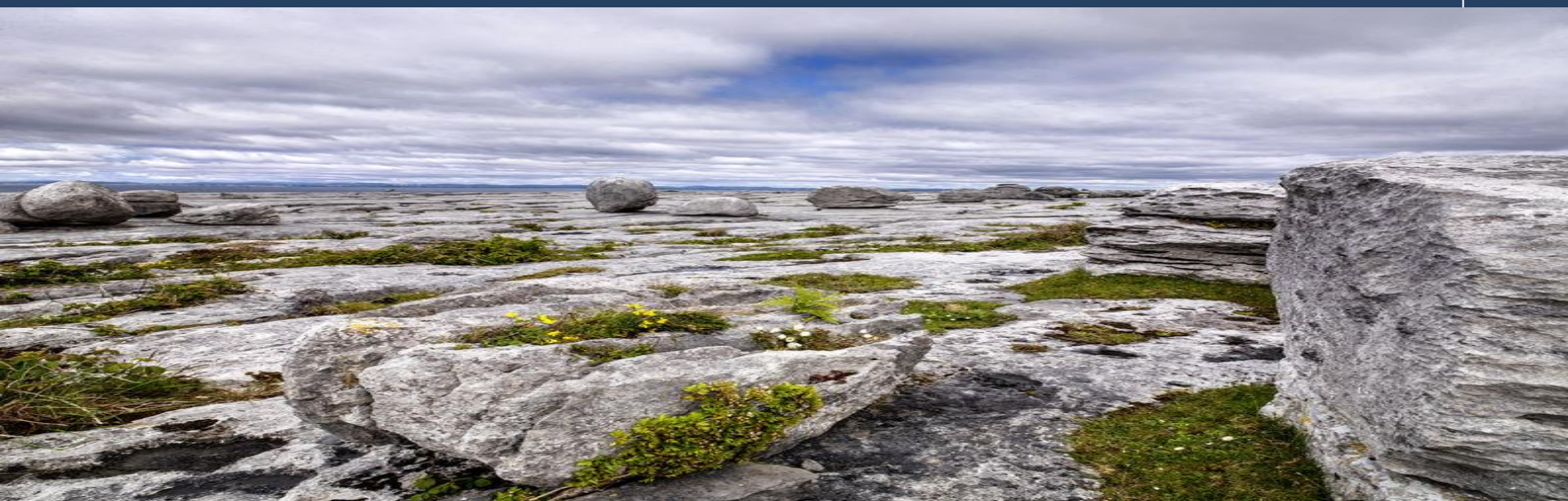


# The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan

Plean Forbartha an Bhoireann agus Aillte an  
Mhothair ar Eispéireas Cuairteora



DRAFT Version 16 July 2019



**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority



**WILD ATLANTIC WAY**

SLÍ AN ATLANTAIGH FHIÁIN

## The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan

<b>VISION:</b>	Increase dwell time and inspire visitors and the next generation to become custodians of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher
<b>TARGET MARKETS:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally Curious</li> <li>• Great Escapers</li> </ul>
<b>DESTINATION PROMISE:</b>	<p>....feel the pulse of this perfumed earth, and the heartbeat of these ancient stones....</p> <p>....a vast memorial to bygone cultures....</p>
<b>UNIQUE SELLING POINTS:</b>	A remarkable place that inspires visitors to want to connect through light, landscape, a sense of space, tradition and time
<b>BURREN THEMES:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening to Ancient Rocks</li> <li>• Savouring Life's Flavours in the Burren</li> </ul>
<b>HERO EXPERIENCES:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Walk on the Edge of the World along the Cliffs of Moher</li> <li>2. Discover the Burren Way through the Living Landscape</li> <li>3. Wellness the Wild Atlantic Way</li> <li>4. Savour the Unique Local Flavours of the Burren</li> <li>5. See Life Shaped by the Ancient Farming Landscape of the Burren</li> <li>6. Immerse yourself in the Music and Dance of the Burren</li> <li>7. Adventures On and Under in the Burren</li> </ol>

Located in County Clare, the county of Culture, on the West Coast of Ireland, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher destination is part of the Cliff Coast zone of the Wild Atlantic Way. This world-unique limestone landscape is famous for the powerful combination of fascinating natural and cultural landscapes as well as its rich historical and archaeological heritage, and has become a well-known tourist destination.

The Destination boasts the magnificent Cliffs of Moher, a Burren Geopark Geosite, one of Ireland's most visited natural attractions. The Burren National Park and the UNESCO awarded Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark also contain many fascinating geological features and natural sites, and include various stone dolmens, that are older than the pyramids in Egypt, as well as ring forts, ancient churches and castles. It's flora and fauna are celebrated with Atlantic, Arctic, Alpine and Mediterranean plants living in harmony together.

Recognising the need for improved development and promotion of the area's unique features to achieve increased international cut-through, Fáilte Ireland has developed a Visitor Experience Development Plan for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher destination.

This Plan also provides a clear direction towards strengthening and growing the destinations international market share through the delivery of hero experiences.

The primary target markets for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher are the Culturally Curious and Great Escapers who are seeking:

CULTURALLY CURIOUS TRAVELLERS	GREAT ESCAPERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To <b>meet the locals</b> and to get to know their story</li> <li>➤ Engage in activities and experiences that help them <b>develop as a person</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Do things that are different</b>, and authentic or unique to a place</li> <li>➤ <b>Participate</b>, they don't just hear the story but also want to be involved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Escape the everyday</b>, find a place to get away from it all</li> <li>➤ Find places and <b>experiences that are life enriching</b></li> <li>➤ <b>Do things that are different</b>, and authentic or unique to a place</li> <li>➤ <b>Participate</b>, they don't just hear the story but also want to be involved</li> </ul>

With the extensive increase in visitor numbers during peak season to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher, visitor management and identifying total capacity numbers is required to ensure that the FIT (Free and Independent Traveller) visitor experience is improved and to protect and sustain the values and communities that created a profoundly unique tourist destination for Ireland.



The Cliffs of Moher is Ireland's second top fee-paying attraction, with over 1.5 m visitors. The pace of growth in day visitation, with the accompanying visitor management concerns, and the overall low visitor spend in the area arising from the nature of visitation are the key challenges underlying this VEDP. The area is of outstanding beauty and international significance, which provides a strong basis to address the issues and realise new opportunities.

