GEOPHÁIRC
Dhúiche Sheoigheach
& Lochanna an Iarthair
JOYCE COUNTRY & WESTERN LAKES GEOPARK

unesco
Global Geopark

Joyce Country & Western Lakes
UNESCO Global Geopark



Tourism Development Plan
2026 - 2030

www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie

December 2026

1. Introduction & Overview

UNESCO Global Geopark (UGGp) status was achieved for Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark on 23rd April 2026. The recognition is based on having: geology of international importance in the region and connecting with the area's natural and cultural heritage; a functioning management system; a distinctive brand; a co-management plan for sustainable development, in partnership with local communities; and membership of the Global Geoparks Network.

OUR MISSION

With UNESCO Global Geopark status achieved for the Joyce Country and Western Lakes region, the communities, businesses and education providers in the area are empowered to better inform about its attractions, further promote the use of the Irish language and draw more visitors to experience in a regenerative way its rich geological, historical, natural and cultural features, resulting in more confident and resilient local communities, enterprise and jobs.



What is a UNESCO Global Geopark?

A UNESCO Global Geopark is a place where outstanding geological heritage is used to support sustainable development through conservation, education, interpretation and sustainable tourism.

GEOPARKS IN THE WORLD

The first Global Geoparks were recognised in 2004 – 17 in Europe and 8 in China.

2015 was a milestone year for Geoparks when the 195 member states of UNESCO ratified the creation of a new label: the **UNESCO Global Geopark**.

As of April 2026, there are 241 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 51 countries around the world.

GEOPARKS IN IRELAND

There are currently 5 UNESCO Global Geoparks on the Island of Ireland: the cross-border Cuilcagh Lakelands in counties Cavan and Fermanagh, Mourne Gullion Strangford in counties Down and Armagh, Burren & Cliffs of Moher in Co. Clare, Copper Coast in Co. Waterford, and Joyce Country & Western Lakes in counties Mayo and Galway.

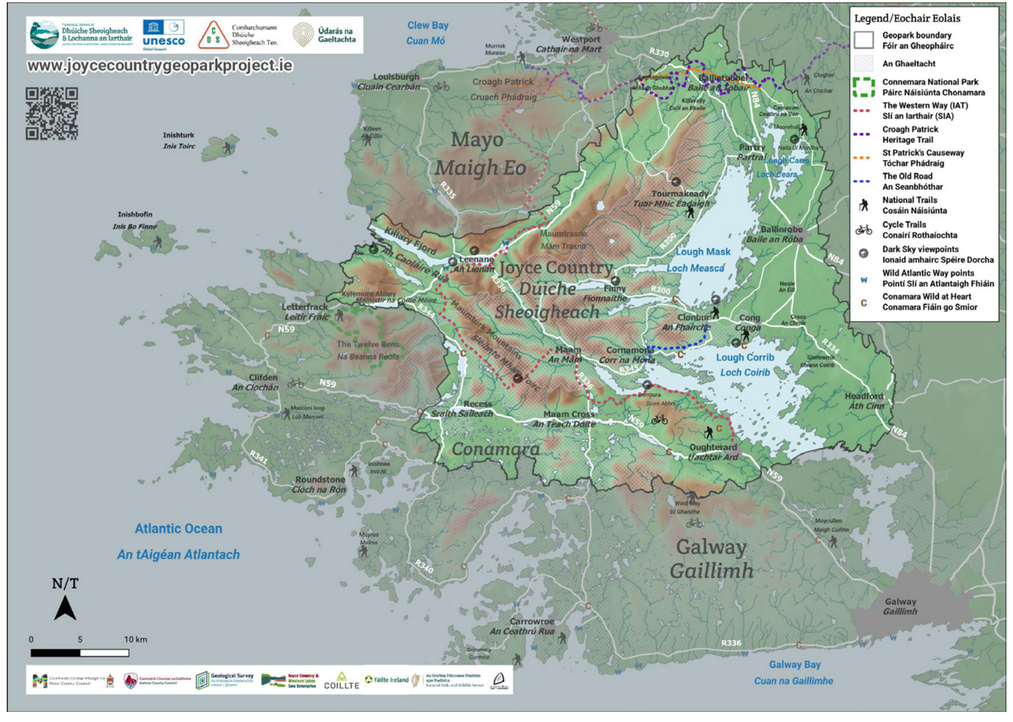
THE JOYCE COUNTRY & WESTERN LAKES UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK

The UGGp is governed by a Management Master plan highlighting its governance system.

It is hosted by Comharchumann Dhúiche Sheoigheach Teo (CDS) and funded by Údaras na Gaeltachta, Geological Survey Ireland and Galway and Mayo County Councils. Additional non-funding partners include Fáilte Ireland, NPWS, Coillte, IFI and JCWL GeoEnterprise.

