



TIONSCADAL GEOPHÁIRC

Dhúiche Sheoigheach & Lochanna an Iarthair

JOYCE COUNTRY & WESTERN LAKES GEOPARK PROJECT

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SUMMER 2021



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Conference 15 & 16 June

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

We've received great feedback on the mid-June virtual conference 'Explore Our Whispering Landscape'. The 300 registrations were 50% more than our target, while 225 actually attended and each of the live sessions attracted more than 60 participants. Not surprisingly, the Geoparks and Sustainable Development session attracted the most, with impressive participant numbers for the other three sessions – Local products and link to geology, Heritage in the JCWL region, and Tourism and networking. Also very popular were the workshops, launch of the animated geology videos, the exhibition space for businesses, communities and other organisations.

In case you missed some, all the introductions, pre-recorded presentations, live Q&A sessions, workshops and local community and business expos can be viewed on the conference platform until July 16 by logging in here <https://jcwlgeopark.dealroomevents.com/login> You will see on the program tab a green button named 'view recorded video' next to each session, which will allow you to view the video. From 16 July, you will be able to view all the same material on our project [YouTube channel](#) – and on our website.

A tourism
product is what
you buy

A tourism
experience is
what you
remember



Business networks training

KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS AND WHAT THEY VALUE

Networks boost business – that's a fact. But do we know how to get the most from networks? This was at the core of project training provided recently to 20 businesses from the geopark region and delivered by tourism consultancy Bane Mullarkey.

It considered market differentiation, knowing your clients and what they value. It had tips on what different domestic and foreign visitors like and don't like. Breakout rooms encouraged participants to plan actions and itineraries that individual businesses can do to show their fit with target markets ... before they arrive, while here and after they've gone. There were ideas on cross selling – how to get a customer to spend more by purchasing a product or service that's related to what's being bought already. The trainer noted gaps among the participants in product knowledge and tailoring the overall region's offering to different target markets. We plan to build on the progress made and extend participation to more businesses. More detail in early autumn.

COMING SOON

Digital marketing training

In early autumn, a short training course will be provided in digital marketing and social media. It will include how to communicate, engage and amplify cost effectively for best impact, how to be found on a website at key search moments, how to measure and improve use of data, and how the participating businesses can subscribe to and uphold the principles of the Geopark Charter which underpins the business network trainings. More detail in the coming weeks.



Tour guides training

GREAT PROGRESS SO FAR

The 21 participating in the tour guiding course funded by the project are now more than halfway through the training programme. Each participant delivered a short presentation and the standard, range, and diversity of topics was excellent. It concluded with a field visit jointly hosted by project geologist Benjamin Thébaudeau and Petersburg Outdoor Training and Education director Trish Walsh.

The course resumes in the autumn, with the main focus on guiding skills, customer service and planning tourism experiences. Additional field trips showcasing the region and planned Geopark area are planned. Attendance has been excellent, with participants especially keen on sharing experiences from their diverse backgrounds and learning from each other.



Video training for communities

HOW TO SHOWCASE COMMUNITY FEATURES

In the lead-up to the project virtual conference in June, we offered video promotional training to all the communities in the geopark region. A total of 20 participated from 16 communities.

The contracted trainer Hugh Sweeney covered topics including: filming on camera and phone, how to capture good quality audio, lighting basics and other technical details such as capturing B-roll to accompany an interview, slow-motion, drone footage and motion graphics. The basics of editing included tips on use of free shareware apps. Shortly after, more than half the participants submitted a short video promoting their community, these were checked and edited by the trainer and uploaded on the conference website where they will remain until 16 July and are also available on the project website in the individual towns and villages webpages (see first newsletter article above).

Flyer mail drop

INFORMING ABOUT THE GEOPARK IDEA



Most homes, businesses and community councils in the geopark region should have received our flyer (pictured) through the letter box in May or June. 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 local people about the geopark idea. If you or your business is based in the geopark area but you didn't receive the flyer please let us know info@jcwlgeopark.ie



Local markets and events

THERE'S PLENTY TO DO IN OUR SMALL COMMUNITIES

Local markets are back in full swing and thriving in the geopark region. Featuring local food, crafts, art works and lots more. Mostly monthly, you can catch the dates and times for Ballinrobe, Clonbur, Headford and Oughterard through facebook. Also check out upcoming events [here on our website](#) – including Féile na Sléibhte (Clonbur), Heritage Week, extreme sports events in the region of Killary Harbour, and much more. And do please let us know if your community event is not yet listed on our website.