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the lowest spend returns from international visitors – very large number based in for the Cliffs of Moher without further engagement in the area – over reliance on day visitors.</li> <li>• Traffic management issues and visitor management concerns – high concentration of visitors and need for dispersal.</li> <li>• Promotional activities limited overseas.</li> <li>• Few online packages.</li> <li>• Limited accommodation capacity in destination.</li> <li>• Fragmented communication in region between local groups + links with Clare Tourism fragmented.</li> <li>• Infrastructure and lack of visitor services.</li> <li>• Traffic concerns for cyclists – potential to undermine the experience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of a Visitor Management Plan to disperse visitors throughout the area + greater use of capacity management principles.</li> <li>• Redesigning and managing the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk to become a walk of Global significance with managed access and extended value.</li> <li>• Amplifying recognition of the Burren as an internationally significant landscape recognised by UNESCO.</li> <li>• Promoting exceptional experiences relating to Burren adventure, wellness and education.</li> <li>• Creating all year round visitor experiences to capture Great Escapers and winter travellers from Germany, France, UK, US, Australia and New Zealand, extending the season and sustaining employment.</li> <li>• Strengthening the partnerships between local organisations and creating a stronger coordinated proactive marketing alliance.</li> <li>• Improving accommodation options.</li> <li>• Creating premier niche eco experiences.</li> </ul>

The way forward for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher is through partnerships, connectivity of the products and development of new experiences, and a focus on getting the story to the customer – inspiring them to travel off-season, stay longer and enjoy the essence of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher. To help achieve this, nine Catalyst projects have been identified along with a range of supporting recommendations. These must align with the regions guiding principles, which are to:

- Increase environmental conservation through sustainable tourism;
- Build community support for tourism through events and local-buy programmes;
- Boost the visitor connection with the Burren and overall visitor satisfaction; and
- Maximise the value of tourism (not just the volume).

## CATALYST PROJECTS: (in order of priority)

1. Develop and implement an **Integrated Traffic and Transport Strategy** for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher.
2. **Upgrade of 2km of the Cliff Walk** (1km either side of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre) through a partnership with land owners and National Parks to develop a management plan and future funding model that supports the land owners and allows for reinvestment and a sustainable walking infrastructure.
3. Develop a **winter Burren Music, Dance & Story Trail** connecting visitors with music, dance, stories and traditions of the place – people and villages.
4. Create a **'Wellness the Wild Atlantic Way' programme** and dedicated section on the Fáilte Ireland website that looks at the broader definition of 'wellness' including connection, time in nature, and the need to sleep well, as well as the traditional, relaxation, healthy food and exercise elements.
5. **Develop the Burren Discovery Trail** to assist in dispersing independent travellers eastward to the Burren Lowlands and provide interpretive content to interpret the landscape and reveal the underlying stories.
6. **Support farmers keen to diversify** their business to include tourism with a business support programme and guidance on insurance and planning requirements and investment in sustainable tourism experiences.
7. **Be a Custodian for a day** – join the Geopark to experience what is involved in managing a Global Geopark.
8. Facilitate workshop(s) to assist in further developing and promoting a series of **cultural events that encourage year-round visitation** through dedicated timely funding.
9. Encourage the establishment of new **eco-friendly, responsible adventure experiences such as new cycling experiences along the green roads** including mountain-biking and the 'edge' experience.





**Postscript,  
Seamus Heaney**

*And some time make the time to drive out west  
Into County Clare, along the Flagggy Shore,  
In September or October, when the wind  
And the light are working off each other  
So that the ocean on one side is wild  
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones  
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit  
By the earthed lightening of flock of swans,  
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,  
Their fully-grown headstrong-looking heads  
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.  
Useless to think you'll park or capture it  
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,  
A hurry through which known and strange things pass  
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways  
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.*

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Boland Marketing



## Disclaimer

The following Visitor Experience Development Plan has been prepared on behalf of Fáilte Ireland by a project team comprised of Team Tourism, EarthCheck Pty Ltd and Boland Marketing. Any representation, statement, opinion or advice, expressed or implied in this document is made in good faith but on the basis that this project team is not liable (whether by reason of negligence, lack of care or otherwise) to any person for any damage or loss whatsoever which has occurred or may occur in relation to that person taking or not taking (as the case may be) action in respect of any representation, statement or advice referred to in this document.

All images have been sourced from Fáilte Ireland or EarthCheck.



Located in County Clare on the West Coast of Ireland, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region is part of the Cliff Coast zone of the Wild Atlantic Way. This world-unique landscape is famous for the powerful combination of fascinating natural and cultural landscapes as well as its rich historical and archaeological heritage, and has become a well-known tourist destination. Today, the opportunity exists for tourism businesses to create new journeys that inspire modern poetry, art, photography and stories, shared not only through travel experiences, but also on social media both by the Trade and in partnership with the Wild Atlantic Way.

This Visitor Experience Development Plan has been guided by a project Working Group and has been prepared in alignment with Fáilte Ireland's Guidelines for Experience Development Plans. The process of its development was based on consultation with local businesses, and an assessment of the destination in terms of challenges and opportunities. It has been written to inspire and assist tourism businesses and stakeholders to deliver new and improve existing visitor experiences.

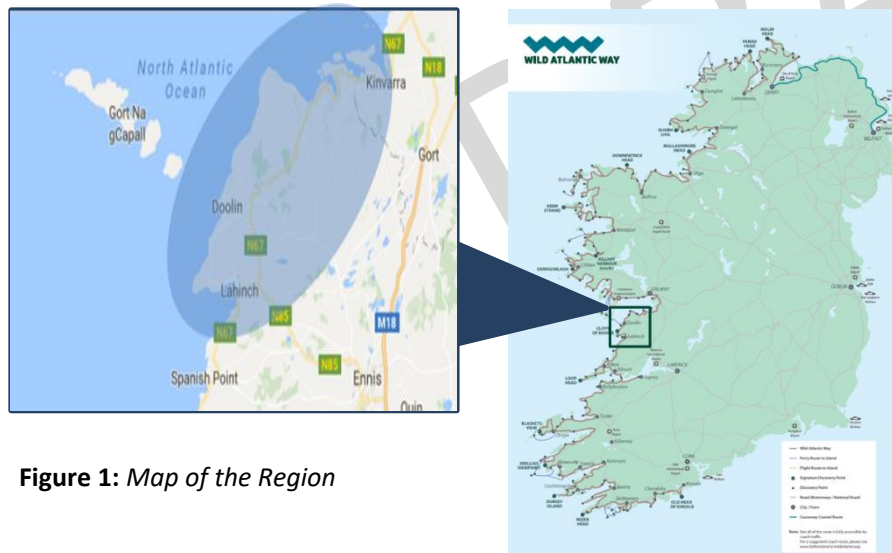


Figure 1: Map of the Region

Source: Fáilte Ireland

## Experience Development Plan Aims and Objectives

To increase the economic and social contribution of tourism to the destination. The key objectives of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan are to develop hero, supporting and ancillary experiences for the region that will:

- motivate visitors to **stay longer and spend more**;
- **extend the length of the season**;
- align to relevant **brand, target markets and segments**;
- **sustain and increase job creation** in the local area; and
- **protect the special environmental character** of the region.