With 2 full-time and 1 part-time staff, the key aim of the organisation is to develop further resources and structures to retain UNESCO Global Geopark Status.

Snapshot of Joyce Country & Western Lakes Unesco Global Geopark





1. Introduction & Overview

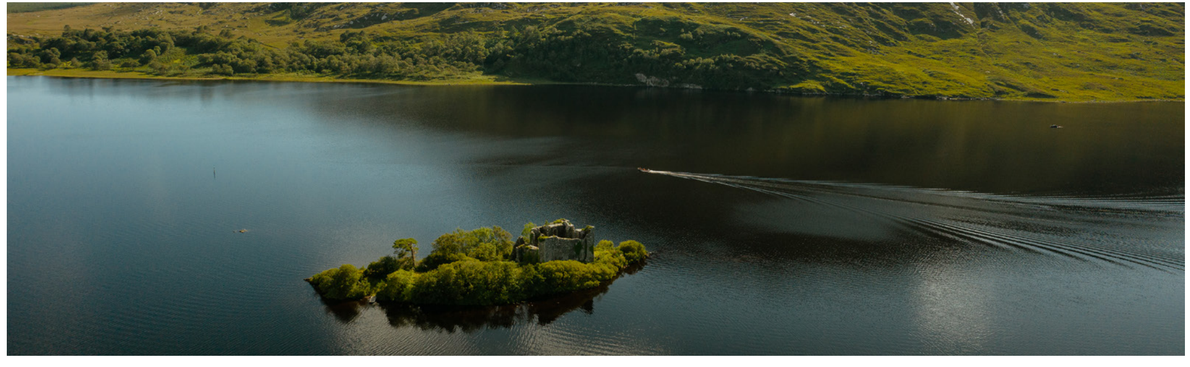
The Joyce Country and Western Lakes UNESCO Global Geopark currently includes the area surrounding Joyce Country on the Galway-Mayo border and towns and villages both sides of Loughs Mask, Carra and the northern half of the Corrib. Other smaller lakes include Loughs Inagh, Derryclare, Glendollagh and Nafooey plus numerous more localised lakes. The Partry Mountains, Maumtrasna and the Maumturks are the standout mountain ranges. The area touches the Wild Atlantic Way at Leenane. Around one third of the region is Gaeltacht.

The population of approx. 25,000 is spread across 17 villages and three towns in an area of around 1500 km^2. There are 27 national schools and 5 secondary schools, plus an outdoor education and training centre. Maps of the local businesses in the region (accommodation, food and drink and activity/attraction) can be found in Appendix 1.

ADDITIONALITY

Having successfully achieved UNESCO Global Geopark status, this confers the following additional and complementary benefits to the existing tourism offering in the region:

- A UNESCO designation within County Mayo and County Galway
- A strong new dimension for the Gaeltacht and the Irish language through the global UNESCO designation, with a geo-based offering appealing to learners and tourists that can be experienced in Irish as well as English.
- A community-led, community-focused approach to tourism development that can act as a flagship sustainable and regenerative project for the region.
- Action leadership in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, education and adaptation.



2. Building the Strategy

2.1 CONSULTATION

The 2026–2030 Geopark Tourism Strategy is shaped from local consultation and by the tourism priorities of the UGGp's partners. This approach supports the existing vision of a community-led destination that shares its geology, landscape, Irish language and culture while protecting the places on which tourism depends.

Consultation approach

The Geopark held community consultation meetings during 2026 in Ballinrobe (16 June), Clonbur (23 June) and Maam (25 June) attended by 40 people, and also through an online survey with 16 responses. Discussions with tourism businesses and other stakeholders, including Údarás na Gaeltachta, the County Councils and Fáilte Ireland, have added sector and policy perspectives. Meeting summaries, survey responses and stakeholder contributions are reviewed here together to recognise common priorities and to inform the objectives, actions and partners in this strategy.

Community consultation summary

The following are proposals raised during consultation, rather than agreed commitments:

- **Explain** the UNESCO designation and the Geopark's geology more clearly through village **maps**, small interpretation signs, **local events**, guided walks and improved digital information.
- Develop and maintain connected **walking and cycling routes**, pair route promotion with access agreements, wayfinding, transport information and care for sensitive places.
- Build **experiences** around local stories and skills: wildlife and heritage walks, music and literary trails, food making, sheep and wool, angling, farming and Irish-language culture.
- Make it easier to discover and book what is happening across the area through **itineraries**, a shared events calendar and stronger links between local businesses and communities.
- **Support** year-round **livelihoods** and services. Respondents noted gaps in affordable accommodation, food and drink, transport and places to gather, particularly in smaller communities.
- Keep tourism benefits visible to residents and **manage risks**, including traffic on narrow roads, unmanaged camping, pressure on heritage sites and habitats, and uncertainty about land access.

