



Community consultations in Ballinrobe and Clonbur

JCWL tourism strategy consultations well underway

Strong engagement feeding into 2026-2030 plan

Joyce Country & Western Lakes UNESCO Global Geopark is currently renewing its **Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** for the period **2026-2030** for this stunning region. Contributions are coming from the range of stakeholders – in the form of consultations with community, business, advocacy groups and state bodies. Initial in-person consultations have been with representatives of the 20 Geopark communities, hosted in three venues – at Ballinrobe (16 June), Clonbur (23/06) and Maam (25/06). A total of 37 participants attended, plus online responses. State agencies are also contributing either online or in-person. All stakeholder groups are asked to give feedback around four main themes: i) awareness about the Geopark (visibility, likes/dislikes, improvements, etc); ii) Attractions and experiences in the Geopark (known and overlooked, new ideas, etc); iii) Thriving communities (level of local services, gaps in accommodation, food and drink, etc); and iv) General aspiration for the future (addressing perceived negatives, vision for 5 years and 20 years, etc). The consultations are an opportunity to share views, ideas, and experiences of tourism's contribution to community development in the Geopark area and help ensure that local voices are reflected in the new strategy. Consultation with stakeholder groups continue in the autumn including sharing strategy drafts before finalisation later in 2026.

Stay up to date through the geopark website

www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie and social media / facebook and Instagram @JCWLGeopark



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JOYCE COUNTRY & WESTERN LAKES GEOPARK PROJECT



Joyce Country &
Western Lakes
Geo Enterprise

Training programme for New Business Development in the Geopark



Joyce country and Western Lakes Geopark is calling for expressions of interest for a comprehensive training programme to support new business development in the Geopark's communities.

The training (subject to funding approval) is planned for **10 two-hour sessions** in the **autumn 2026**.

Expressions of Interests to be completed and sent by email to info@jcwlgeopark.ie before 5pm on **Friday 21st August**.

You can access the EoI with the QR code or by request at same email as above.



Comharchumann
Dhúiche
Sheoigheach Teo.

www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie

Expression of Interest flyer with QR code

Training for new business development

Expression of interest re-opened

We have re-opened the **Expression of Interest** (EoI) for this comprehensive training programme to support new business development in the Geopark communities. The training (still subject to funding approval) is planned for 10 two-hour sessions, starting September, continuing through autumn 2026. It can include new ideas for start-ups that are broadly related to tourism, and also expansion/broadening of existing tourism businesses and will operate in the Geopark area. *Note:* submissions received earlier this year are still valid unless the proposer is no longer available for the training. Screenshots of the flyer above can be circulated among Geopark community groups via email, social media and other local means (e.g. the flyer could be placed in local shop/business/hall). Access the EoI form online [here](#), or request the Word document EoI from info@jcwlgeopark.ie Applicants should email the completed form to info@jcwlgeopark.ie by **Friday 21st August**. Requests for clarification prior to the deadline can be to the same email address.



**Joyce Country &
Western Lakes
Geo Enterprise**

Applications are invited from suitably experienced persons for this 4-month contract position:

PROJECT OFFICER: Arctic Char in Lough Mask

Working ability in Irish an advantage.

Details from agdsgeoenterprise@gmail.com

Submit CV with proposal quotations
by 5pm Friday 7th August 2026.



Advert seeking project officer, and Arctic Char mosaic at Tourmakeady

Lough Mask Arctic Char project

Strengthening environmental stewardship

JCWL GeoEnterprise, the Geopark communities representative group, has been awarded funding to implement a project focused on **Arctic Char in Lough Mask**. This pilot project will highlight the species' importance to the lake's wider ecosystem, develop a community forum for all stakeholders involved with the lake, and strengthen public understanding of water quality and environmental stewardship within the Joyce Country and Western Lakes UNESCO Global Geopark. Lough Mask is well known for its population of Arctic Char as one of the few remaining large western lakes that retains significant populations of juvenile fish, largely due to its deep, cold water. The stakeholder forum will consider water quality, ecological health and local engagement priorities. There will also be education and awareness activities for local schools and communities, contact with the Arctic Char community initiative at Lake Windermere/UK for potential areas for collaboration, and capacity building of JCWL GeoEnterprise. The pilot project is being funded by the River Basin Management Service (previously LAWPRO – Local Authorities Water Programme). Applications are open until Friday 7th August for a suitably experienced person to manage the project, full details from agdsgeoenterprise@gmail.com



Business partner plaque at BÁCÚS Dhúiche Sheoigheach in Clonbur

JCWL Geopark Business network expansion

Strength in numbers

The Geopark Business Network continues to grow, with several new members joining the network and existing partnerships being renewed in recent months. The network now includes **27 member businesses**, representing a wide range of tourism providers including accommodation, food and drink, activity providers and visitor attractions. Together they help showcase the very best of the Geopark while delivering memorable visitor experiences.