This Plan is supported by recommendations required to create an **internationally recognised visitor experience**.

Through the delivery of the Visitor Experience Development Plan, it is also the aim to:

- encourage and **engage businesses and local partners**;
- maintain **business engagement beyond the project lifetime**; and
- **build lasting links** between national partners and local tourism experiences.

*Setting the right scene and providing the right environment is important to trigger the right emotions within visitors.*

- National Experience Development Framework



## Clare County Development Plan, 2017 - 2023

The current Vision for the County is “A county that has maximised its unique characteristics, strengths, location and connectivity to become Ireland’s centre of culture, tourism, heritage and the preferred international destination for sustainable investment and innovation. A county in which citizens, visitors and all stakeholders are empowered and supported by public bodies under the leadership of a professional, responsive and progressive local government system.”

Key tourism goals include “A County Clare in which tourism growth continues to play a major role in the future development of the County, adapting to the challenges of competing markets by maximising the development of a high quality, diverse tourist product.” It identifies the county as one of “‘living landscapes’ where people live, work, recreate and visit while respecting, managing and taking pride in the unique landscape of the County”. This new Development Plan has clear goals addressing the community, environmental and economic expectations for the next six years. In-destination, key issues including excess traffic (particularly buses on day trips from Dublin and Galway) have become a major concern for residents, businesses and visitors.

## The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark, Life After Life

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark reached its fifth and final year of EU ‘LIFE’ funding in 2017, allowing much to be achieved in raising awareness, interpreting the landscape, bringing trade on board, and building a platform for sustainable tourism.

A five-year management plan is needed, however, for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher to retain its UNESCO Global Geopark status. This includes a plan to manage peak demand impacts, both social and environmental, better engage consumers in the story of the region and boost awareness of the Burren as an international important location including the popular Cliffs of Moher.

The County Development Plan’s Tourism Objectives for North Clare and the Burren includes the objective to: “To consolidate and improve the Burren as a vibrant, sustainable, world-class destination in order to retain its Geopark status and support its World Heritage Site status”.

## Guiding Principles and Future Measures of Success

Based on the information provided in the key strategic documents, the following guiding principles and future measures of success (once benchmarking is in place) are recommended:

- **Increase environmental conservation** through sustainable tourism;
- **Build community support for tourism** through events and local-buy programmes;
- **Boost the visitor connection** with the Burren and overall visitor satisfaction;
- Maximising the **economic and social contribution of tourism** to the destination; and
- **Implement measures for visitor management** that will help to improve the overall visitor experience as well as retain (and in some cases improve) the region’s unique natural, heritage and cultural assets.



# 1

## Setting the Scene Ag Leagan Amach an Radharc



Image courtesy of Tourism Ireland

*'The people of the Burren are generous in time and spirit'*

- Ralph Doyle, Burren Perfumery

## Ireland's Unique Selling Propositions

Sitting underneath the Brand Ireland pillars are four key propositions (or experience brands) which represent the country's areas of strategic importance. These four areas are:



**Wild Atlantic Way** – “Experience one of the wildest, most enchanting and culturally rich coastal touring routes in the world. Wherever you travel along the Wild Atlantic Way you'll find magic, adventure, history and beauty in abundance.”



**Ireland's Ancient East** – “When you explore Ireland's Ancient East, you wander through 5,000 years of history. In these lush, green lands, tales of feuding dynasties hide behind crumbling Gothic architecture; ghostly tombs predate the pyramids; and knights, kings, monks and Vikings loom large in incredible stories.”



**Dublin A Breath of Fresh Air** – “Visiting Dublin is like taking a great big breath of fresh air. Always invigorating, this Viking city is at once modern and historic, exciting and relaxing.”



**Ireland's Hidden Heartlands** – “Explore the lush green heartlands of Ireland's natural rural beauty... where activity and relaxation are centred around rural communities and their lifestyles, that can be discovered across a lattice work of land and water trails showcased by the iconic River Shannon and the Beara Breifne Way.

## What is an Experience Brand?

Ireland's *Experience Brands* are at the heart of 'Tourism Brand Ireland'. They bring it to life, create the motivation for visitors to visit the Island of Ireland by defining its diverse character in a way potential visitors can understand. The Experience Brands provide the competitive advantage that separates us from our competitors.

An *Experience Brand* therefore must be unique enough to stand out in the international marketplace and stimulate demand. Each *Experience Brand* must have a clear consumer lead proposition which ensures that a consistent approach is taken to the identification and development of memorable tourism experiences within these brands. Each *Experience Brand* must be distinctive in the international marketplace and differentiate itself from other *Experience Brands* within the Island of Ireland and in other destinations.

An Experience Brand must:

- Be **grounded** in the consumer (travel values, social values, behaviours)
- Be **motivational** for international visitors
- Be **of scale** – made up of a critical mass of related attractions and supporting experiences which are purchasable and accessible – supported by appropriate tourism infrastructure
- Be **more than one experience**, and usually a combination of supporting experiences which underpin one or two lead experiences
- Be **unified by a compelling story** – one which has international relevance
- Be capable of **increasing dwell-time** and/or driving **economic benefit**
- Have a **consumer led** proposition, values, etc.
- Be **market-led** and tested





The Wild Atlantic Way is the Burren and Cliffs of Moher's over-arching proposition and delivers the Brand Ireland pillars.

## Wild Atlantic Way Brand Promise

*The Wild Atlantic Way on Ireland's Western Coast off the Western **Edge of Europe**, captivates you with its **wild landscape** that continuously shapes its **living history**; and engages you with its creative and **vibrant communities**, whose **stories and culture** stimulate you, so you are freed up to relax, enjoy and **leave feeling refreshed, renewed and uplifted**.*

This brand promise is delivered through three themes which highlight the unique features of the Wild Atlantic Way. Key to the success of the Wild Atlantic Way as an *Experience Brand* is that we deliver on the brand promise at every point of interaction with the visitor. It needs to be:

- **Real** – based on genuine and authentic assets. It needs to be truly delivered by the tourism businesses included in the brand. The industry needs to buy-into the brand and 'live it' to truly deliver on its promise.
- **Relevant** – developed with the potential visitor in mind and able to satisfy their needs and motivations.
- **Related** - to the other Experience Brands on the Island of Ireland but unique enough to stand out alongside them individually.

