

# Geopark status questionnaire

Please take two minutes to complete the following short questionnaire. Recording your thoughts and concerns is extremely important and we would appreciate if you could send us your responses in the post or via email (see contact details overleaf). Alternatively, you can place your completed questionnaire in a dedicated box at your local post office.

Do you feel you have a good understanding of what a Geopark is?

- Yes     No     Not sure

Would you like more information on...

- Access     Economic benefits  
 Management     Educational benefits  
 Legal implications     Other (please specify)

Do you think Geopark status would benefit the Burren?

- Yes     No     Not sure

Are you a ...

- Landowner     Local resident  
 Tourism provider     Education provider  
 Other (please specify)

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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## Tell us what you think!

Please contact us for more information and to contribute your thoughts on Geopark status.

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See also [www.burrenbeo.ie](http://www.burrenbeo.ie)  
and our fortnightly column  
"Geopark Journal"  
in the Clare Champion

## What next?

This leaflet was developed following suggestions we received from attendees at our recent Burren-wide series of public meetings on Geopark status last November.

Follow-up meetings will take place in the New Year to discuss the issues raised during the November meetings and in the questionnaires, and to decide on whether to proceed with further investigations into Geopark status. Details of this meeting will be advertised in the local press and on our website.

# Geopark status and the Burren



## How does it concern me?



*managing visitor access*

## Geoparks - Key Points:

- A Geopark is **not** a World Heritage Site, nor an SAC, nor a stepping stone to either status
- It carries **no restrictions** and does not affect planning and farming
- It is **not imposed on local communities** "from above": community support and involvement is absolutely essential to the success of a Geopark
- Instead of continuous coverage of a region, Geoparks can be a network of sites
- A Geopark is a region of international significance in terms of its geology (rocks and landscape)
- It relates geology to the local flora, fauna, history and culture
- It has a sustainable development and management plan agreed with local stakeholders
- It promotes awareness of a region's geological heritage by sharing information among locals and visitors and by supporting existing, and developing new, educational programmes

## Planning and legal implications

Geopark status is not a legislative designation and, as such, carries no legal obligations or restrictions. It cannot affect planning decisions or agricultural practices. Inclusion of a statement to this effect in the County Development Plan (as suggested by the North Clare County Councillors)

would ensure that the non-legislative basis of the status is upheld into the future.



*business opportunities, e.g. agritourism*

## How much of the Burren would be covered by a Geopark?

A Geopark does not have to mean "blanket coverage" of a region. Instead, a Geopark can be a network of individual sites, whereby the land in between each site is not part of the Geopark. Some Geoparks consist solely of sites in public ownership; in other Geoparks, sites on private land are included but only with the agreement of the landowner.

## How would a Geopark link in with existing initiatives in the Burren, e.g. Burrenbeo and BurrenLife?

A Geopark would complement and support the awareness and educational elements of these initiatives. Due to their different structure and focus, each initiative can access and attract different sources of funding.



*supporting education programmes, e.g. EcoGeo*

## What are the benefits of Geopark status?

- It is internationally recognised and is a tool for marketing and promoting all aspects of a region, from the natural heritage to local accommodation, restaurants, produce and events
- It can attract funding to develop and sustain programmes and facilities in a region
- It can provide opportunities for landowners to develop agri-tourism businesses
- It requires high standards in education, facilities, and management to be maintained: the status, once granted, is re-assessed by the UNESCO-European Geoparks Network every four years

## How is a Geopark managed?

The management structure in existing Geoparks is a mixture of representatives of the local authority, agencies and the local community. Local residents are a **vital** part of the management team and therefore play a key role in the development of a management plan for the Geopark.

## What about trespassing?

Geopark status does **not** afford open access to private lands. Instead, Geoparks highlight the need to respect private property and would guide visitors onto managed sites and trails, particularly those that are already accessible to the public. Sites of geological interest on privately owned land would be included in the Geopark only if landowners and Geopark staff reach an agreement regarding visitor access and management. These sites can be withdrawn from the Geopark if the landowner so wishes.

## How is Geopark status being investigated?

The suitability of the Burren for Geopark status will be investigated by Dr Maria McNamara and the other members of Burren Connect, with advice from individuals and representatives of various local and regional groups. All are welcome to contribute.



## What is Burren Connect?

Burren Connect is a project working on environmental protection and sustainable visitor management in the Burren. We are based in Ennistymon and are involved in traffic management, trail development, education and training programmes, and research into ecotourism. Financial support is provided by Clare County Council, Shannon Development, and the Geological Survey of Ireland. Please see our website [www.burrenconnect.ie](http://www.burrenconnect.ie) for further details.

