoring and visitor management of archaeological sites and monuments were developed by the GeoparkLIFE Programme. While the site is well-known that there were actually no detailed plans or descriptions of the archaeological features or assessment of their condition prior to the work of the programme. The location of the site within the Burren National Park (McGrath et al. 2017) might have been expected to facilitate its protection, management and presentation, but the programme's work has raised interesting issues. A conservation/management plan is required for St Mac Duagh's hermitage and its environs. Clarification of the issue of ownership is required before any programme of conservation or other significant intervention can be conducted.

As described by Jones (2004) and Kirby (2016) the site is more generally known as St (Colmán) Mac Duagh's Hermitage, Keelhill. The site is related to the early medieval monastic site about 10km to the east at Kilmacduagh on the lowlands near Gort. There is a possible unmarked pilgrim's path, St Colmán's path, linking the two sites (Kirby 2016). An element of the Irish early medieval monastic tradition was the practice of monks retreating from the world to a hermitage. The site components at the base of the cliffs on east side of Slievecarran are collectively known as the hermitage of St Mac Duagh. Under Section 5 of the *National Monument (Amendment) Act 1987* they are listed collectively as a Monastic Site on the Register of Historic Monuments under reference number 443. Under Section 12 of the *National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994* they have been listed individually on the Record of

Monuments and Places (RMP) as components 1-10 of the overall site; CL006-023.

The elements of the site consist of a cave in the cliffs and below it is a small medieval stone church or oratory, graveyard, two *leachtanna* or outdoor altars/memorial cairns, a *bulllaun* (mortar) stone and a holy well. The site may be set within a stone enclosure. About 400m to the south-east is a semi-circular stone enclosure and two more *leachtanna*. There are also two *fulachta fiadh* in the vicinity. There is rich tradition associated with the site and St Mac Duagh, including the name of the track leading to the hermitage. This is known as *Bothar na méisel* or 'way of the dishes' (referring to a meal that killed the servant of St Mac Duagh, also referenced in the name of the enclosure to the south-east as the Grave of the Saint's Servant).

The features of the site, its remote location and the traditions associated with it all suggest the site was an early hermitage site, possibly dating to the seventh century.

The site is within the area of the Burren National Park, which is located in the east of the Burren and about 2000 hectares in size. The Park is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG). The site is located within the Eagle's Rock/Slievecarran/Keelhilla Nature Reserve Land Block and is the main attraction on a designated 2.5km looped walking trail within the Nature Reserve. The starting point of the walk is a parking area off the Carran to Kinvarra road. This road has been repaved making access from both directions easier. The hermitage is about 1km from the road and reached by a track on open limestone pavement which also passes through areas of woodland (oak, ash and hazel). NPWS have placed stone over portions of this track where it is prone to flooding on the basis of monitoring of visitor movement on the trail (see below).

There is unsupervised free public access to the site. There are anecdotal reports of an increase in visitors in recent years. One material impact of this is the deposition of 'votive' offerings, particularly ribbons, at the site. In 2010 all such offerings were removed from the site. Kirby's (2016) survey in December 2015 revealed a total of all 400 offerings present at the site. The issue here is whether these offerings are a genuine expression of spirituality or casual touristic deposition. If the latter it can certainly be argued that they detract from the authenticity of the site and the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark's 'Leave No Trace' policy and code of conduct. Kirby also recorded other potential visitor impact on the site, notably the partial collapse of the stone structure around the well.

The proposal by the GeoparkLIFE programme working group to look at the hermitage as a demonstration site and to engage in active management of the site raised the issue of ownership. It had been assumed that as this is an archaeological site with the publicly owned National Park that it is owned by DCHG, but as work progressed it became clear that ownership was a complex issue. The site is managed by NPWS as part of the overall management regime of the Burren National Park.

How are the issues being addressed?

GeoparkLIFE working group: A seminar was organized in October 2014 on the theme of Pilgrimage in the Burren. A field trip was undertaken to St Mac Duagh's hermitage to view and discuss the issues pertaining to the conservation of this important site.

The lack of archaeological and architectural baseline data was addressed by baseline geology, ecology, archaeology and architectural reports which were completed in December 2014. An archaeological assessment of the church/oratory site was also completed in August 2015.

This assessment revealed that only the west gable and part of the north wall are upstanding while the line of the rest of the foundations of the church can be traced on the ground. The church is in a vulnerable condition and continuing to deteriorate. In addition to the comment made above about the walling around the well this has potential implications for the health and safety of visitors and conservation work is required to ensure the preservation of structures.

To measure and assess the impact of visitor numbers and footfall on walking trails and the site from 2014 footfall counters were installed along the designated looped walking trail at Keelhilla Nature Reserve. These are used to obtain baseline data and to monitor visitor numbers on a daily, monthly and annual basis. The numbers recorded between September 2015 and September 2016 indicated that 15,000 people used the trail between the entrance to the Nature Reserve at the carpark on the Carran/Kinvara road and St Mac Duagh's hermitage. In addition NPWS have been monitoring the walking path since 2014 (McCarthy et al. 2017). Testing of a trail monitoring app was carried out in August 2016.