*The Wild Atlantic Way on Ireland's west coast leads you through **one of the world's most dramatic coastal landscapes**, a landscape on the edge of Europe that has shaped the development of its people, communities and settlements, a landscape that has inspired its own particular language, literature, art, song and dance. It's a place of many natural features - seascapes, sea-life, cliffs, mountains, glens, loughs, trails and pathways. It's a place to experience nature at its wildest, a place to explore the history of the Gaels and their religion; a place to experience great events, great food and drink, great music and the craic.*

## Wild Atlantic Way Themes

**Life Shaped by the Atlantic** – You can get up close and personal with traditions and spiritual Gaelic Ireland and immerse yourself in the real Ireland where the traditions of the past are very much alive in the music, the song, the dance, storytelling, games and the Irish language.

**Where Land Meets Sea** – On the very edge of Europe, the ocean's force has carved a coast of wild, raw beauty. Huge Atlantic rollers crash and churn, shaping jagged ocean crags, islands and the sheer granite of Europe's tallest sea cliffs. It provides a breathtaking backdrop for active exploration of untamed land and seascapes. Enjoy up close encounters with the elements.

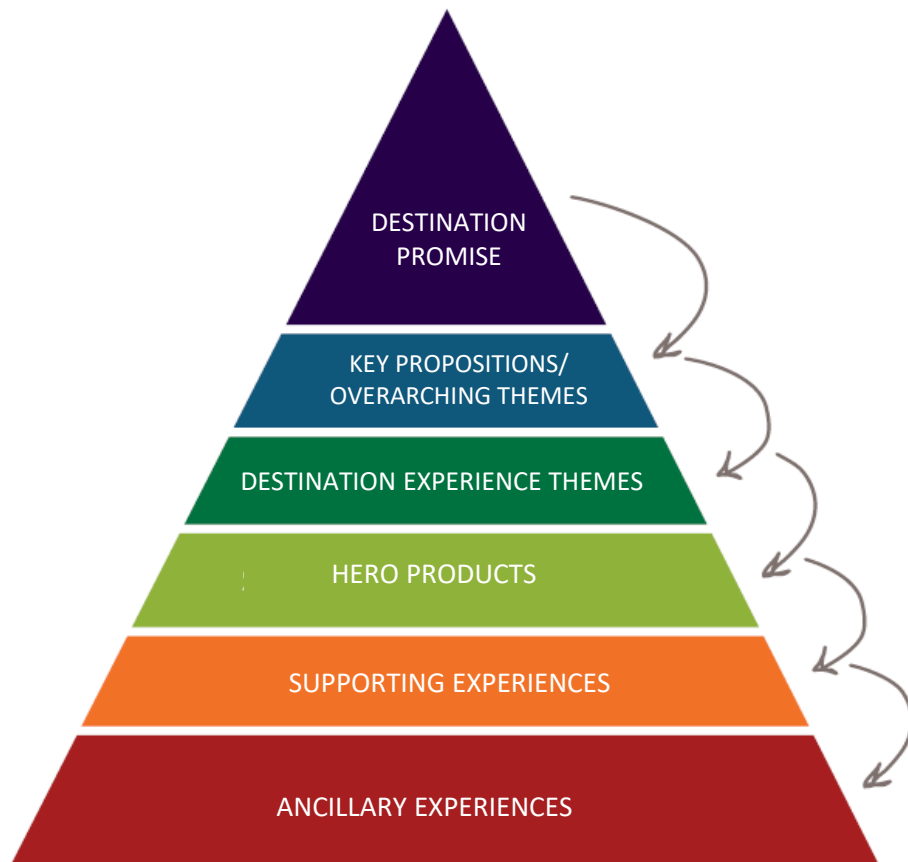
**Connectedness** – The feeling of connecting to the people and the landscape, of being a part of something 'bigger' and reflecting on what is important in your life. Feeling renewed and energised by the place, its people and its story. Your reward from a journey of discovery and being immersed in an ancient landscape.

If the potential visitor to the Island of Ireland is offered a clear menu of individual but equally appealing Experience Brands the likelihood of them choosing to visit for longer is increased.

***It's up to each business to embrace the themes of the Wild Atlantic Way and give the customer a clear choice.***



*Developing an experience requires a shift away from the traditional product versus price mentality. It's about delivering life-changing moments that inspire visitors to not only share their experience with others, but also makes them want to return.*



Experience Development is the art and science of delivering a consistent message that inspires consumers throughout their travel experience – providing something that not only motivates visitors to become ambassadors for your destination, but also gives them the tools to help tell your message.

The concept of experience development extends beyond just simply providing an enjoyable experience for visitors. To achieve international cut-through in today's 'sharing economy', experiences need to utilise thematic interpretation techniques that evoke a positive emotional response in visitors, making them want to brag about their experience with family and friends and to experience it again and again. By embedding an experience with the unique selling features, or 'heroes', of a destination, visitors will associate that experience specifically with the destination and become advocates for these experiences with others.

**DESTINATION PROMISE:** The expectation that is created amongst potential visitors about the experience(s) that they will enjoy in the destination (i.e. a promise of what they will receive based on what is being delivered)

**KEY PROPOSITIONS/OVERARCHING THEMES:** This is what sets your destination apart

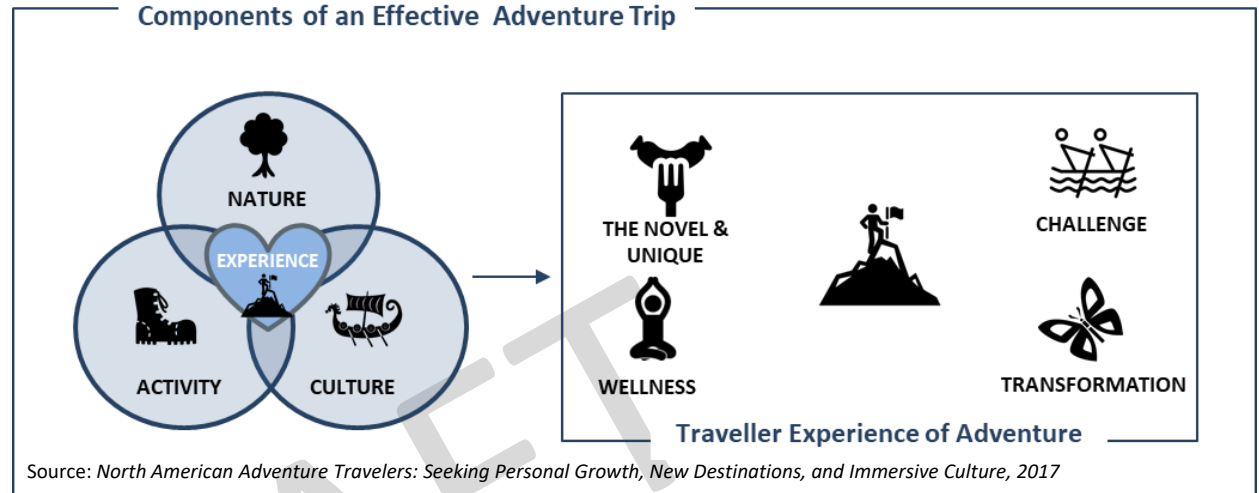
**DESTINATION EXPERIENCE THEMES:** The stories your customers can connect with that showcase your key proposition

