



TIONSCADAL GEOPHÁIRC

Dhúiche Sheoigheach & Lochanna an Iarthair

JOYCE COUNTRY & WESTERN LAKES GEOPARK PROJECT



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UNESCO in Our Whispering Landscape CONFERENCE | 15 & 16 JUNE 2021

****SAVE THE DATE**** THERE'S SOMETHING FOR ALL STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS

A major virtual conference is being organised by the Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geopark Project for Tuesday-Wednesday 15th & 16th June. Themed as UNESCO in Our Whispering Landscape, the conference will open a window on UNESCO Global Geoparks' contributions to sustainable development, and how communities can benefit from more locally generated jobs and business. It will also showcase the rich heritage in this JCWL geopark region, providing models and ideas for cultural development, geotourism and networking.

In normal times it would be a large, blended conference with in-person and virtual contributions. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 uncertainty, we are opting for a virtual event, as in the advert above. While meeting, greeting and viewing online has some limitations, it also comes with advantages – more guest speakers from around the world and the island of Ireland, more people can tune in and it also creates a legacy. Exhibition space and workshops are also planned.

Just to re-emphasise, this project's key aim is to achieve UNESCO Global Geopark status to benefit communities in the region in the

longer term. The Joyce Country and Western Lakes area of Mayo and Galway is worthy of UNESCO Global Geopark status due to its geology of international importance. UNESCO Global Geoparks (created in 2015) have equal status to UNESCO World Heritage Sites (created in 1972). They are both powerful branding tools but the advantage of the UNESCO Global Geoparks is that they carry no additional planning restrictions.

More detail about the conference follows soon via social media @JCWLGeopark and the project website www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie



Our essential publicity and promotion of the geopark idea

WE NEED TO BE SEEN, HEARD AND SUPPORTED

A fantastic rural development opportunity needs good publicity for strong support. And so hopefully many of you have noticed in recent months that the JCWL Geopark Project has upped its publicity through various media outlets. We've had two-page news features in the Mayo News, Connacht Tribune, Connaught Telegraph and both the Galway and Mayo Advertisers. An article in the winter issue of MountainLog – Mountaineering Ireland's flagship publication, and several local community magazines.

On the airwaves, project staff have been interviewed on Galway Bay FM, Radio na Gaeltachta and Connemara Community Radio. On social media we are very active on facebook, Twitter and Instagram – all with the tag @JCWLGeopark – also linking to our website www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie which we hope you agree is a fabulous resource.

Additionally, we have sent out a key set of project documents (listed below) to all

Councillors and senior staff in County Mayo and County Galway, senior Galway City Council staff, to the region's TDs and Senators and MEPs, and to senior staff at other stakeholder agencies including Geological Survey Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland and Coillte. And we made a submission to the draft Mayo County Development Plan (Galway's plan is pending).

► CORPORATE BROCHURE

With stunning photos and very brief narrative, its purpose is to showcase to key decision-makers the fantastic landscape, scenery, heritage, human and infrastructure resources in the JCWL area and to generate support for the geopark idea.

► STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

This easily digestible document points the way for geo-tourism development in the area, including six strategic objectives with key actions for the period 2020-2025.

► FLYER

A5 size, it is simply key bullet points about what a geopark is/isn't, does/doesn't, will/won't ever be, to inform individuals, communities, businesses, others about the idea. This will be sent out soon by mail drop.

If you would like digital copies of any or all of those three documents, please contact us on info@jcwlgopark.ie

A crucial requirement of a UNESCO Global Geopark is to have **a sustainable governance and management structure in place, including financial commitments**. In the coming few months we will host online presentations for elected public representatives and senior officials about the geopark with ideas for such sustainable structures. We hope you the reader will help publicise whenever possible and to whom ever, what a great opportunity the geopark idea is for Counties Galway and Mayo and the whole of Connacht.



21 participants start Tour Guiding course

GUIDING WILL BE A KEY CONTRIBUTOR TO BOOSTING
VISITOR NUMBERS IN THE GEOPARK

The training course for those interested in Tour Guiding started at the end of February. Funded by the JCWL Geopark Project, it is being delivered by Petersburg Outdoor Education and Training Centre (OETC), Clonbur, following an open tender process. There was great interest in joining the course with over 30 applications. Following an interview process, twenty-one were finally accepted, with priority given to those living in the geopark region. Participants come from a great variety of backgrounds, and there's a balanced age and gender profile – with great opportunities to share and learn from each other's broad experiences.

Course delivery will be a blended combination through online and, later when Covid-19 restrictions are relaxed,

in-person at Petersburg. Field visits will be an important part of the curriculum. The course is accredited by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) – the national agency responsible for qualifications and quality assurance in further education and training and higher education. The programme consists of two parts: i) Irish Tour Guiding, and ii) Irish Natural Heritage & Culture – both of which are at Level 6 and QQI credit value 15.