By working together, Business Network members promote sustainable tourism, support one another through collaboration and referrals, and celebrate the region's unique geology, landscapes, heritage, culture and communities. Each member proudly displays the Geopark Partner plaque, demonstrating their commitment to the values of this UNESCO Global Geopark and its charter. We look forward to welcoming even more businesses to the network as we continue to grow a strong and sustainable tourism destination together.



Féile na gCurrach at Corr na Móna, and Geopark stand at Cong Food Festival

Summer Festival Season in the Geopark

A great buzz to go with the weather

July was a fantastic month of community events, with the Geopark team attending several. We had a stand at the **Cong Food Village Festival**, enjoying two days of glorious sunshine, a fantastic atmosphere in the heart of Cong and high level of interest from visitors. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet locals and others, share the story of the Geopark and showcase what our region has to offer. There was a real buzz throughout the weekend, with delicious local food, cookery demonstrations, heritage walks, live music and family activities – something for everyone.

The sun was bright and the competition intense at **Féile na gCurrach**, hosted again this year on July 12th by CDS on the fabulous pier at Dóirín a' Locha Corr na Móna on Lough Corrib. The Féile is held in numerous locations and communities also extending toward County Mayo, and as usual was a fantastic day in a beautiful location.

On 25th July, we were delighted to attend **Ballinrobe Heritage Day**, organised by Ballinrobe Historical Society. It was another great event to engage with people at the Geopark stand, about our unique geology, landscapes and heritage. The day celebrated Ballinrobe's rich history through exhibitions, guided tours, family activities and the unveiling of a beautiful stained-glass sculpture in the church grounds, making it a thoroughly enjoyable event for all ages. These and other festivals are excellent opportunities to engage with local communities, raise awareness of the Geopark and celebrate the rich natural and cultural heritage of the region. Well done to all the organisers, volunteers and everyone who stopped by to chat!



Ireland holidays

West Ireland's magical landscape: where limestone rivers, Hollywood legend and Irish myth converge

The newly designated Joyce Country and Western Lakes Unesco Geopark in Galway and Mayo celebrates a 700-million-year geological history that has produced a unique terrain and rich cultural heritage

Vic O'Sullivan

Article from The Guardian published in June

Shouting from the rooftops ...

... and heard across the Irish Sea

There has been continuous media interest in our UNESCO Global Geopark's recent ratification. We have had the pleasure of featuring in a full page article in [The Guardian](#) on the 8th of June which did a fantastic job of making sense of the region's landscape riches and community heritage. We were also featured on local media with interviews on Connemara radio to promote our community consultations (see above) and Geological Survey Ireland Director Koen Verbruggen talked about the recent completion of the Tellus survey and a mention of their continuous support to our Geopark. Finally, we were delighted to upload individual **short videos** for each of our 20 communities that were collected prior to our ratification in April. The compilation video launched on the 23rd of April in CDS, gives a great snapshot of the Geopark and its people at this time. They are all available on our [YouTube channel](#).



Prime Minister Carney among locals in Aughagower

From tiny Aughagower to Canadian PM

Warm Mayo welcome for PM Mark Carney

It's not often the world's media descends on a small rural village in Ireland, but the visit of Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney to his ancestral home on 14th June was one such occasion. PM Carney's grandparents, Robert Carney and Nora Moran, grew up in the townlands of Ayle and Mace in the parish of Aughagower, Co Mayo, a few kilometers from Westport town, leaving in 1925 to start a new life in Canada. His own life's journey includes governor of the (Central) Bank of Canada 2008-2013, and of the Bank of England 2013-2020, before becoming Prime Minister as leader of the Liberal Party in 2025.

Aughagower Community Council prepared a fantastic display in the local hall telling the story of the family migration, with support from Westport Historical Society. Relatives, locals, reporters, politicians and poets (Aughagower's own Ger Reidy) brought a great buzz to the village that will live long in the memory of Prime Minister Mark Carney and his wife Diana Fox. Pride of place and connection indeed!!



The Change Maker Funding Programme is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and delivered by Pobal; the designated Intermediate Body.

Map of UNESCO sites on the island of Ireland

Working on all fronts

Partnerships are key

We mentioned in our May newsletter three projects that the Geoparks is involved in. The **Erasmus+ GeoSite project** is ending in the Autumn with a final work meeting in August which will feature an open webinar with other European Geoparks to help showcase the project's deliverable and discuss how to best share best practice. The **UNESCO together PEACEPLUS** project will be officially launched in Belfast on the 2nd of September. Led by Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark, this initiative will strengthen cooperation between UNESCO Global Geoparks, Man and Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage Sites and Creative Cities, creating new opportunities for young people, communities and organisations to work together across borders (more information [here](#)). Unfortunately, the application for funding from **Creative Ireland** led by Limerick School of Arts & Design has been unsuccessful. We hope the work that was put in for the application will help spur on a new project based on community engagement through the arts.