The SWOT analysis (section 3 below), drawn from Geopark staff interaction with the wide range of stakeholders, also highlights a need to explain the UNESCO designation significance, strengthen awareness of local geo-heritage, celebrate the living Gaeltacht and monitor access and visitor activity in ways that respect communities, landowners and sensitive landscapes.



2.2 ALIGNMENT WITH DESTINATION PLANS

Fáilte Ireland's approach promotes sustainable destination development, stronger visitor experiences and regional benefits. The Geopark's joined-up storytelling and responsible visitor management can support these goals. The Destination and Experience Development Plans/DEDPs of the local sub-regions of the **Wild Atlantic Way** brand provide opportunities to connect visitor routes and complementary experiences across boundaries, while retaining the Geopark's distinctive inland, geological and Gaeltacht identity.

Connemara and the Islands Destination and Experience Development Plan 2016-2025 (renewal in process): Its emphasis on connected walking and cycling, distinctive local culture and stronger visitor experiences offers direct links at Leenane and Killary, in Oughterard and through the Geopark's Gaeltacht communities in County Galway. The Connemara Sheep and Wool Trail already names Geopark business network members the Sheep and Wool Centre in Leenane and Joyce Country Sheepdogs. Geopark actions could connect these experiences with geo-heritage and Irish-language interpretation.

Clew Bay Destination and Experience Development Plan 2021-2030: Its Tracks and Trails theme, Western Way work, Westport hub and sustainable mountain access offer a link from Westport and the wider Clew Bay area into the Geopark region. Joint itineraries could connect walking and cycling with the Geopark's lakes, communities and geological stories, while sharing good practice on trail maintenance, safety and visitor dispersal. The plan's Under Big Skies theme also offers scope to link the Geopark's landscape and geological interpretation with responsible dark sky experiences and the work of Mayo Dark Sky Park. The Grace O'Malley trail under development will connect all sites around Clew Bay and end at Ballintubber Abbey and could mention Castlekirk in the Maam Valley. These are cross-destination opportunities to explore with partners, rather than projects already agreed under the Clew Bay plan.

Inland Mayo Destination and Experience Development Plan 2027– (to be launched Q1 2027): This plan is still in development. Fáilte Ireland's consultation area included Cong, Ballinrobe and Tourmakeady, all directly relevant to the Geopark. The Geopark is working with Fáilte Ireland and local communities to connect the lakes, heritage, walking routes, Gaeltacht culture and locally run businesses in these places. Joint visitor information and itineraries could encourage longer stays and spread benefits across inland Mayo. Specific projects and themes will align with the DEDP.



2. Building the Strategy

2.3 ALIGNMENT WITH PARTNER STRATEGIES

Galway County Council: The County Galway Tourism Strategy 2023–2031 emphasises sustainable tourism grounded in cultural and natural heritage. Geopark interpretation, community participation and local enterprise contribute to this direction. The Geopark region particularly fits in specific geographical zones defined in the strategy; zone 4 for Lough Corrib and shores but also parts of zones 3 and 6.

Mayo County Council: Mayo's tourism and development priorities, as outlined in Chapter 5 of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028, support quality, sustainable, year-round visitor experiences, rural enterprise and protection of natural and cultural assets. Geopark itineraries and business collaboration can advance these priorities.

Údarás na Gaeltachta: Gaeltacht enterprise, tourism infrastructure, Irish-language use and living culture are highlighted in the authority's Strategic Plan 2021-2025. The Geopark can support Irish-language visitor experiences, local businesses and community-led development.

2.4 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ALIGNMENT

National tourism policy: A New Era for Irish Tourism, the national tourism policy published in 2025, places emphasis on tourism SMEs, balanced regional development, climate action and digital capability. Fáilte Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023–2027 calls for collaboration and touring routes linking less-visited places; its destination planning approach also balances visitors, industry, communities and environment. The Geopark's business network, digital visitor information and responsible route development can contribute to these aims.

Geotourism invites visitors to understand a place through its geological heritage and the connections between landscape, nature, culture and local life. UNESCO's Geotourism for UNESCO Global Geoparks toolkit (2024) offers guidance on developing and managing this sustainably with communities and local businesses. The steps highlighted in the toolkit for development and management of a geotourism destination were followed for the renewal of this strategy.

Dark Sky Ecotourism uses the experience of naturally dark night skies to support learning, nature appreciation and local livelihoods while protecting night-time habitats and limiting light pollution. The Dark Sky Ecotourism Erasmus+ project Guide (2023) provides practical ideas for rural tourism providers. For the Geopark, guided geological walks, local stories and carefully designed stargazing could complement one another, subject to suitable sites, safe access, landowner agreement and responsible lighting.