All participants are keen to engage either part time or full time in tour guiding at some point after successful completion of the course. It has the potential to add greatly to awareness raising about what the geopark region has to offer, to contribute towards increased visitor numbers, and provide additional income and jobs.



Check out our Geopark Ambassador course

LEARN HOW IMPORTANT GEOLOGY
IS TO THE WAY WE LIVE IN OUR
FABULOUS LANDSCAPE

This JCWL Geopark Project short course has now been delivered twice since January 2021. It is also part of the curriculum of the Regional Tour Guiding Course which started this month at Petersburg OETC. Running over two sessions of 1.5 hrs each, and presented by the Geopark Geologists, this short course enables participants to become Geopark Ambassadors by learning about the geopark project, why the local geology is so important, what can be found at the sites of interest, how to read the geological map and the landscape and how you (the participants) can use the geopark brand. A field trip will also complement what was covered in this course. This has not yet happened due to COVID-19 restrictions, though it is eagerly awaited by the participants.

So far, the sessions have been attended by 65 participants from both our business network and our local communities, and feedback has been positive (average rating of 4.75 stars out of 5!) and encouraging. The course is free and will run again in April for those in the geopark region and further afield. Details to follow on our website and our social media channels (@JCWLGeopark).



Website content and business listings expansion

CHECK IF YOUR BUSINESS IS LISTED ON THE GEOPARK WEBSITE

Our website www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie is regularly updated for news content and events. And we always welcome any comments, suggestions or corrections you might have for the content. One of our new additions is the page dedicated to festivals and annual events organised by the communities of the region. And we'll soon offer parts of the website in further international languages for when our visitors from overseas will be allowed back (post Covid-19).

We also plan to add a page called local products on local crafts and food products. If you would like a particular product to be listed there, or your accommodation, food and drink or activity business in the geopark region, do let us know and we'll include you info@jcwlgeopark.ie



Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland's outlook for tourism in 2021

THE OUTDOORS WILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN DOMESTIC HOLIDAYS

Fáilte Ireland has been closely monitoring consumer insights and sentiment throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and research shows that domestic tourism will be the first to return as the vaccine rollout gets underway.

Fáilte Ireland is hopeful that some kind of domestic tourism activity can start again this summer and initial metrics for 2021 are generally up, suggesting that this year will be stronger than 2020. People who claimed to have taken fewer domestic trips last year are showing higher intent for 2021, meaning there is an opportunity for tourism businesses to convert this intention into bookings, when it is safe to do so. While families continue to show strong intent, younger unconstrained adults, are showing an interest in travel in the Republic of Ireland as a destination.

We are hearing mixed reports from tourism businesses across the country in terms of bookings. Booking enquiries for coastal

locations, for example, have tended to be higher. Self-catering providers are seeing a high level of booking enquiries for July and August. Hotels are also expecting a slight increase in occupancy levels in the latter half of the summer and some are seeing an increase in the length of stays being booked. Many of these bookings are provisional and most are flexible given the uncertainty around re-opening.

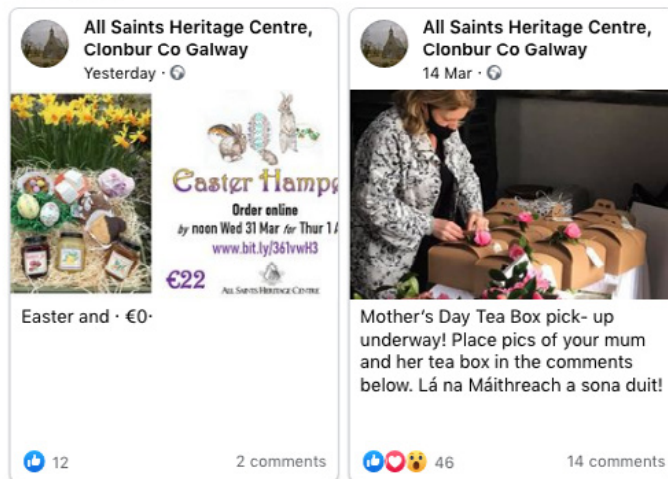
The latest Fáilte Ireland research into consumer behaviour tells us that the outdoors will play an important role in domestic holidays in 2021, for individual, group and family holidays. Families are more inclined to visit nature reserves, gardens, zoos, wildlife parks and open outdoor spaces, as these are easily identified as places to go by parents. Building local itineraries to both help and encourage broader activities planning would be welcomed by those looking to book.