The issue of deposition of votive offerings at St Mac Duagh's hermitage was comprehensively addressed in a report commissioned by the GeoparkLIFE programme (Kirby 2016). The key question to be determined was whether these were genuine votive offerings in the context of traditional or new spiritual tourism or the result of casual deposition by tourists. The report demonstrated that there was very little evidence of a historical tradition of the deposition of offerings on trees close to the well. The site was surveyed in December 2015, in contrast to the traditional mode of deposition at a particular tree (normally a thorn tree) and the holy well itself, there were 22 locations at which offerings were deposited. The deposits were dominated by ribbons, over 80% of the total, while there were no rags, which are the offerings traditionally left at holy wells and associated with cures and folk medicine. In the context of this detailed assessment NPWS did a follow up baseline survey of the offerings in March 2016 and all were removed in April 2016. Monitoring of votive deposition took place during the tourist season (May-October) in 2016.

Comment on policy gaps

The approach taken to addressing issues demonstrates best practice conservation principles as expressed in the ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013) of using description, assessment, detailed baseline survey and identification of threats and vulnerabilities before any active intervention on the site.

It is clear in this context that a programme of conservation is required on the site. An unexpected problem that arose was the status of the ownership of the site. This is the subject of ongoing discussion between NPWS and NMS. It should be noted that both bodies are in the same Government Department (DCHG). The problem would appear to be at least in part due to inconsistencies in the **National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014**. It should be noted that a Consolidated National Monuments Bill is now at an advanced stage of drafting (2018) but requires Government approval before enactment.

The monastic site registered as number 443 on the Register of Historic Monuments and the individual sites listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (CL006-02301-010) are not national monuments as defined in the National Monuments Act. Currently therefore they do not come under the remit of the Service Level Agreement between National Monuments Service, DCHG and the Office of Public Works for conservation work on National Monuments in State Care. It should be noted that the OPW has an informal relationship with NPWS and consults with them regularly.

Discussion about the status of St Mac Duagh's hermitage has raised the wider issue of the ownership, protection and management of archaeological monuments within the area of the Burren National Park. A working strategy agreed between NPWS and NMS for the hermitage would provide a good basis for the integration of the management of archaeological monuments into the overall management of the National Park. It should be noted that this issue does not appear to be addressed in the Draft Management Plan (McGrath et al. 2017).

It should also be noted that there is no general legislation on National Parks in Ireland and that it is not a statutory term. The State Property Act 1954 is used to administer most of the National Parks.

The report on votive offerings (Kirby 2016) indicates that the 29th of October, the official day of diocesan commemoration of the feast of St Mac Duagh, is still being celebrated locally and is likely to be a day on which there is heightened visitor impact on the site. It would be useful to identify other potential peaks in visitation and to organize supervision of the site on those days. It is a recommendation in the Draft Management Plan to encourage more visits to Keelhill (McGrath et al. 2017, 44).

5.2.2.c An Cabhail Mhór

What are the issues

The initial proposal came from an active local community group, the Killinaboy History and Heritage Group (KHHG), as part of the active engagement with communities as an element of the GeoparkLIFE programme. The Group's activities in the area have included a historical account and transcriptions of the gravestones in the historic graveyards of Killinaboy and Coad. As an extension of their work the group identified the need for a training programme which would involve the repair and repointing of a seventeenth century building, An Cabhail Mhór and skills which could be applied to historic masonry structures elsewhere in the Burren.

This would involve health and safety training, lime preparation and training in the use of lime. Progressing this proposal required compliance with relevant legislation and policy and brought to the fore a range of issues around active community participation in heritage conservation. Most of the structure including walls, gates, corners turrets and house gable remains intact though in poor condition. There is a risk that unless cleared of vegetation and repaired it could result in significant collapse.

As described by UaCróinín and Breen (2014) An Cabhail Mhór is the name given to a fortified dwelling situated by the river Fergus. The building is associated with the Blood family who came to Ireland in 1595 at the behest of O'Brien of Inchiquin to provide security. Neptune Blood who was born in 1595 may have been responsible for the construction of An Cabhail Mhór and he certainly lived there. Neptune Blood was ordained a priest and installed as vicar of Kilfenora and Dean of Killinaboy and Rath in 1633. In the Catholic Rebellion of 1641 the house appears to have been pulled down by the rebels and appears not to have been inhabited again.

Architecturally the building fits with an earlier seventeenth century date and its fortification is understandable in the context of the time. It is an almost complete rectangular bawn (walled courtyard of a castle) built of rubble limestone. The main entrance arched gateway is in the centre of the north wall and there is a second entrance (river gate) in the south wall. The walls are complete to an height of about 3m with rectangular turrets on the north west and south east corners. The location of the residential structure is indicated by a gable wall with a chimney rising to a height of 7m at the north east corner and the rubble in the south east. The bawn is covered with ivy which is obscuring details and more importantly causing instability in the walls due to its weight. The site appears to have been approached by a roadway to the north with its own access to the river to the south.