Picture by Felix Sproll



3. SWOT Analysis of Tourism in the Geopark

Strengths

- UNESCO Global Geopark designation 2026-2030.
- Geology of international significance.
- Pristine and breathtaking natural environment.
- World-class opportunities for walking, cycling, angling, cultural immersion.
- UNESCO Global Geopark status helps protect the environment and sustain thriving communities.
- Existence of quality visitor experience infrastructure within the Geopark territory – The Western Way, the Tóchar Phádraig, 1 National Cycling Trail with 4 in the greater area, 9 National Walking Trails with 14 in the greater area, quality fishing and angling lakes and rivers.
- Established hospitality sector including some internationally recognised high-end services.
- Location on the Wild Atlantic Way
- Solid financial support of stakeholder agencies: Geological Survey Ireland, Galway County Council, Mayo County Council, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland.
- In-kind support from stakeholder agencies, including Fáilte Ireland, Coillte, IFI, OPW and NPWS.
- Strong, expert management team and cross-community representation committed to the long-term vision and active on-the-ground in the Geopark territory.
- Developing sense of connection between towns, villages and communities of the Geopark area.
- Demonstrated ability to leverage funding opportunities.
- Údarás na Gaeltachta is an important strong partner in promotion, training, enterprise development and capacity building.
- Attractive and informative website linked with active social media presence promoting the features and experiences of the region in everyday language.
- Expand social media for key target groups.
- Increased sense of pride of place in communities from UGG status.

Weaknesses & Vulnerabilities

- Insufficient economic activity to sustain employment in all Geopark communities.
- Limited sense of connection between towns, villages and communities of the Geopark area.
- Underdeveloped collaboration between businesses and visitor experience providers within the Geopark area. Geopark Business network has only limited interconnectivity.
- Visitor experiences and itineraries require further development and coordination.
- Lack of clarity around future governance structure, funding and resourcing of the UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Lack of knowledge and awareness among locals and visitors of the geological and wider heritage of the area and what the UNESCO Global Geopark designation means.
- Lack of a clear, concise public message explaining what the Geopark is and why it is special.
- Website lacks transparency regarding management and governance. Improvements are needed with regard to basic information for visitors (i.e. itineraries, downloadable maps, an option to register an interest in volunteering).
- Requirement to revalidate UNESCO Global Geopark designation by 2030.
- Modest level of community engagement in the Geopark.
- Lack of identity as a destination or proposition in the Galway/Mayo area.
- 'Gaps' in the current tourism offering including hospitality and activity services, well-informed guides and communities, information infrastructure and signage.
- Lack of quality affordable accommodation, public transport and insufficient year-round food and hospitality offering.
- Current short-term funding and lack of long-term contract security for staff.

Opportunities

- Strengthening of the Irish Language & Gaeltacht culture.
- Become an exemplar of sustainable tourism and community-led tourism within Galway, Mayo and beyond.
- Promote a balanced tourism model that supports informed visitors and supports, thriving businesses, engaged communities and a protected environment.
- Develop authentic, regenerative visitor experiences that celebrate the Geopark's geology, biodiversity, heritage, Irish language, local food and culture.
- Capitalise on emerging visitor demand for family-friendly experiences, places of escape and opportunities to connect with nature and with local culture.
- Capitalise on the diversity of learning opportunities for students and visitors e.g through experiencing the landscape, local stories, citizen science projects, etc.
- Leverage national and international funding opportunities.
- Develop food/drinks tourism and agritourism as an expression of Geopark heritage and culture.
- Outdoor-museum-style experiences, including digital and other tools.
- Visitor experiences built upon the Irish language and Gaeltacht culture e.g. sean-nos dancing and singing, language immersion, storytelling, pilgrimage.
- Training around experiences, e.g walks, cycling, water sports.
- Collaborative destination marketing to maximize value of UNESCO brand.
- Development of 'turning-point infrastructure' including digital information panels, signage, (satellite) visitor centers, walking and cycling trails, greenways, etc.
- Development of events promoting the geopark partners in festivals, commemorations.
- Proximity to 'hook' experiences such as Galway city, Westport and Clew Bay, Kylemore Abbey, Mayo Dark Sky Park, National Museum at Turlough House and Connemara and Wild Nephin National Parks.
- Well-targeted promotion of the Geopark in key national and international markets.
- Lead in progress towards 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Threats

- Economic uncertainty including from global geopolitical tensions.
- Greater loss of the Irish Language and Gaeltacht culture.
- Threats to international tourism in the coming decade.
- Population decline in some Geopark towns and villages.
- Declining employment opportunities for younger people.
- Overtourism at sensitive locations, leading to local residents push back, damage to biodiversity and sensitive habitats, and declining water quality.
- Failure to successfully brand and promote the JCWL UNESCO Global Geopark as an attractive destination in the face of intensifying other national and international competition.
- Low public awareness could limit visitor interest, community engagement and partner investment.
- Failure to engage local businesses and tourism development bodies to adopt sustainable and ecologically responsible approaches to tourism development.
- Withdrawal of monetary and in-kind support by any of the stakeholder agencies.
- Failure to engage local communities including farmers/landowners in the Geopark idea.
- Fears and apprehensions of landowners with regard to future designation and land access issues.
- Destructive forces of Climate Change and other environmental threats including potential damage to landscapes, habitats and service infrastructure from extreme events and geohazard.
- Lack of tourism infrastructure at geosites and other visitor experiences.