**HERO PRODUCTS:** The customer accesses these experiences through the Hero Products

**SUPPORTING EXPERIENCES:** What each business does to bring the hero experience to life

**ANCILLARY EXPERIENCE MIX:** How the wider tourism offering supports the regional themes





**For many businesses, the opportunity to develop HERO Experiences is about doing things differently.** It is about creating a sense of adventure and ‘micro’ adventure moments where the visitor feels totally absorbed in the setting, the story, and feels a sense of accomplishment. Even the traditional concept of outdoor adventure has changed and moved away from simply the activity. Today, it is about getting off the beaten track, connecting with locals and feeling immersed in the moment. It is a sensory and an intellectual experience – one that touches the visitor emotionally and intellectually, as well as physically.

**This realignment of activities and products to experiences is a direct response to market trends.** The visitors in the target segments are looking to discover the essence of a place and to connect with it in as authentic a way as possible. The sense of discovery can just as easily be in the ordinary moment – the encounter with the owner of the small high street artisan store, the exchange of stories with the local in the bar, or the conversation at breakfast in the B&B. With this perspective in mind, the entire community is in the business of delivering the destination experience and of ensuring that the visitor truly appreciates what makes the Burren and Cliffs of Moher distinctive and memorable.

## How was the Plan Developed?

The planning process involved the following six steps:

1. Formation of a Working Group – this group was put in place by Fáilte Ireland with representatives from all the key agencies and local tourism groups involved in influencing or delivering tourism.
2. Desk research to review on-line presence of destination; relevant best practices from comparable destinations; and existing plans and strategies of stakeholders.
3. In-region consultation – site visits; discussions with related operators; Working Group workshop; a series of community workshops to discuss the essence of place, the underlying stories and the opportunities; and a general appraisal of the overall area – followed by an analysis of the findings.
4. Development of draft Plan and review by Fáilte Ireland.
5. Review of draft Plan by key agencies and tourism groups, and Fáilte Ireland discussions with stakeholders in-region.
6. Presentation of revised draft Plan to Working Group.



# 2

## Key Insights Informing our Actions

Léargais Thabhachtacha a Chuireann ár  
nGníomhaíochtaí in Iúl



*People want to experience an off the beaten track  
experience that genuinely immerses them in multiple ways  
so that they feel stimulated, energised and uplifted.*

- Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme 2015-2019

The latest data from Fáilte Ireland indicates that County Clare receives **1 million visitors (of which 59% are international)** and **€229 million in visitor spend**. At present, there is little data available which specifically relates to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region, with County Clare data providing the only indicator of visitor patterns within its boundaries.



The main **reasons to visit** are for a **holiday (66%)** or to **visit friends and relatives (21%)**



Visitors are mainly made up of **couples** who are **aged between 25 and 35 years**



The majority are **first time visitors** to the region



Visitors source their **pre-travel information** through the **internet (77%)**



**International** visitors spend on average **€89 per person per day** and **domestic** visitors spend an average of **€71 per person per day**, and **coach visitors** who come for the day spend **€12.08 per person**



There is a preference to visit **during the summer months** (July and August)

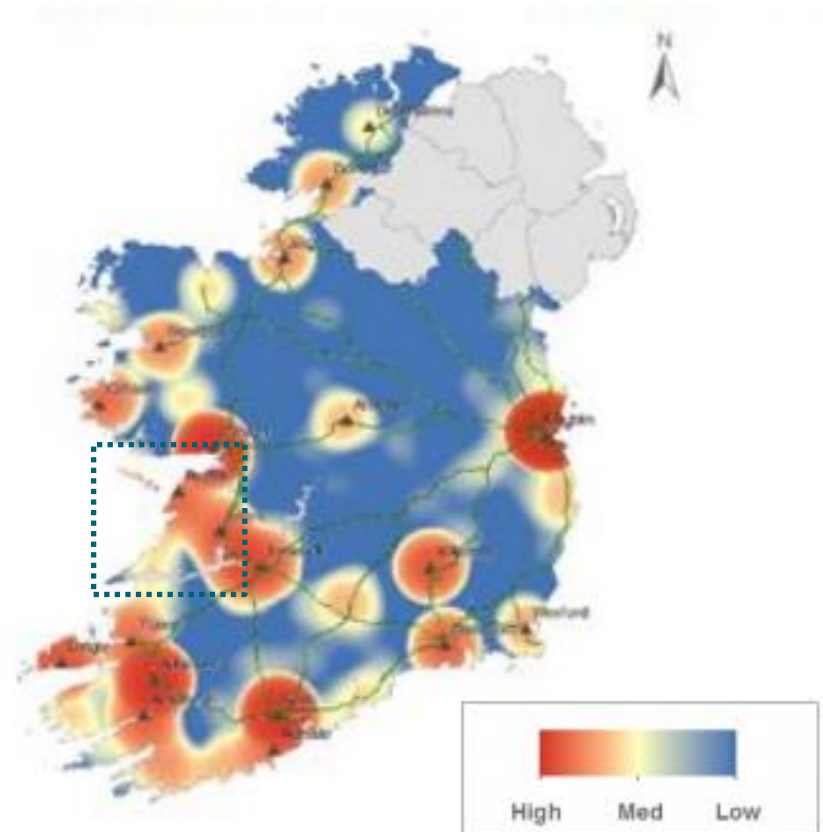


Visitors get their **information from word of mouth (32%)** and **official websites (27%)**



The **Cliffs of Moher** welcomed **1.6 million** visitors in 2018

Figure 2: Hotspot Map of Overseas Visitors Travelling for a Holiday



Source (including image): Fáilte Ireland, *Regional Tourism Performance in 2015*, October 2016

Source: Fáilte Ireland, *Visitor Survey*, 2016

Source: Fáilte Ireland, *Holidaymaker Survey - West Clare*, 2012

Source: Fáilte Ireland, *Brand Tracker Visitor Experiences*, 2015



Having a detailed understanding of what motivates visitors to travel to Ireland, not just their needs, can help to grow market share through more effective targeted marketing.