The site is privately owned. Under Section 12 of the **National Monuments (Amendment) Act** the site is listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (CL017-056) and as Protected Structure 255 in the County Clare Development Plan. As such works to repair the walls must be agreed in writing with the National Monuments Service, DCHG and permitted under a Section 57 Declaration from Clare County Council. An official notification to carry out the works must also be submitted to the National Monuments Service.

How are the issues being addressed?

GeoparkLIFE Working Group: A meeting was held on site in January 2015 to discuss the proposal for a building lime training course on the repair and conservation of historic ruins at An Cabhail Mhór.

An Architectural Heritage Report, Archaeological Assessment, photographic record and method statement for a training course in building conservation for the north wall of the monument were prepared (UaCróinín and KHHG 2014 and 2015).

A Conservation Inspection and Risk Assessment was carried out through the GeoparkLIFE programme (Architectural Conservation Professionals) in 2015. This concluded that the site was dangerous as it stands and should be fenced off to prevent access. The report recommended that the removal of ivy and immediate repairs on the masonry should be carried out under the supervision of an appropriately qualified conservation professional and that removal/sorting of stone should be supervised by a licensed archaeologist.

Written notification of the proposal to repair the north wall was submitted by the KHHG to the National Monuments Service, of the then Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht, Regional Rural Affairs (May 2015). A section 57 Declaration was submitted to Clare County Council (May 2015). The KKHG responded to NMS queries on the notification documentation and permission was granted in principle by NMS subject to conditions (including a wildlife/ecological report which was commissioned by GeoparkLIFE in May 2015) in July 2015. Landowner agreement was put in place by KHHG, to be finalized on commencement of the work.

A tender document was circulated by GeoparkLIFE for a conservation engineer's report (in line with the NMS permission conditions). The tender was not proceeded with as it became clear that GeoparkLIFE could not commission this work on behalf of Clare County Council for a community group. In addition under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005) a Project Supervisor for the Design Process (PSDP) must be appointed to address and co-ordinate safety and health matters. Against this background the KHHG have not been in a position to pursue the project further.

The KHHG made an application to the Heritage Council for a conservation grant in April 2015. This was unsuccessful on the basis that the project was already receiving grants from the GeoparkLIFE programme. In January 2016 the KHHG and Burren Conservation Volunteers (BCV), with the support of GeoparkLIFE made an application to the Heritage Council for An Cabhail Mhór to be one of the monuments included in a pilot phase of the Adopt a Monument scheme. The project was not chosen.

Comment on policy gaps

At each stage in the process KHHG were consulted and numerous meetings, organised by the GeoparkLIFE programme, were held to discuss the various actions and the reason for each one. Frustrations were perhaps inevitable as KHHG considered progress to be slow and the processes to be unnecessarily cumbersome. GeoparkLIFE facilitated and supported as much as possible and guided the community group through the relevant processes.

Ironically having successfully negotiated the requirements of the National Monuments Acts, what has stymied progress is the issue of PSDP (Project Supervisor for the Design Process) and health and safety policy as directed by the ***Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005)***. The KHHG were faced with the dilemma of fulfilling the criteria required for this process. It became apparent that as a community group the KHHG did not have the resources to act as a corporate body, unfortunately putting the proposed training scheme beyond their reach at this time.

Not surprisingly the KHHG are somewhat disillusioned with the process and what it regards as a tangled, unnecessarily complex and restrictive regulatory framework, even if GeoparkLIFE has endeavoured to provide clear and concise guidance at all times. The GeoparkLIFE programme also has to be conscious to balance its commitment to capacity building through community-based projects with the objectives of best practice conservation and management of archaeological sites and monuments.

The outcomes from the case study at An Cabhail Mhór have been informative with regards to the range of relevant policies that have to be considered in this type of project where an active conservation intervention on a standing structure is proposed.

It also demonstrates the challenges that are posed at national level in Ireland as we move towards a more community-focused and-led approach to conservation of cultural heritage, for example as promoted at international level by the Faro Convention and at national level by ***Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development*** (2017).

The issues for community groups are also relevant in terms of new heritage guidelines being prepared by the National Monuments Service DCHG which are designed to aid communities and Local Action Groups (LAGs) undertaking heritage projects under LEADER.

GeoparkLIFE has acted in a mentoring role for KHHG through this process. But the process has shown that there is also a need for a mentoring role as well as a regulatory one ***within*** the relevant agencies/ partners if there is to be a genuine drive towards empowering communities to actively engage in conservation management and more broadly to sustain rural communities as aspired to in the national ***Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development*** (2017).

5.2.3 Concluding comment: What do the case studies tell us?

It is clear that the potential of the *Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023* as an integrating policy instrument is not being fully realized and that there is significant potential here. Despite the stated aim of the core strategy of the plan being to align national policies with development and community needs at local level, in terms of the management process on the ground, and work to integrate tourism and conservation, this alignment is clearly not always in place.