4. Emerging Visitor Trends

The Geopark team has gathered visitor and employment data from its business network members, local community organisations and partner agencies involved in the management of walking infrastructure. The data is in the form of annual visitor numbers (people counters), bed nights and ticketed entries from 2019 to 2025 (or as many years as could be provided).

MAIN ATTRACTIONS

Kylemore Abbey attracts the largest number of visitors for the Geopark with over 500,000 annual visitors in the past three years including over 300,000 paying to visit the abbey and grounds. The vast majority of these visitors do not stay overnight in the Geopark but rather come for the day from Galway city, the rest of Connemara or Westport. A large number of these visitors go on to Killary Fjord and Leenane although we don't have accurate numbers for these except for the numbers coming on to the local boat tour (over 30,000).

The second busiest area is Cong with over 36,000 annual bed nights in the Ashford estate alone and over 85,000 annual visitors to the Cong Woods trail. Of these, just under 10,000 visit the local tourist office managed by the community and open from May to September.

There are close to 50,000 annual visitors to Aughnanure Castle outside Oughterard, over 30,000 visitors to Moore Hall and about 20,000 visitors to Tourmakeady Woods and to Clonbur Woods. Numbers counted on the Western Way are lower with close to 9,000 people counted in Mám Éan and less than 2,000 on the Derroura mountain bike trail. Just under 10,000 people are counted annually in Ballintubber Abbey (although this does not include unpaid visitors to the ground) and about 3,000 for Dríoglann Loch Measc.

TRENDS

Tourism sector employment

Employment in hotels and attractions shows an overall increase of 8.9% up to 2026 in the four years since Covid. In parallel, staff numbers are all on the increase since 2019 with the majority of employees working within a 20km radius of their place of work.

Walking trails and cycling

Numbers using national walking trails have decreased from the height of the Covid years (2020-2022) but recent years show either a stabilisation or increase in numbers. Large numbers of cyclists use the roads of the Geopark for leisure individually, for specific events or through a number of local clubs. Numbers of cycle club members have decreased in the last two years mainly due to road safety concerns.

Angling/fishing

The numbers of people involved with fishing/angling have dropped significantly in the last 40 years. One of the major events in the region is the World Cup Trout Fly competition in the summer on Lough Mask. The recent number of entries for this competition are still about 350 but were closer to 1,300 in the 1980s.

Festivals

Most local festivals and events have seen either stable numbers or an increase in participants in the years since Covid. That includes the 3 local weekly Parkruns in Clonbur, Oughterard and Tourmakeady. The largest festival in the Geopark is the Cong Food Village festival with 15,000 visitors over the two days in July 2026.

5. Vision 2026-2030

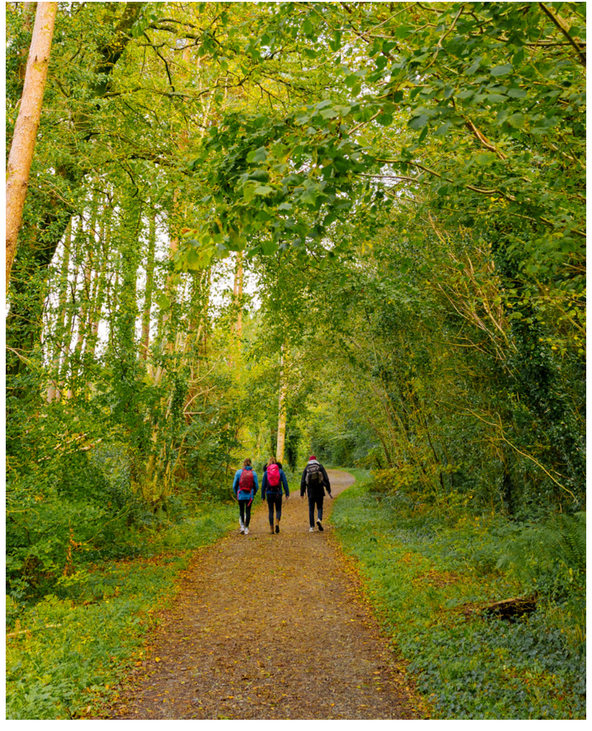
The vision statement below for tourism development in the Geopark 2026-2030 takes due account of the points elaborated in the sections above.