Recognising the benefits of global consumer market segmentation, Fáilte Ireland has recently undertaken significant research on the destination’s key consumer segments, including their travel motivations, lifestyle, values, interests, and travel information sources.

Through this research, the following key market segments have been identified:



**Culturally Curious** – Are very independently minded and are interested in places of historic and cultural interest.



**Great Escapers** – Want to get away from it all, renewing family bonds and spending time together in a beautiful place.

Table 1: Components of a Memorable Experience

Culturally Curious	Great Escapers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personal development</li><li>• Different, authentic</li><li>• Participative experiences</li><li>• Meet the locals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get away from it all</li><li>• Enriching moments</li><li>• Different, authentic</li><li>• Participative</li></ul>

What They Need?



Friendly, hospitable people



A secure and safe destination



Beautiful scenery with a good range of natural, unspoilt attractions



Plenty of things to see, do and experience, including attractive towns



Interesting history and culture



Relaxed and easy pace



Value for money



Easily accessible destination

Source: Fáilte Ireland, Holidaymakers Survey, 2016  
Source: Fáilte Ireland, Global Segmentation Toolkit, 2016



## Strengths

- Very high international market awareness of the Cliffs of Moher.
- Globally distinctive karst landscape.
- UNESCO Global Geopark status.
- Significant biodiversity – recognised for unique botanicals.
- Ancient farming practices.
- Beauty and ruggedness – summer and winter.
- Burren Food Trail – European Destination of Excellence for Tourism and Local Gastronomy in 2015.
- Association with traditional music.
- Outdoor recreation – full spectrum from hard to soft adventure.
- Focus on sustainability through the GeoparkLIFE programme.

## Opportunities

- Introduction of a Visitor Management Plan to disperse visitors throughout the area + greater use of capacity management principles.
- Redesigning and managing the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk to become a walk of Global significance with managed access and extended value.
- Amplifying recognition of the Burren as an internationally significant landscape.
- Increasing spend from visitors arriving by bus.
- Promoting exceptional experiences relating to Burren adventure, wellness and education.
- Creating all year round visitor experiences to capture Great Escapers and winter travellers from Germany, France, UK, US, Australia and New Zealand, extending the season and sustaining employment.
- Strengthening the partnerships between local organisations and creating a stronger coordinated proactive marketing alliance.
- Improving accommodation options.
- Creating premier niche eco experiences.

## Weaknesses

- One of the lowest spend returns from international visitors – very large numbers based in for the Cliffs of Moher without further engagement in the area – over reliance on day visitors.
- Traffic management issues and visitor management concerns – high concentration of visitors and need for dispersal.
- Promotional activities limited overseas; few online packages.
- Limited accommodation capacity in destination.
- Signage and parking issues.
- Fragmented communication in region between local groups.
- Infrastructure and lack of visitor services.
- Traffic concerns for cyclists – potential to undermine the experience.
- Coastal path erosion.

## Threats

- Bus traffic – limited ability to fully control bus travel patterns – new preliminary measures to improve regulation of buses.
- Loss of biodiversity and landscape appeal through non-sustainable growth of visitors.
- Potentially inadequate insurance capacity to assist land owners in creating new opportunities to access local areas.
- Natural cliff erosion along the Cliffs of Moher coastal walk exacerbating impact of human activity.
- Declining housing stock for tourism workers through Airbnb.
- Increasing costs of doing business – rates, insurance, electricity, etc.
- Increase in VAT – surfing not considered tourism – subject to 23% VAT.
- New drink and driving legislation but no local public transport to offset its impact.
- Brexit.





- In 2018 the Cliffs of Moher Experience was the country's number two top fee-charging visitor attraction with **1,580,000 visitors**, an increase of almost 4% on 2017 (following an increase of 7% on the previous year and 14% on the year prior to that). The remaining four in the top five are all in Dublin.
- In 2017 County Clare attracted a total of **749,000 international visitors** to Clare (overnight) – 8.3% of all international visitors to Ireland, and 5% of the cumulative total of all international visitors to ALL counties – but only generates 3.2% of all international revenue.
- **Average spend by international overnight visitors** in the county is only €210.95 – the second lowest in Ireland.
- In 2017 the number of all **domestic trips** to Clare was 362,000 – 3.8% of all domestic trips in Ireland. These trips generated 4.6% of all domestic revenue in Ireland with an average spend of €237.57 – the third highest in Ireland.

Typically this trend is reversed, and the international visitor should be the higher-value visitor. Clearly this represents a challenge that needs to be addressed in this Visitor Experience Development Plan.

- **Employment in hotels and restaurants** – 8% in 2017
- **Overseas €s per 10,000 population** – €13.30 m (5/26 counties) (increase of 24% on 2016) – national average is €10.34 m (increase of 62%)– showing a strong dependency on tourism as an economic sector, but lower rate of growth to the national average.
- **Hotel beds** – 6,069 (6/26 counties) (21% increase on 2016)
- **Broadband connectivity** within the county – 53.2% (18/26 Counties) (national average is 70.4%)

Sources: Cliffs of Moher website;

Fáilte Ireland, 2018, *2017 Topline Tourism Performance by Region*

Fáilte Ireland, 2018, *Visitors to Top Fee-Charging Visitor Attractions 2017*

IBEC, October 2018, *Local Economic Indicators 2018 + Local Economic Indicators 2017*



# 3

## The Burren and Cliffs of Moher – Destination Themes and Experiences

An Rud atá Uathúil faoi an Bhoireann agus Aillte an  
Mhothair ar Shlí an Atlantaigh Fhiáin



*"When you have space and openness you think big."*

- Mary Hawkes-Green

***... feel the pulse of this perfumed earth, and the heartbeat of these ancient stones ...***

P. J. Curtis, *The Sound of Stone* (2003)

***... a vast memorial to bygone cultures ...***

Tim Robinson, *The Burren: A Two Inch Map of the Uplands of North-West Clare* (1999)

The Burren – *150 square miles of paradoxes* (Tim Robinson). A textured landscape that reveals the layers of geological and cultural history through time with an exceptional capacity to arouse curiosity. “Ireland’s Fertile Rock” has a unique level of stark beauty, complexity and diversity above and below ground that makes this ancient karst plateau one of the most alluring landscapes in Europe and globally recognised through its designated status as a UNESCO Global Geopark. To the south-west of this exceptional limestone terrain, the coastline exposes deltaic sediments in the awe-inspiring Cliffs of Moher towering over 200 meters from the ocean – one of Ireland’s most iconic destinations and internationally significant for its largest colony of nesting seabirds in mainland Ireland.