To take one example, national tourism strategy now specifically recognizes the need to focus on visitor revenue, economic impact and sustainability, but there is still a focus in the *Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023* on sustainable tourism or eco-tourism as just a subset of the wider tourism product. Hence the objective (CDP9.17) to support sustainable and responsible tourism initiatives across the county. There are also a number of places in the plan where the focus is on increasing visitor numbers, when it is clear that in the area of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark the current number of day coach visitors is creating capacity problems at key sites, is having a knock-on negative environmental impact while its weak positive economic impact is offset by traffic congestion and impact on the quality of life. The critical underlying policy gap here is action to address this issue. More broadly there is a need for a Tourism Strategy for County Clare. This is a stated objective in the County Development Plan (CDP9.1) and it is recommended that this should be implemented as an urgent action.

The value of the partnership model adopted by the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee is that it has facilitated the identification of policy gaps and how they can be addressed. One of the realities on the ground is that the structure of government agencies at national, regional and local level in general supports and encourages actors to work within agency-based frameworks, rather than collaboratively across agencies, even within the same Government Department, as is the case with the National Monuments Service and National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The value of promoting a more collaborative approach can be seen for example in the case of St Mac Duagh's hermitage demonstration site within the Burren National Park where the focus on this particular monument complex has raised issues and potential approaches that could be applied to all the archaeological monuments within the area of the National Park and more broadly raises the issue of the role of cultural heritage in National Parks.

A principle of the partnership model adopted by the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee is the participation of communities in conservation management and sustainable tourism. It is clear that in an international context this is seen as the best practice framework for the conservation of the historic environment (Hudson and James 2007). The case study of An Cabhail Mhór indicates a number of key lessons. Firstly it is important to remember that active participation of communities can take a number of different forms and that the proposed programme at An Cabhail Mhór of active conservation of a standing building could be seen as an ambitious form of community participation. This should be encouraged and developed but the process indicated that it requires significant investment of time, resources and mentoring to build capacity in local communities. It should be noted here that it was the implications of health and safety legislation and policy rather than the requirements of the *National*

Monuments Acts regulatory framework that has stymied progress.

In terms of policy coherence the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee partnership has proved to be a very successful device in moving the major stakeholders towards a single vision, even if this has also revealed policy gaps that have to be overcome to achieve that vision. A key question is how is this partnership approach is to be continued and sustained into the future but more critically given the policy issues that have been identified, how is it to be developed for the future? How can the management and governance of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark build on the lessons learnt from the GeoparkLIFE programme?

The role of the County Council is of course to plan for the future of the county and the Burren and the Geopark only form part of the Council's wider remit. Planning, development and management policy for the Burren has to be balanced within the Council's wider vision for the county. However, the international importance of the Burren has been formally recognised by the designation of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher as a UNESCO Global Geopark and it is an objective of the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** to continue to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing work of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and to retain its status as a UNESCO Global Geopark. Under the **Operational guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks** one of the key criteria (v) is the implementation of a management plan.

Bringing these observations together a key policy requirement is to identify a best practice model for the future management of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. This would also address the key issue of policy integration, implementation and continuity (Lysaght 2005; McGrath 2013, 191)

5.3 Best Policy Practice – identifying international models

5.3.1 Comparator Sites

One widely used approach to identifying best practice models is to look at comparator sites, in this case where integrated management processes and practice have been established and addressed. Ideally the comparator sites should be examples where specific points of comparison can be made with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. The criteria that identified for comparison are:

- Karst/limestone landscapes culturally shaped by human interaction with the environment.
- Sites where the local authority(ies) is the main driver of management.
- Sites recognised as being of global significance as indicated by designation as a UNESCO Global Geopark or as UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Sites within the remit of European Union and Council of Europe legislative and policy frameworks.

On this basis four sites were identified for comparison; Talayotic Minorca (Balaeric Islands), Spain, Idrija, Slovenia UNESCO Global Geopark, Dorset and East Devon (Jurassic Coast) World Heritage Site, UK and Southern Oland, Sweden World Heritage Site.

5.3.1.a TALAYOTIC MINORCA, BALAERIC ISLANDS, SPAIN

Description:

Thirty two sites have been chosen as representative of the material culture and monuments of the Talayotic culture of Minorca (2500-400 BC). Settlement of the island appears only to have begun around 2100 BC and the sites chart the evolution of prehistoric society. The earliest monuments are megalithic tombs. Caves and hypogea were also used for burial right through prehistory. Boat-shaped (naviform) houses were in use from 1600 BC and over time these are transformed into a distinctive tomb form (navetas). From 1100 BC the talayots appear, these are unique 'truncated cone' monumental constructions that were focal buildings in settlements. The post-talayotic period from 600 BC is marked by the construction of taula enclosures, focused on a monumental T-shaped megalith, composed of an upright with a lintel on top. The sites are seen as outstanding because of their monumentality and state of preservation. Many of the settlement sites show continuity of activity in different periods.

Talayotic Minorca is currently under consideration for inscription on the World Heritage List as a serial cultural site.