UNESCO Global Geopark designation, already achieved for Joyce Country & Western Lakes region, is the basis of our vision to 2030. The process of maintaining the 4-yearly Geopark designation is a connector and motivator for all stakeholders. It stimulates and leverages further sustainable development in partnership with its communities and other stakeholders. This vision is built on commitment to community, education, conservation and regenerative tourism within increasingly broad-based local economies in the Geopark communities.

Tourism development in our Geopark will be guided by its contribution to thriving, sustainable communities, businesses and ecosystems. In short, how tourism contributes to the long term well-being of our place.

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Regenerative tourism is development that has a positive impact on the local community and environment.
It goes beyond the notion of sustainable tourism which focuses on reducing negative impacts



6. Strategic Tourism Priorities in our Geopark

We have identified six strategic priorities for tourism that share what success looks like for the Geopark in 2030, as the basis for actions listed in section 9.

the Geopark in 2030, as the basis for actions listed in section 9." Internationally Recognized Destination of Distinction

Our region is part of a select network of special destinations around the world that have achieved UNESCO Global Geopark status as a testament to our outstanding geological heritage. Key stakeholders at community and institutional levels came together to achieve this outcome. Strong, effective working relationships are a positive legacy from the challenging process that achieved UNESCO Global Geopark status.

Leadership in Sustainable Development & Sustainable Living

Our Geopark plays an active role in facilitating progress within our counties and on the island of Ireland towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (Appendix 2). We raise awareness of the potential impact of climate change on the region, and provide local communities, businesses and visitors with information and ideas on how to leverage funding for projects to mitigate and adapt to its potential effects, harmonised with other environmental sustainability initiatives. We empower people to live, work and visit in a way that honours and conserves the environment in this very special place for current and future generations.

Community

Communities led the initiative to establish our Geopark and we have provided inclusive frameworks for connecting communities across the region. From the educational events and resources created, our communities are proud of the UNESCO Global Geopark status, value what it stands for and know why their place is worthy of this designation. Communities have strengthened both their individual identities and their collective identity and there is a tangibly strong sense of pride of place among those who live and work in the Geopark region.

Business

We recognise the value of sustainable and profitable businesses in supporting and enhancing our communities and our region. Tourism is one of our primary industries and is characterised now by a diverse range of providers who enjoy a longer season for the benefit of local residents as well. Other businesses in the region benefit from increased footfall and activity through tourism. Members of the Geopark Business Network amplify their positive social and economic contributions and explore ways to address any potential negative ecological impacts that may arise.

Language & Culture

The Irish language and Gaeltacht culture is celebrated, and is a defining and differentiating characteristic of our UNESCO Global Geopark. They are a living and natural part of our day-to-day lives, are integrated into our visitor experiences and are reflected daily in our engagement with locals and other stakeholders.

Geopark Experience

We have created visitor experiences that truly reflect our place and culture and the values of the Geopark. A range of flagship experiences are built on our key differentiators of language, heritage, culture, ethos, community and ecology. Our experiences are designed to connect visitors and locals alike, and to give them a deeper understanding of local geology, the environment and their influence on these communities.

7. Geopark Charter for Community & Tourism

In line with our vision to 2030 and the principles of UNESCO Global Geoparks, our Charter has been developed to communicate what our Geopark stands for. This is a set of principles which guides our partnerships with businesses, communities and other stakeholders, all of whom are also asked to subscribe and uphold these principles in the development of the Geopark.

GRADAM

WE SHOWCASE OUR OUTSTANDING LANDSCAPE

Our geoheritage is of international significance and we proudly showcase our diverse geology, landscape, culture, history and built heritage.

BUAN

WE FACILITATE PROGRESS TOWARDS GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

We support and encourage best practices in relation to the unique habitats and biodiversity of our rivers, lakes, mountains, rolling hills and valleys, recognising the fundamental role played by farmers and other landowners in this. We promote responsible management of resources in our communities and businesses. We champion approaches that energize our traditions and customs and foster a flourishing environment and community.

TEANGA

WE CHAMPION OUR GAELTACHT CULTURE & LANGUAGE

We are proud to have a Gaeltacht in the region, and promote and embody the richness and use of the Irish language and Gaeltacht traditions in our events and daily experiences. We create opportunities for communities, businesses and visitors to live in, learn and share the Irish language and Gaeltacht culture.

POBAL

WE EMPOWER OUR COMMUNITIES

We work to ensure that our Geopark communities can fully embrace and appreciate the global significance and importance of their place. We share knowledge and learning opportunities that foster a shared Geopark identity and pride across the region. We strive to make services available to the widest possible audience.

GNÓ

WE CELEBRATE/NURTURE RESPONSIBLE AND ROBUST BUSINESSES

We value the role of businesses in creating a thriving community, economy and destination. We nurture collaboration between businesses and support them in growing skills in business start-ups and management, job creation, tourism development and sustainable tourism practices.