After a year of isolation, domestic tourists will be looking for a sense of fun and connection when on holidays. There is an opportunity for trade to act as a reconnection point. Safety and security will, of course, play a key role in the visitor experience and will be an important area of focus for trade, as they prepare for reopening and recovery. Fáilte Ireland's COVID-19 Safety Charter aims to boost public confidence in the safety of tourism businesses and can be displayed both online on a business' website to assure consumers while booking as well on the premises for when they arrive.

For expert guidance and advice on areas such as driving domestic sales, tourism businesses should visit Fáilte Ireland's COVID-19 Business Support Hub at www.failteireland.ie

Fionnán Nestor
Projects Officer, Wild Atlantic Way, Fáilte Ireland

Latest posts



All Saints Heritage Centre Clonbur – a local heritage initiative

REACHING INTO THE PAST TO DEVELOP A STRONGER FUTURE

There's exciting and ambitious planning taking place these days around heritage development in Clonbur, Co Galway. All Saints Heritage Centre (ASHC) / Ionad Cultúr agus Dearadh An Fháirche is preparing a 5-year Heritage and Culture Strategic Plan aiming to preserve and enhance the social, economic and cultural vitality of Clonbur and its surrounding communities. The plan will revive and enhance skills to leverage local distinctiveness and traditions for a more diverse local economic future including crafts, artistry, resourcefulness, self-reliance, skill, joy and wisdom.

The plan acknowledges the rich heritage of the West of Ireland, with a deep sense of self-reliance, hard work and everyday life skills that generated satisfaction of a job well done, while celebrating the cycle of the year with creativity and enthusiasm. It also recognises the role of well-targeted tourism for sustaining rural viability, with durable skills and enhanced quality of life for the community that goes beyond monetary gain. All ASHC projects are designed to invest a sense of place, and pride in the cultural assets of the area while engaging in mutually

beneficial relationships with the tourist population. Much like a three-legged stool, it relies on balance: one leg heritage and cultural preservation and skills building, a second leg increased economic viability, and the third leg celebration of the beautiful natural assets and community Clonbur offers.

Four areas of cultural heritage knowledge, skill, and craft have been selected to begin with:

- ▶ butter and buttermilk making
- ▶ súgán/straw craft
- ▶ nettles (textiles, foods, lore)
- ▶ horn spoons

A 'repeatable process template' will be developed that starts with gathering interest in the community, providing tantalizing glimpses of the craft, then walking interested parties through learning the skills, and guiding them towards creating a saleable product or experience. Current artisan and craftspeople will be engaged as training resources where possible, and will rely on research and academia where no local craftspeople exists. Among the planned outcomes will be saleable heritage crafts, and cultural tourism experience.



Launch of Leave No Trace new training network

OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTNER AND COLLABORATE ON PROJECTS

The Leave No Trace initiative is an internationally recognised set of operational rules for access to the countryside to help prevent conflict and serve a variety of needs and responsibilities. Its Irish branch was launched in 2008 and focusses on an education programme focussed on messages and skills for outdoors users. The organisation, of whom JCWL Geopark Project is a partner, will launch its new training network on 25 March with their first online Continuous Professional Development (CPD) webinar.

The training network aims to engage with Leave No Trace trainers and training centres to create opportunities to network, partner with other practitioners, collaborate on projects and programmes and learn from a new exciting Leave No Trace

'Annual CPD Programme'. This first webinar welcomes the international award-winning author Richard Louv as guest speaker. Richard's books have helped launch an international movement to connect children, families and communities to nature. He speaks globally on nature-deficit disorder and on the need for environmental protection and preservation for greater access to nature and the health of the Earth.

This webinar is free to Accredited Trainers and Accredited Training Centres, but registration is essential. The event takes place on 25 March at 7.30pm and you can register [here](#).

Leave No Trace Ireland offers a number of educational resources on their website, most of them also available in Irish [HERE](#)



Place Names booklet official launch

THIS WILL HELP YOU "READ OUR LANDSCAPE"

An exciting new booklet exploring the relationship between geology and place names will be launched on Wednesday 14 April on the JCWL geopark project facebook page. This bilingual publication focusses on the geological and geomorphological features recorded in place names in Ireland with more specific examples from the project region. The booklet provides tools to research your local geology all over Ireland with a glossary of frequent terms used.

Printed copies were sent to all schools (primary and post-primary) in both county Galway and Mayo and others will soon be delivered to all the community councils and partner agencies to the project. Lecturers in Geology and Geography in Higher Education institutions in Ireland were also sent digital copies of the booklet.

The launch will feature a short presentation of the content of the booklet and will showcase some examples of such place names connections with the local geology in the region. The digital copy of both the Irish and English versions will then be accessible on the project website www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie. Printed copies will also be made available free.