Management

The sites are spread across the island, with a marked concentration in the southern half of Minorca. The management of the sites is included in the Island Historical Management Plan. While some of the sites are in public ownership the majority are in private hands. There are partnership agreements with all the landowners of these sites. Interpretation is provided at the sites through information panels and in some cases leaflets provided at entry. The central hub of interpretation on the island will be the refurbished Museu de Menorca. Visitors to the sites come by car or coach, either on self-organised, educational or organized tours. The highest number of visitors to an individual site is around 35,000 per year. Currently the sites attract only a small proportion of the over one million 'sun' tourists. But the broader tourism policy of the Island Council emphasises a greater focus on cultural tourism through the development of cultural routes, specifically Talayotic Minorca.

There is strong local support for the concept of World Heritage inscription at political and community level. Community support is actively expressed through visitation but this raises interesting issues regarding management – for example a reluctance to control access. The state of conservation of

some of the components raises issues about the level and impact of unmonitored access. While there is a programme of conservation this is allied to a fragmented system of management and an active programme of research excavations whose impact on the sites and integration into interpretation needs to be developed.

Website: The first link is to the WH nomination site while the other two are tourism-based websites.

<http://www.menorcatalayotica.info/portal.aspx>

<http://www.menorca.es/Publicacions>

<http://visitmenorca.com/en/know/archeology/>

5.3.1.b IDRIJA GLOBAL GEOPARK, SLOVENIA

Description

The Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark lies in the western part of Slovenia and comprises the area of the municipality of Idrija. The town of Idrija has one of the largest mercury mines in the world. The area of the Geopark has an extremely diversified morphology, featuring deep and narrow ravines and gorges, as well as karstified plateaus, due to its position at the meeting point of the alpine and karst worlds. The Idrija Geopark unites the richness of geological and other natural and cultural heritage with traditional cuisine, domestic arts and crafts, services and tourist attractions which the area can offer to visitors. The project of establishing the Idrija Geopark was started in 2008 by the Idrija Mercury Mine and the Idrija Municipality on the basis of a mutual agreement. The Idrija Municipality established a consultative working body or committee, which prepared expert geological reports and other required materials.

Management

In 2010 Idrija was recognised as a Geopark by the Global Geopark Network. Under a local decree the Idrija Municipality established a public institution – the Idrija Heritage Centre (IHC) to run the Geopark. The programme of the Idrija Geopark encompasses protection of natural heritage and geological heritage, research, management and tourist related activities working in collaboration with a range of public and private partners.

IHC is the legal entity providing legal and financial framework for the Idrija Geopark, and as such it is the main developer and manager of the Idrija Geopark. For the purpose of managing and developing the Geopark, IHC has contractual relations with the two key institutions connected to the heritage of the

Idrija ore deposit and mining in the mercury mine; the Idrija Municipal Museum and the Idrija Mercury Mine.

The Idrija Geopark organisation is comprised of several bodies: the management body (the Council of the IHC), the executive body is the director of IHC and the expert and partner groups. The Geopark expert group is an advisory body to the IHC and the IHC Director. It is comprised of expert organizations and institutions in the fields of geology, nature and environment protection, and is a collaborative body among scientific research institutions.

The Geopark partner group is comprised of public and private partners/associates of the Idrija Geopark who have signed the Partnership Agreement and are creatively contributing to the Geopark's development through activities and partnership cooperation. The common activities of IHC and individual partners are described in the appropriate legal document (Partnership Agreement). The partner group is open and welcomes everyone who wants to join. At the moment it includes 33 partners:

Website: <http://www.geopark-idrija.si/en/>

5.3.1.c DORSET AND EAST DEVON COAST WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Description

The Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site has an outstanding combination of globally significant geological and geomorphological features. The property comprises eight sections along 155km of largely undeveloped coast. The property's geology displays approximately 185 million years of the Earth's history, including a number of internationally important fossil localities. The property also contains a range of outstanding examples of coastal geomorphological features, landforms and processes, and is renowned for its contribution to earth science investigations for over 300 years, helping to foster major contributions to many aspects of geology, palaeontology and geomorphology. This coast is considered by geologists and geomorphologists to be one of the most significant teaching and research sites in the world.

Management

The management of the site is undertaken by a formal partnership, established to oversee the protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage. The Partnership is led by a non-executive Steering Group and supported by a range of Working Groups and other sub-groups established to ensure effective delivery of purpose.

To support this governance structure, a small professional team, the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team, has been established. The Team's principal role is to support the implementation and delivery of the Management Plan, guided by the Steering Group. The Steering Group delegates responsibility to a small Management Group for the detail of implementation, overseeing the team and forward planning.

The Management Group comprises the Chair of the Steering Group, Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team leader and representatives from the core funding partners and other statutory agencies.

The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Team's role in implementation of the Management Plan is as advisor, supporter, coordinator, facilitator and deliverer. It plays a role in most but not all the initiatives undertaken under the Plan. The team is a small unit hosted by Dorset County Council comprising technical specialists in the areas of work covered by this Management Plan. Activities are delivered under the identity of the Partnership.

As the key body for the delivery of the Management Plan for the site, the Steering Group's priority is to ensure that sufficient resources are in place to enable the Team to achieve its core functions. Allocation of staff time and financial resources are planned by the Team, agreed annually and monitored by the Management Group.