FÁILTE

WE ENGAGE AND IMPRESS OUR VISITORS

We invite our visitors, holiday-makers and learners to immerse themselves in our exceptional geological heritage and our distinctive culture and way of life. We open possibilities to become part of our community, even if only for a short while. Our Geopark experiences are fun, educational and memorable.

MEITHEAL

WE PARTNER WITH OTHERS AND WORK TOGETHER

We actively work with all stakeholders to enhance our shared ability to create and maintain a vibrant and flourishing destination, economy and community. Our stakeholders include local authorities, Údarás na Gaeltachta and other national statutory agencies, educational bodies, local communities and businesses.

8. Strategic Objectives for Tourism Development 2026-2030

1. Grow awareness of the JCWL UNESCO Global Geopark among residents and potential visitors as a truly distinctive destination offering a unique sense of place. *(Gradam, Fáilte)*

2. Develop and deliver sustainable, world-class visitor experiences that are unique to JCWL UGGp and its people, and that share distinctive attributes of our geology, language, landscape and food. *(Fáilte, Teanga, Buan, Pobal, Gnó)*

3. Create greater educational, recreational and leisure opportunities that act as compelling attractors for the destination. *(Fáilte, Gnó, Pobal)*

4. Integrate the Irish language and Gaeltacht culture into the overall Geopark Visitor Experience *(Teanga, Meitheal, Pobal)*

5. Support job creation and the local economy through development in the networking, collaborative and business management skills of tourism and tourism-dependent businesses. *(Gnó, Meitheal, Pobal)*

6. Encourage resident, business and visitor responsibility around use of resources, behaviour in the landscape and engagement with the community. *(Buan, Meitheal)*



9. Action Plan 2026-2030

MONITORING AND REVIEW

Progress will be reviewed through visitor and business information, community feedback, participation in cultural and educational activities, and monitoring of visitor impacts at selected sites.

	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	KEY ACTIONS	KPI	Budget	Timeline
1	Grow awareness of the JCWL UNESCO Global Geopark among residents and potential visitors as a truly distinctive destination offering a unique sense of place.	Retain UNESCO Global Geopark Status for the Joyce Country & Western Lakes region.	Revalidation by UNESCO		2030
		Develop and share an “elevator pitch” clear message about what the Geopark is.	Pitch		2027
		Renew signage to include UNESCO logo. Disseminate flag into communities	Renewed signs community flags	5,000	2029
		Expand and consolidate network of information centres in the Geopark region. Work with business partners. Develop maps for local walks, features and attractions.	Number of info centre	20,000	2029
		Use and disseminate visitor-facing destination brand and visual identity aligned with the local tourism strategies (DEDPs, Údaras na Gaeltachta, County Councils).	Maps, flags, branded items	2,500 per annum	Annual
		Organise a schedule of Geopark events throughout the year	Number of events	5,000 per annum	Annual
		Work with communities to develop art installations or displays reinforcing the Geopark themes in the region.	Number of new installations	10,000 per annum	Annual
		Secure the funding to resource a destination marketing and storytelling strategy that leverages our natural competitive advantages in the areas of language, culture, food and geoheritage.	Tourism officer position Tourism strategy	40,000 per annum	2028
2	Develop and deliver sustainable, world-class visitor experiences, that are unique to JCWL UGGp and its people, and that share distinctive attributes of our geology, language, landscape and food.	Communicate the defining hallmark characteristics of JCWL visitor experiences e.g. - Accessible geological heritage - Up-close with Nature - Bi-lingual - Engagement with locals - Local food and drink experience - Music - Dark Skies	Updated website Branding programme with business network members	500	2027
		Develop simple itinerary suggestions for various types of visitors and at various times of year: - Families - Pet-friendly - Outdoor enthusiasts - Culturally curious - Seasonal festivals (St Patricks’s day, Halloween, Summer, etc.)	Updated website		2027
		Strengthen business network according to businesses needs, following inspiration from successful models in other geoparks.	Businesses feedback. Attendance at business network meeting		Annual
		Gather feedback from visitors	Feedback survey result	1,000	2028
3	Create greater educational, recreational and leisure opportunities that act as compelling attractors for the destination.	Support and promote investment in world class visitor experiences such as greenways, blueways, angling, walking and cycling trails, geosite interpretation and pilgimage tours.	Number of new experiences		
		Work in tandem with JCWL UGG Education programme, including for Outdoor Classroom actions.	Number of Edu Prog. actions		2027
		Improve bilingual signage, waymarking and visitor orientation plan for the Geopark.	New waymarking arrows	5,000	2029
		Review Geopark ambassador programme with focus on communication, tourism and local community involvement	Updated course offering		2027