The sinuous traces of prehistoric life under your feet; the warmth of the rocks year round; the sense of deeply embedded spiritual traditions all around you; the astounding ecological diversity arising from the harmony between man and nature in today’s farming practices together create a sensual landscape that whispers to the soul. This is a unique part of the Wild Atlantic Way with unrivalled stunning beauty that will truly re-energise your inner being as you explore its stories through the layers of time.

***The Burren is an ancient kingdom of limestone sculptures carved slowly by rain, wind and time. The landscape is a huge wild invitation to extend your imagination, an ancient conversation between the land and the sea.***

– John O'Donohue

## **The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark**

At the core of this region is the Global Geopark. The area achieved recognition as a Geopark in 2011 – a UNESCO programme that acknowledges the region’s geological, ecological and cultural value from an international perspective. Through the work of the Geopark visitors have an opportunity to discover how the powerful combination of geological forces and past and present cultural influences have shaped a landscape that is unique in so many ways.

The mission of the Global Geopark is to support people and organisations to work together to ensure the ongoing care of the landscape, to create a deeper understanding of local and regional heritage, to develop and promote sustainable tourism, and to support the building of a vibrant community and strengthened livelihoods.

The Geopark is home to seven Wild Atlantic Way Discovery Points, including the Cliffs of Moher Signature Point, and actively promotes geotourism within the region. It has created a series of Geosites (nine) and heritage trails that interpret and promote natural and cultural features of interest, together with visitor information publications and its online information channels.

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark is seen by the UNESCO Global Geoparks Network as a leader in working with local businesses to produce sustainable tourism models and has achieved international recognition from National Geographic, EDEN and the World Tourism and Travel Council for this work. For further information visit [www.burrengeopark.ie](http://www.burrengeopark.ie)



## The Burren & the Cliffs of Moher

*... feel the pulse of this perfumed earth, and the heartbeat of these ancient stones ...*

*... a vast memorial to bygone cultures ...*

### ***Listening to Ancient Rocks***

A striking karst landscape of curious landforms and subterranean drainage systems that was formed over 350 million years ago under a tropical sea that teemed with life. The layers of limestone today reveal the traces of life embedded into the rocks – rocks that have come to personify the permanency of the ancient relationship we have with the world around us and with those elements that seem to endure for ever. And, yet, time makes subtle changes. The fascinating shapes that intrigue us today have evolved slowly through exposure to earth movements, ice sheets and rain water down through the millennia – shapes that startle us with the profuse abundance of flora that can suddenly appear to caress them. Such mysteries reflect harmony – the art of listening to the rocks and working to maintain traditional grazing regimes. This intimate bond with the land and sea of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher extends well beyond to embrace our visitors – whether looking for dramatic settings for adventure or simply seeking to be captivated by its mysteries of formation, visitors continue to hear the stories of ancient rocks whispered in the winds.

#### **HERO EXPERIENCES**

- Walk on the Edge of the World along the Cliffs of Moher
- Adventures On and Under in the Burren
- Discover the Burren Way through the Living Landscape
- See Life Shaped by the Ancient Farming Landscape of the Burren

### ***Savouring Life's Flavours in the Burren***

*This perfumed earth* inspires the senses and creates a deep feeling of well-being that arises from the unexpected fertility of the rocks, the spectacular scenery, and the astonishing burst of bloom. The scents and flavours of the land and sea are captured in imaginative ways, and our tastes are constantly indulged through the creativity of artisan bread makers, chocolatiers, and cheese makers, the immersive food and foraging tours, and the dishes innovatively prepared by award winning chefs. The farmers markets with their rich array of local fresh produce and dynamic atmosphere; the deep-rooted musical traditions throughout the area that reflect the distinctive soundtrack of the landscape; the healing powers of the waters and minerals recognised through the centuries together with today's focus on wellness all contribute to a sensual experience that truly makes you feel alive and excited to savour life's flavours in the Burren.

#### **HERO EXPERIENCES**

- Wellness the Wild Atlantic Way
- Savour the Unique Local Flavours of the Burren
- Immerse yourself in the Music and Dance of the Burren



### Listening to Ancient Rocks

Recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) the Burren and Cliffs of Moher are globally significant sites for their shared geological heritage. An ice shelf shaped ancient seabed, the Burren is a stark contrast to the rolling green hills of the farmed Irish countryside, and yet it remains a fertile pasture for livestock year-round, where the practice of winterage has provided the basis for Ireland's first major farming for conservation programme, and an in-depth understanding of land stewardship.

This is a landscape where traditional values co-exist with adventure in a timeless manner. The practices of farming, fishing, music, dance and story-telling weave an unbroken line linking the past and the present, while the enduring majesty of Aileen's Wave and the ancient mysteries of caverns attract adrenalin seekers equally motivated to engage harmoniously with nature.



***Discover the Burren Way through the Living Landscape shaped by 360 million years of water and thousands of years of farming traditions.*** Only once you start to walk in the landscape do you truly experience the Burren and the Cliffs of Moher. While the acute experiences of the Cliffs, the bare rock mountains, or the stunning coastal scenery can capture the heart for a moment, only when you walk and take in the subtlety and enormity of the story behind the scenery do you begin to connect.



### ***See life shaped by the Ancient Farming Landscape of the Burren.***

Explore the Burren and enjoy community life whilst marvelling at the powerful traditions of the land and sea with ancient forts and settlements, bohereens with walls of stone and windswept fields and coastline.

### Hero Experiences



### ***Walk on the Edge of the World along the Cliffs of Moher.***

This is the "Edge of the World" where the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean engulfs you. Ever-changing, enchanting, exhilarating, vertigo inducing gasps, breathtaking scenery, sea birds in full flight and the glimpses of visiting marine life – this is where reflection and renewal come together.



### ***Adventures On and Under in the Burren: diving, surfing, caving - the edge.***

This exceptional landscape has mesmerised adventurers for decades both overground, underground, on the waves and underwater. Interweaving with the Custodians of the Burren are today's connectors of the landscape and elements. Where land meets sea, it has inspired not only thrill-seekers but given life to epic literary works of adventure such as the Lord of the Rings series.