The Jurassic Coast Trust is an independent charity established by the Steering Group to manage the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. The Jurassic Coast Trust receives some grant funding from Dorset and Devon County Councils, Natural England and the Environment Agency. The remainder of its financial support is generally from charitable giving, including from businesses, and from the sale of publications and other merchandise.

Website: www.jurassiccoast.com/team

5.3.1.d SOUTHERN ÖLAND, SWEDEN WORLD HERITAGE SITE

Description

The area inscribed on the World Heritage List comprises the southern third (municipality of Morbylanga) of the island of Öland (part of the county of Kalmar) in the Baltic Sea, covering over 50,000 ha and is dominated by limestone pavement. The agricultural landscape has organically evolved and its sustainability depends on continuing traditional land-use. This area is an outstanding example of human settlement where farmers, over its long cultural history, have adapted to the constraints of its geology and topography and have made the optimum use of diverse landscape types. Several thousand years of cultural tradition are reflected in the patterns of land-use, land division, place names, settlements and

biological diversity. The land is mainly owned by a large number of private individuals, which include over 400 agricultural enterprises.

Management

The area is protected under several Swedish statutes, specifically the Cultural Monuments Act and the Environmental Code. Under the Planning and Building Act management of the World Heritage Site is integrated into a Master Plan for the whole island. This does not have statutory force but is intended for guidance in policy and decision-making. This is followed up by a detailed, statutory development plan for Morbylanga. The responsibility for implementation lies with the municipality. Co-ordinating with the national agencies the county (Kalmar), municipality (Morbylanga) and farmers (Federation of Swedish Farmers) work within a joint management strategy for the cultural landscape. This is underwritten by a policy document in which the guidelines for co-operation and objectives for the property are stated.

Specific environmental support from the EU and the State exists to encourage more environment-friendly forms of production. There are several forms of environmental support partly funded by the EU. The EU LIFE fund has also contributed to restoration work. The majority of farmers have applied for one or other of the financial supports. Development has shown that financial compensation paid to farmers for managing the cultural landscape has produced a positive effect. Farmers are also offered visits from an advisor who draws up a management plan in consultation with the farmer.

In terms of conservation and management expertise the Kalmar County Administrative Board has experts in heritage management and nature conservancy. The Board is tasked with ensuring legal compliance and in contributing to the development of the regional economy. The Kalmar County Museum has experts on building conservation, archaeology and the history of the agrarian landscape.

Website: <https://www.öland.se>

5.3.2 Concluding comment: What do the comparator sites tell us?

While there are significant differences between the operational systems of management across the four sites they all demonstrate an integrated management approach, combining natural and cultural heritage, active programmes of conservation, education and promotion of sustainable tourism.

The four management regimes explicitly demonstrate consistency with the requirements of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2017) or the *Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks* (2015). All have been designated and reviewed periodically under these guidelines.

The relevant local authority/authorities plays a key role in the management of the four sites, despite significant national differences in legislation and the alignment of national and regional planning and development structures. The management of each of the sites is underwritten by a collaborative approach, involving relevant state and local authority agencies and communities. This is most explicitly and clearly structured by the site partnership agreement that oversees the protection, conservation, presentation and sustainability of the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site. It should be noted that in this case an independent charitable Trust has been established to take responsibility for the management of the World Heritage Site.

The success of the management approach is that it is an active process, with objectives and indicators of success set out formally in a plan, carried out in the form of an ongoing, annually reviewed programme of work with staff and resources guaranteed on a multi-year basis by key national and regional funding agencies.

In terms of governance in each case a small professional team support the implementation and delivery of a management plan. Their work is overseen by a steering or partnership group who develop the management plan and set policy. In some instances a management group oversees the professional team with delegated decision-making authority from a steering group, overseeing the professional team and reporting to the steering committee.

The management practices identified at the comparator sites and policy frameworks for best practice management such as the resource manual on *Managing Cultural World Heritage* (UNESCO 2013) provide the basis for building a suitable sustainable management system for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and more broadly the indicators that could be used as part of a toolkit for integrated management of conservation management and sustainable tourism.

5.4 Towards Policy Choice: The Burren/ Cliffs of Moher Geopark

The GeoparkLIFE programme has carried out an ambitious range of projects and initiatives. This work has been co-ordinated by a Steering Committee which has in effect provided a management structure. As noted above the partners recognise that the LIFE programme has proved to be a successful device in moving the major stakeholders towards a single vision in thinking about the management of the Burren. But with the programme's completion at the end of 2017 the question arises as to how the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark will continue to deliver and sustain the aims and objectives of the programme?

It is clear from the views of partners in the GeoparkLIFE programme expressed in Part 2 that there is a demonstrated need for a suitable management structure to continue. While the vision for integrated management is developing, it is still very much a work in progress. The review in Part 3 has indicated that there are a range of major policy issues to be addressed in following through on specific actions.

At the same time under the *Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks* the Burren and Cliffs of

Moher Geopark is required to have a management plan that provides for the social and economic needs of local populations, protects the landscape in which they live and conserves their cultural identity. The **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** provides a policy endorsement of this requirement by committing to support the retention and revalidation of UNESCO Global Geopark designation.