The booklet has been funded by Geological Survey Ireland and is a publication of Joyce Country and Western Lakes GeoEnterprise – the cross-community representative group which is a partner in the JCWL Geopark Project.

LIFE application submitted by Lough Carra Catchment Association

€5M PROJECT COULD BE A LIFE-SAVER
FOR LOUGH CARRA

The LIFE application was submitted on 17 February - a trojan effort by the consultant team at Woodrow SS and the Co-ordinating Beneficiary Mayo County Council. The application is based on the Concept Note and Feasibility study organised by the LCCA in 2019/2020 – the LCCA LIFE Feasibility Study 'Charting a Bright Future for Lough Carra' available [here](#).

There has been excellent support from all the associated beneficiaries, partners and stakeholders including Geological Survey Ireland, the JCWL Geopark Project and GeoEnterprise (the cross-community group partnering in the Geopark Project). The LIFE Project title is 'Improving ecosystem resilience and reducing nutrient pollution in Lough Carra, one of Europe's premier SAC marl lakes' with a total project budget

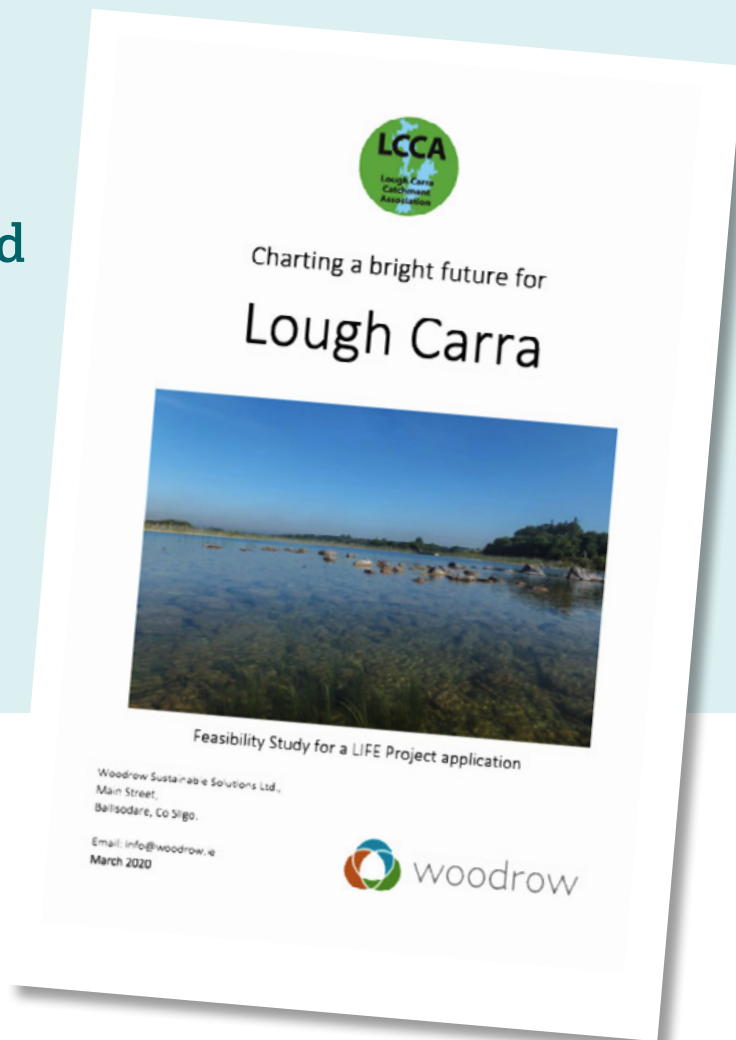
close to €5 million including an EU financial contribution of close to €3 million. If approved, expected start date is 6/09/2021 and expected end date 04/09/2026 with plans for continuing the project after LIFE.

The list of associated beneficiaries includes: Department of Agriculture, Food & The Marine; National Parks and Wildlife Service; Geological Survey Ireland; Lough Carra Catchment Association; Coillte. Other partners who do not receive funds from the project but who co-ordinate their activities, under the supervision of Mayo County Council are: Environmental

Protection

Agency; Office of Public Works; Local Authorities Waters Programme; Inland Fisheries Ireland; Vincent Wildlife Trust; Teagasc; and the National Federation of Group Water Schemes.

Our best wishes to Lough Carra Catchment Association and all the partners, it would be great if the LIFE project is approved, for the benefit of current and future generations.





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Our mailing address is:

**Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geopark Project
Thuar Mhic Éadaigh, Co. Mayo F12 D990, Ireland**

P: (+353) 094 900 0245

E: info@jcwlgeopark.ie

www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie | [@JCWLGeopark](https://www.instagram.com/JCWLGeopark)

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