	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	KEY ACTIONS	KPI	Budget	Timeline
4	Integrate the Irish language and Gaeltacht culture into the overall Geopark Visitor Experience	Create tools and resources that empower businesses and communities to use access to Gaeilge, Gaeltacht and Geology as key selling points; such as a simple research report on use of Irish for marketing or further connection with the language plan in Gaeltacht and Ballinrobe.	Marketing in Irish report. Leaflet for Irish use in Geopark	3,000	2028
		Ensure a Geopháirc le Gaeilge programme that ensures availability and access to fully bilingual visitor orientation, information materials and events at all levels within the destination.	Gaeilge plan for the UGG		2028
		Partner with the Gaeltacht Language Plan Officer to engage with local courses and Ciorcail Chomhrá for the visitors and local communities alike.	Number of joint event with Language Plan		Annual
5	Support job creation and the local economy through development in the networking, collaborative and business management skills of tourism and tourism-dependent businesses.	Engage regularly with the Geopark Business Network members to improve outcomes and to survey for training needs.	Data record on jobs and level of activity		Annual
		Resource training, networking and business development opportunities for members of the Geopark Business Network and the local communities – Provide mentoring and collaboration opportunities for Business Network members	Business development course Mentoring uptake	40,000	2026
		Enable businesses and communities to engage with national and international networks of UNESCO sites for inspirations on business ventures such as local food, drinks and Food Trail, Heritage Trail and immersive language experiences.			2030
		Connect and engage with training and courses offered by LEOs, LEADER and others			Annual

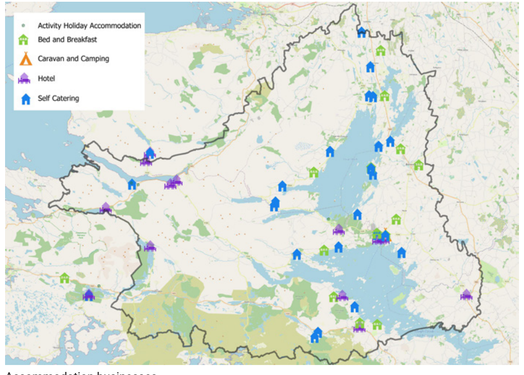
	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	KEY ACTIONS	KPI	Budget	Timeline
6	Encourage resident, business and visitor responsibility around use of resources, behaviour in the landscape and engagement with the community.	Communicate Geopark ethos in the area of sustainable management of resources (waste, water and energy), and share information and best practice for homes and businesses in the Geopark communities			Annual
		Support businesses and communities to positively influence visitor understanding of and engagement with nature, language and local community (e.g. Geopark Code of Conduct, Leave No Trace principles)			
		Actively monitor and respond to visitor behaviour and visitor impacts in the Geopark.	Geosite monitoring		Annual



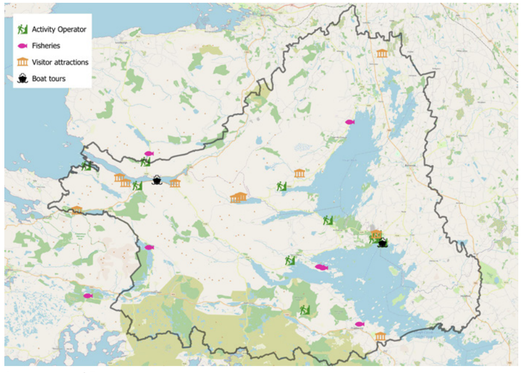
Appendices

APPENDIX 1:

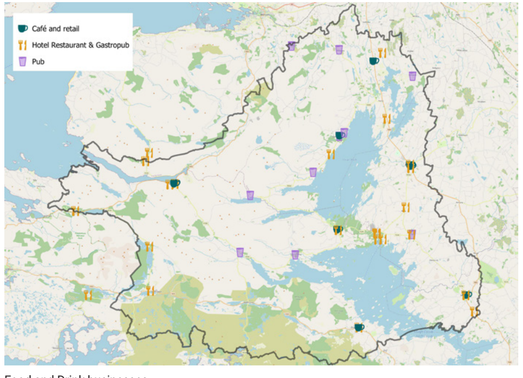
Maps of existing tourism businesses in 2026.



Accommodation businesses



Attractions and Experiences



Food and Drink businesses

Appendices

APPENDIX 2:

UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

The Division for Sustainable Development Goals within the United Nations Department of Social & Economic Affairs states:

"The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests."

Source https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org



Údarás na Gaeltachta
Comharchumann Dhúiche Sheoigheach Teo.
Geological Survey Suirbhéireacht Gheolaíochta Ireland | Éireann
Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council
Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo Mayo County Council
Joyce Country & Western Lakes Geo Enterprise
Fáilte Ireland
COILLTE



GEOPHÁIRC
Dhúiche Sheoigheach & Lochanna an Iarthair
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