A logical alignment with the County Clare Development plan would be provided by the formal incorporation of the UNESCO Global Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark management plan into the next iteration of the County Development Plan and its addition as an appendix to the County Development Plan. This approach has been taken in County Meath where the **Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site Management Plan** has been formally incorporated into the **Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019**.

It is also a stated objective of the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023** (CDP 14.23) to collaborate with landowners, local communities and other relevant stakeholders to achieve World Heritage Site status for the sites on the Irish Tentative List in County Clare. One of these is the Burren. Clare and Galway County Councils have prepared a draft Technical Evaluation that will be used to assess the Outstanding Universal Value of the Burren and its potential to be designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A functioning management system to ensure the safeguarding of the nominated property is mandatory in the consideration of the nomination of a property for inscription on the World Heritage List.

Hence to sustain the work of the programme and the integration of tourism with conservation management putting in place an appropriate management system for the Geopark is the key policy choice that the partners in the GeoparkLIFE face.

Managing Cultural World Heritage (UNESCO 2013) provides the details of a widely used, globally recognised framework for defining heritage management systems. This is seen as consisting of three categories; **elements**, **processes** and **results**, each with three components:

Elements: Legal framework, institutional framework and resources

Processes: Planning, implementation and monitoring

Results: Outcomes, outputs and improvements in the management system.

Elements

In the case of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark the **legal framework** is provided by its recognition in the **Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023**. The plan is an agreed blueprint for the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of County Clare. The County Development

Plan aligns that blueprint with EU and national legislative and policy framework. The objective in the County Development Plan to support the Geopark and recognition of its role and impact provides the critical link between the legal framework and the framework of its designation as a UNESCO Global Geopark with the attached Operational Guidelines (2015). Clare County Council is also the **institution** which gives form to the organizational needs and decision-making of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. Alongside other funding streams; such as the GeoparkLIFE programme, Clare Council provides the **resources** which are used to make the Geopark operational. The resource allocation is primarily through supporting a small professional Geopark team.

Processes

The framework of elements facilitate the **planning, implementation** and **monitoring** of actions to deliver results which guarantee the conservation and management of sites and the Burren landscape, and their associated values in a sustainable way. The processes are what provide the policy choice and shift from a plan-based, static approach to one that is dynamic, process-based and reviewed and revised on an on-going basis. It is clear from the GeoparkLIFE programme review of policy that the only effective approach to achieve integrated management is a partnership approach. In the case of the BCOM the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee provides a model that could be transformed into a partnership structure under the leadership of Clare County Council that would;

- develop a management plan
- set policy for the Geopark
- oversee implementation of the management plan.

To ensure the effectiveness of this governance structure it should be underwritten by a formal, written partnership agreement.

The plan would be implemented by the professional team and advisory or working groups. This enables a wide group of people to be involved in the process of Geopark management and the working groups would assist in helping partners to work towards agreed aims and priorities. Actions would be set out in the management plan with agreed timelines and resource allocation. This would be monitored on an annual basis and reviewed in detail on a 4 year cycle (to match with the revalidation process of UNESCO Global Geoparks). The current programme of work under the GeoparkLIFE programme could be seen as providing a pilot phase of implementation and monitoring.

Results

Achieving the specific **outcomes** sought for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, local communities and all relevant local, regional and national actors and authorities would be the ultimate aim of the of the Geopark management system. **Outputs** represent the actions, services or

products produced by the management system.

A **management system improves** benefits from assessing progress against targets (outputs) and broader objectives (outcomes) and then analyzing discrepancies and their causes. Improving a management system depends on evaluating it: are the three elements supporting the three processes and delivering targetted outputs and achieving all the desired outcomes? The information derived from monitoring outputs and outcomes by means of indicators helps to effectively review and revise the management system.

As a starting point the criteria set out in the *Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks* (2015) provide a core set of outcomes for a first iteration of a Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark management system.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 With the completion of the GeoparkLIFE programme at the end of 2017 the question arises as to how the Geopark will continue to deliver and sustain the aims and objectives of the programme and address the issues raised in the review?
- 6.2 The review makes recommendations (numbered in bold below) specifically relevant to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and the development and implementation of the GeoparkLIFE programme in relation to key policy gaps identified in the process. The review addresses the need for the implementation of an effective policy framework. It also addresses the challenge of integrating tourism with conservation at a wider European level.

6.3 Addressing Policy Gaps

1. It is clear that as a high heritage value destination based on sustainable tourism a key objective of the Geopark is to attract visitors who will stay longer and spend more. However on the ground the reality is that tourism policy is still apparently focused on growing the number of visitors. As has been pointed out above this approach is not sustainable and prioritizes short-term (and limited) economic return over environmental impact and the need for conservation management.

It is **recommended** that the change of tourism policy articulated in the national policy instrument; *People, Place and Tourism, Growing Tourism to 2025* (2015), focusing on overseas visitor revenue and sustainability rather than visitor numbers should underpin the approach of all national, regional and local agencies to sustainable tourism in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. This should be implemented through a strategic regional plan for tourism which is a stated objective (CDP9.1) of the County Development Plan.
2. The most obvious policy dis-connect between what is explicitly stated as the national approach to sustainable tourism and what is happening on the ground in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark is in relation to transport policy. As stated above the Burren has a finite capacity for tourism and the current level of day trip coach visitors is problematic, with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre as the honeypot attraction having over 1.5 million visitors in 2017, reaching capacity at certain times.