Exploring the region with due respect

WHEN IN DOUBT, JUST ASK

As the country is reopening, we now have access to all the beauty of the Irish outdoors and of our region in particular. The Geopark Project promotes the enjoyment of the outdoors for our physical health, our wellbeing and the exploration of our geological, natural and cultural heritage. This access however can only be granted by the landowners and under the condition of respect.

As a partner of [Leave No Trace](#), we actively promote their code of conduct for access to the countryside summarised in their seven principles. This includes a strong emphasis on communicating with landowners when accessing commonage, on the respect of farm animals and avoiding bringing dogs in sensitive areas, on leaving open gates open and closed gates closed and on parking at reasonable spots that won't disturb any traffic. The Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark Project aims to become a model for sustainable upland access in Ireland.



Community consultations

LOOK OUT FOR US IN YOUR AREA

The pandemic has limited our contact with your community council/coiste pobail during the last 15 months to digital means (social, email, web and virtual). While that was certainly better than no contact at all, we are hopeful about getting out and about again soon to meet and greet in person to update on progress and engage about the great opportunities for communities and local businesses. We will also be visible at community markets, marts and other events – regulations permitting. Keep an eye out for our pull-up banner with striking logo – we'd love to chat with you and hear your thoughts.

Agency consultations

CLOSER CONTACT WITH OUR PARTNERS

We have increased our consultations with Galway and Mayo County Councils and Údarás na Gaeltachta. They are three key state agency partners in this geopark project, providing in-kind and other support for various project actions. The presentations and discussions included with Castlebar Municipal District and the Tourism Sector Policy Committee (SPC) in Mayo, the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC in Galway, and

to senior officials in Údarás na Gaeltachta. The discussions have centred on what's been achieved, what benefits are becoming evident, and the way forward. Meanwhile, the quarterly Project Steering Group meetings continue including the above three agencies, plus of course the project lead agency Geological Survey Ireland, along with Coillte and Fáilte Ireland, and the cross-community representation of JCWL GeoEnterprise.

County development plan submissions

IN THE POLICY PICTURE

It's now preparation time for County Development Plans for Mayo and Galway County Councils. These are important policy documents, setting the development and support framework for the next seven years. This JCWL Geopark Project is making submissions to both the county plans to ensure prioritisation for establishment of a UNESCO Global Geopark in the Joyce Country and Western Lakes region.



Website & digital updates

LISTINGS, LEARNINGS AND VIDEO

We've been busy updating our [accommodation business listing](#), [interactive map](#) and [learning](#) pages. We've also added videos of each of the [sites of interest](#) on their respective pages so you can learn more about them. And the videos are up for our [towns and villages](#) that the communities created themselves. Check out those drone shots! You may have seen some of these already if you tuned in to our conference on 15 and 16 June. If you weren't able to tune in, not to worry as the sessions and workshops can be seen on our [YouTube channel](#), and will also be available to see on our website from 16 July.

Lough Carra LIFE project

GREEN LIGHT FOR €5M PROJECT

Congratulations to Lough Carra Catchment Association and other stakeholders on the award of the Lough Carra LIFE Project. The LIFE project will run for 5 years with a budget of close to €5 million.

The process will involve securing a long-term programme for the Lough Carra Catchment and protection of this wonderful marl lake. As a stakeholder in the Lough Carra LIFE Project, the LCCA will be working to ensure that this project will have the positive impact that other LIFE projects have had on the local environment, as evidenced in [Burren LIFE](#) and [Aran LIFE](#). The project is being led by Mayo County Council, represented by Martin Keating (Head of Environment, Climate Change, & Agriculture) and involves all major stakeholders with significant contribution from Geological Survey Ireland.

The next six months

PROJECT PRIORITIES TO DECEMBER 2021



Rialtas
na hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040



Geological Survey
Suirbhéireacht Gheolaíochta
Ireland | Éireann

There are just six months remaining of this Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark Project, which is funded largely by the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (Project Ireland 2040), with supporting cash contributions from Geological Survey Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta and in-kind contribution from Mayo and Galway County Councils, Coillte, Fáilte Ireland and GeoEnterprise.

Several priorities still need to be addressed:

SIGNAGE

The project has been identifying a number of geosites – locations that can be used to tell the geological and associated stories of the geopark narrative. They should have accessible interpretation but that interpretation can be digital interpretation on an app or website, a directional sign or a physical structure such as a panel. The project is liaising with the relevant bodies on this to agree a way forward.

APPLICATION TO UNESCO

The project will be submitting an application for UNESCO Global Geopark (UGG) status in November 2021. The assessment process takes around 18 months, so the outcome should be known in the summer of 2023. From application date it must operate as a de facto geopark until the status is granted. Note too that UNESCO Global Geopark status must be revalidated every four years through an assessment process to ensure it is in line with UGG requirements.



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