JCWL UNESCO Geopark stand during Boston Scientific Green Week

Boston Scientific Galway Green Week

Staff eager to explore new outdoor experiences

Boston Scientific Galway has more than 4,000 employees, the company's largest site in Ireland. The Geopark team was delighted to take part in **Boston Scientific Galway Green Week**, where we hosted an information stand as part of its 'Boats, Bikes & Boots' initiative. The invitation came from a chance meeting of two BS staff at the "traditional iron processing demonstration" in Corra Móna's páirc spraoi in May, delivered by Irish Bloomery Iron. The Green Week event was a valuable opportunity to share the story of our UNESCO Global Geopark with employees, highlighting the region's spectacular geology, landscapes, heritage, biodiversity and outdoor recreation and visitor opportunities. Throughout the day, we enjoyed meeting staff, answering questions and encouraging people to explore everything the Geopark has to offer. It was a pleasure to support Boston Scientific's Green Week initiative, promoting the importance of sustainability, connecting with nature and enjoying the outdoors. We would like to thank Boston Scientific for the invitation and look forward to working together again in the future.



University of Colorado Denver students at The Neale with Joe Greaney

Visit of Colorado students

Irish-American history in perspective

Professor Jim Walsh of the **University of Colorado Denver** recently brought a group of his students of History and Political Science to the west of Ireland. We had the pleasure of hosting them in the Geopark for a day, discussing the very important events of the 19th and early 20th century taking place in our Geopark, namely the Great Famine, the Land League lobby and first Boycott and War of Independence. Joe Greaney gave a deep dive into the heritage of The Neale and the connection to Charles Boycott following a previous presentation he made in Colorado earlier this year. This visit happened in partnership with ATU and thanks to the organisation of Michael Larkin of Killawalla. We hope the connection is strengthened over time after this initial visit.



Mary Robinson with Benjamin Thébaudeau and Sinéad Seoighe of Geopark team

Mary Robinson Climate & Nature Conference

Food production resilience and biodiversity in spotlight

The Geopark team was delighted to attend the **Mary Robinson Climate and Nature Conference 2026** in Ballina, where we hosted an exhibition stand and had the opportunity to connect with communities, organisations and businesses from across Ireland who are working towards a more sustainable future.

This year's conference, themed "**Food and Care: A Meitheal for Our Time**", sparked inspired discussions around climate action, biodiversity and the future of food in Ireland. A key focus was the importance of growing more of our own food, supporting local producers and encouraging more people into food production. Speakers explored the challenges facing Ireland, including our reliance on imported food, the declining number of growers and the need to make local food production more viable for future generations. There was also a strong emphasis on the role of communities working together to build a more resilient and sustainable food system.

Our exhibition stand provided a valuable opportunity to promote the Geopark, showcase our unique geology, landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage, and engage with delegates from a wide range of sectors. The event also allowed us to exchange ideas, make new connections and share how the Geopark supports sustainable tourism and community development. We left with fresh ideas, valuable contacts and plenty of inspiration that will help inform our work as we continue to develop tourism in a way that benefits both people and place.



President Catherine Connolly arrives at the Ionad Pobail

President Catherine Connolly visit to Maam

Exhibition of fabulous local crafts and photos

There was great anticipation and excitement for the visit of **Úachtarán Na hÉireann Catherine Connolly** to Maam on 4th July. While the President is quite familiar with Maam and other Connemara communities from her decade as a Galway West TD, this was her first visit to this small but beautiful settlement since becoming President in November 2025. The event at the Maam Community Hall was to mark the exhibition of local crafts and photos over a long period of time in this culturally and geologically rich location in the Maam Valley at the head of Lough Corrib. Organised by the multi-talented and very active Maam Women's Group, the occasion attracted a large number of women, men and youngsters from across a wide area. President Connolly was greatly impressed by the quality of products on display, music from the area and the strong sense of community and heritage evident in the display. The event rounded out with tea and superb local baking to send all on their way.



Mayo supporters at The Mall, Castlebar, when victory secured

Mayo's green and red now with Sam

Triumph over Kerry's GAA aristocrats

Last but not least ... we hope readers won't mind this small indulgence in the County of Mayo, by offering huge congratulations to everyone with even the

remotest connection to Mayo to mark the historic victory over Kerry in the All-Ireland 2026 Senior Football Championship on Sunday 26th July. Scoreline 1-20 to 1-17, and done in style. The **Sam Maguire Cup** resides in Mayo once again. What a way to banish the agony of the many lost finals. We look forward to the spin-offs for the whole of the Geopark!!



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JOYCE COUNTRY & WESTERN LAKES GEOPARK PROJECT



Joyce Country and Western Lakes UNESCO Global Geopark

Halla Thuar Mhic Éadaigh, F12D990, Tuar Mhic Éadaigh

P: (+353) 094 9000245

E: info@jcwlgeopark.ie

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