It is **recommended** that a comprehensive, sustainable transport plan is developed for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark. This should be developed in the context

of the implementation of the strategic regional plan for tourism referred to above.

3. The analysis of the extent to which the integration of sustainable tourism and conservation actually works on the ground (Part 2 of the review) and the policy gaps identified in Part 3 through the discussion of case studies, and the broader scope of the GeoparkLIFE programme, has identified that there are problems with current policy approaches. These have tended to be compartmentalized, emphasizing the importance of individual policies and agencies rather than adopting an integrated approach.

There is a problem with the communication both of policy and the operational approach of different agencies. Tourism businesses and community groups can experience difficulty in understanding the complexity and diversity of policy. The structure and work of the GeoparkLIFE Steering Committee, developed in the process of carrying out the GeoparkLIFE programme, is seen as providing a model for a collaborative, inclusive and integrated management approach which resonates with changes in international approaches to conservation management.

It is **recommended** that all the stakeholders and partners involved in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark formally recognise and commit to the future sustainability of this landscape as a high heritage value destination through an integrated, proactive management approach.

6.4 An effective policy framework

4. It is clear from the views of the partners and stakeholders in the GeoparkLIFE programme, as expressed in Part 2 of the policy review, and recommendation 3 above, that there is a need and support for a suitable management structure.

It is **recommended** that the current partnership model involving the active participation of all the relevant agencies involved in heritage conservation and sustainable tourism should be continued and developed in accordance with the best practice models identified in the comparative analysis.

5. Under the *Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks* the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark is required to have a management plan that provides for the social and economic needs of local populations, protects the landscape in which they live and conserves their cultural identity.

It is **recommended** that a comprehensive, strategic management plan is developed for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, based on the *Operational Guidelines for UNESCO Global Geoparks*.

6. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, and the GeoparkLIFE programme, are run under the auspices of Clare County Council. It is a specific objective of *Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023* to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to support the ongoing work of the Geopark and to secure the retention of its status.

It is **recommended** that the management plan for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark should be fully and formally incorporated into the next iteration of the Clare County Development Plan. The management plan should be added as an appendix to the County Development Plan.

6.5 The wider challenge of integrating tourism with conservation

7. The GeoparkLIFE project illustrates how an informal structure of agencies working with communities can bring together expertise and knowledge at a local level. This is a good way of creating collective responsibility and an ability to address local needs. The GeoparkLIFE structure also illustrates how a locally based approach is the way towards resolving conflict. The notion of a collaborative and integrated approach to management is essential if sustainable tourism and conservation management are to sit side by side.

It is **recommended** that the core principle of the need for effective local management as essential to successfully and sustainably integrating tourism and conservation is recognised as an approach to meeting the European challenge of achieving this integration.

8. A critical European-wide issue is whether we can move from processes focused on expert-led and centralized approaches to the integration of tourism and conservation to those where expertise feeds into and informs community involvement and initiatives. Successful community projects need accessibility to experts who understand the needs of projects (from health and safety to environmental legislation) and who will guide them through a structured process.

It is **recommended** that programmes seeking to have active community involvement in the integration of tourism and conservation have two core elements:

- (a) effective local management structures to integrate sustainable tourism and conservation, building on the public, private and community sectors.
- (b) a community liaison officer with the requisite skills and expertise ideally located within the competent local authority and in the type of management structure recommended above.

These two measures would add strength and assist with specific projects. It would also help to build social capital in strengthening connections and relationships between groups. Furthermore it would integrate such informal social networks with the capacity and the strategic development function of the local authority.

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Appendix:

Questions for Policy Interviews (See 4. Part 2: Perspectives of the project partners and other stakeholders on policy)

Sustainable Tourism and Conservation Management:

Questions for interviews:

- What is your area of responsibility/work in relation to tourism and/or conservation management?
- What is your role as a partner in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher GeoparkLife Project?
- What are the main legislative/policy drivers that direct/guide/impact on your work and longer-term strategy/objectives?
- What are the major policy constraints you face in achieving success in achieving work objectives?
- Are other partners on the project as aware of these legislative instruments/policy drivers as they should be?
- Are sustainable tourism and conservation management achievable on the ground?
- Can you identify areas/examples where there are potential policy conflicts between different interests (sustainable tourism/conservation management/other) or perspectives in the LIFE Project.
 - Give examples of policy confusion/conflict
 - Was the confusion/conflict resolved?
- How are such issues best resolved?
 - Negotiation?
 - Policy changes (Local/national/European)
 - Accept status quo – do nothing
- From your perspective what are the most significant elements of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark Life Project in achieving policy objectives-
 - strengthening the integration of tourism and heritage
 - promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism
 - BEN, Demonstration Sites, Conservation Management/Community Support/Policy Review.

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