



TIONSCADAL GEOPHÁIRC

**Dhúiche Sheoigheach  
& Lochanna an Iarthair**

JOYCE COUNTRY & WESTERN LAKES GEOPARK PROJECT

## Application to UNESCO submitted

### We did it !

We're delighted to inform you that Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark submitted a renewed application for UNESCO Global Geopark status at the end of November. The application dossier includes an important collaboration agreement with the geopark's four funding agencies Údarás na Gaeltachta, Geological Survey Ireland, Galway and Mayo County Councils, setting the system for governance going forward. A Management Master Plan provides the strategic framework and main actions during the seven-year period 2022-2028 (see item further below). The geopark's 20 communities (17 villages, 3 towns) and current and future businesses are the ultimate beneficiaries, helping boost local jobs, incomes and to reverse our rural population decline.

The UNESCO assessment will take place in 2023 and the result should be known in the early spring of 2024. If achieved, it will be the first Gaeltacht area to gain UNESCO Global Geopark status. In the meantime, we are continuing our work as a de facto geopark and prepare for the arrival of UNESCO assessors in the spring/summer of 2023. Stay up to date through the geopark website [www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie](http://www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie) and social media / facebook Twitter and Instagram @JCWLGeopark



**Joyce Country &  
Western Lakes Geopark**

[www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie](http://www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie)



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## Communities' networking event in Ballinrobe

## Sharing ideas as the geopark goes forward

An impressive 14 of our 20 geopark communities participated in a geopark communities networking event at the Valkenburg in Ballinrobe on Saturday 12 November. It was a great opportunity to present and discuss the geopark Management Master Plan 2022-2028, for which there was enthusiastic support from all present. Dr Orla Nic Suibhne of SEAI (Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland) gave a lively presentation on the energy saving and renewable options at community level including setting up Sustainable Energy Community groups (Tourmakeady has one and there is a new one developed for Joyce Country with CDS), retrofitting, how to identify service providers, and options for renewable energy production.



The event concluded with interaction between communities in a “speed-dating” like networking activity. Communities were able to share their recent experience securing funding, organising festivals or events, ideas for further development, and the challenges they face running their organisations. Mayo County Council Local Enterprise Office (LEO), the Education Training Boards for Galway and Mayo (GRET and MSLETB), and South West Mayo Development Company (LEADER) were also there offering information to participants. The event closed with congratulations to the Ballinrobe Town Hall Committee for securing a €4.5 million Project Ireland 2040 (RRDF) grant for the redevelopment of the Valkenburg into a multi-purpose community facility. There was great energy in the room and similar events will be repeated to continue to foster sustainable development in the geopark region.



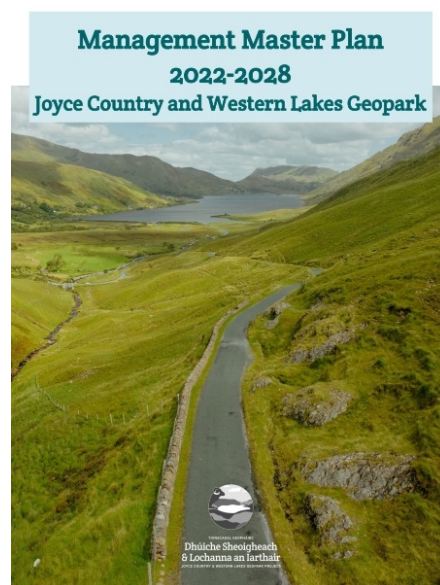
# Launch of Management Master Plan 2022-2028

## A strategy for the future

The geopark has developed a Management Master Plan to guide development and stakeholder participation in Joyce Country and Western Lakes aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark. This strategic document was crafted from years of consultation with communities, businesses, funders, other agencies, and other stakeholders. It includes a profile of the geopark region, and the local, regional, national and international policy context underpinning its development. There's a vision of where we aim to be, details on governance and staffing, finances and budget, conservation and infrastructure, a comprehensive SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and a medium-term action plan. More detailed work plans will be prepared annually.

The Master Plan will be made available on the geopark's website and launched officially in the New Year (details to be confirmed). Stay up to date through the geopark website

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## Christmas and New Year wishes

How time flies ... another year behind us. Thankfully the key goal achieved of resubmission of the application to UNESCO Global Geoparks. Míle buíochas to Meadh at Údarás na Gaeltachta and Gearóid at CDS Teo for fantastic work pulling the strands together. And to all the other numerous contributors and supporters. We hope also we've seen the back of the Covid-19 pandemic. It's been particularly tough on jobs, businesses and communities relying on the tourism sector, but there's great optimism for the future and especially in the Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark region.

To you, your families, friends, communities and businesses we wish a safe and very enjoyable Christmas and happy and prosperous 2023.



## Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark

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