### Hero Products and Places

- Feel the power of the edge on the Coastal Walk from Hag's Head to Doolin.
- Marvel at the variety of sea bird species nesting at the Cliffs of Moher, home to one of the major colonies of cliff nesting seabirds in Ireland.
- Go underground at Doolin Cave or Ailwee Cave and discover the secrets of these outstanding caverns.
- Surf the Atlantic swell at Lahinch and Fanore or take on the ultimate adrenaline rush of Aileen's Wave under the Cliffs (experienced surfers only).
- Rock climb at Ailladie, Ballyryan and Ail na Cronan with local experienced guides – from beginners to advanced.
- Discover the secrets of Pollnagollum that inspired J.R.R Tolkien's Lord of the Rings – for experienced cavers only with appropriate support.
- Meander along the Burren Drive and be awed by the honeycomb of stone walls that connect the villages of the Burren.
- The 123km Burren Way takes in the best of what the Burren area has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites.



### Listening to Ancient Rocks

#### Hero Products and Places continued

- Learn about this unique, stark limestone terrain by taking a guided walk through the Burren National Park, a Burren Geopark Geosite, and learn its secrets.
- Discover the extraordinary flowers and plants of the Burren – Maritime, Artic, Alpine and Mediterranean – all in one landscape – in particular, discover the beauty of Burren in Bloom when all flowers come to life and why there is such profusion of colour.
- Learn the story of winterage through the Burren Winterage Weekend and join communities in celebrating this farming tradition.
- Discover the stories of the Cliffs of Moher – it's history, people, ecology, birdlife, marine life and traditions at the Visitor Centre.
- Visit a Holy Site or Well with a local guide where you can connect with past and be amazed by resilience.
- Take the Coastal Drive through Fanore as the sunrise tips over the hills and the light of the stone casts reflections across the sky.
- Visit the Aran Islands and immerse yourself in the traditions and daily activities of island life (visitor experiences on the Aran Islands are looked at in the Connemara and Aran Islands Visitor Experience Development Plan).

#### Supporting Experiences

- Visit the sites used in or that inspired a famous poem, novel, film or TV series (e.g. W.B. Yeats or even Father Ted).
- Hear about the many legends in which the Cliffs of Moher feature: (for instance the story of the Mermaid of Moher or the lost City of Kilstiffen).
- Enjoy the view from O'Brien's Tower that has served as a viewing point for visitors for hundreds of years.
- Trike and bike tours along the stone walled bohereens of the Burren.
- Dive in the crystal-clear waters off Liscannor where the waters inspired the creation of the submarine.
- Kayak along the coastal shores of the Cliffs of Moher and take in the enormity of their scale.

- Take a bird's eye view of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher with a helicopter tour, or take to the seas and be awed by their scale with a cliffs boat cruise.
- Shore adventure of a different kind with fishing and world-famous links golf – the challenge is in the Atlantic breeze.....
- Take to the seas with a little boating or sailing on Galway Bay.
- Family fun, learning and adventure at Moher Hill Open Farm and Leisure Park, Burren Nature Sanctuary and Seaworld.
- Take a Farmland Nature Trail guided tour.
- Become a member of the Burrenbeo Trust to support its education and conservation work.
- Go back in time with the Kilfenora Timeline.
- Explore Poulnabrone Dolmen, the oldest dated megalithic monument in Ireland, and learn about the ancient stories related to that place.
- Explore the Burren Centre and discover the secrets of the Burren, its history, geology and spirit.



### Savouring Life's Flavours in the Burren

The Burren and the communities that live in it and surround it, offer visitors a sense of calm in an increasingly fast-paced world. The Burren offers an infinite number of opportunities to reconnect, to slow down and to re-energise. It has done this for generations, from the early monks and pilgrims to the poets, writers, artists and those seeking refuge. Traditional music, with its roots to the sea and the early stories of the land awaken the senses to the sounds of this landscape as they are carried across on the winds of time. Today that story continues with healthy food, healthy lifestyles, music, festivals and events, and a healthy dose of fresh sea air.

#### Hero Experiences



***Experience Wellness the Wild Atlantic Way through immersion of the senses.*** Within minutes you can feel at one in the landscape. This is a place of natural wellness where the sea air, Atlantic waves crashing on limestone and panoramic sunrises and sunsets immerse you. It is a spiritual landscape that cleanses the mind. Combine this with a therapeutic spa experience and feel the 'stones' melt away the tension – a truly rejuvenating encounter with the Burren.



***Savour the Unique Local Flavours of the Burren.*** A true 'field to plate' experience, the Burren Food Trail is a real palate-pleaser. With a wealth of signature regional dishes and a commitment to local produce and sustainability, it's no wonder this award-winning spot was named Ireland's top 'Foodie Town' in 2015. Meet the artisans and be inspired by their passion in the range of immersive experiences that visitors can enjoy.



***Immerse yourself in the Music and Dance of the Burren and see the lineage of stories, songs and sounds of the sea.*** Meeting the locals is at the core of a visit to the Burren. Connecting with the people and their villages - 'We are the last people of Ireland of the stone age race – people want to hear our stories, want to hear our music, want to see our land.' The music, songs and dance handed down from generation to generation, tell the stories of the past, celebrate the landscape and its' traditions and connect with both visitors and diaspora from across the seas.

#### Hero Products and Places

- Escape to a yoga retreat set to a back drop of the Burren landscape, Atlantic Ocean and Cliffs of Moher.
- Follow the setting of the sun on the lunar shores of the coast road of Fanor and watch the kaleidoscope of colours as it dips below the horizon.
- Immerse yourself in the food experiences of the Burren Food Trail and meet the artisans passionate about their local produce.
- Taste homemade ice cream as you discover the fishing history of the Flaggy Shore, a Burren Geopark Geosite, famous for its limestone pavements and fossils embedded in the rocks.
- Learn about the process of making natural and organic cosmetics by hand at the Burren Perfumery.
- Be inspired to "think big" at the Burren College of Art.
- Be swept away by the magic of music at Doolin Music House, hear the Kilfenora Céilí Band at the Burren Centre or help celebrate musical tradition at the Russell Memorial Weekend Festival.

#### Supporting Experiences

- Visit the Victorian Spa Wells, a Burren Geopark Geosite in Lisdoonvarna and learn of its therapeutic history with its rich mineral waters.
- Creative experiences (art, photography, poetry) inspired by the interplay of the light and the landscape.
- Be inspired by the organic magic of chocolate making or learn how local produce is brought to the table in so many different ways.
- Escape to natural wellbeing and wellness where food and the landscape are also part of the experiences and therapies on offer.
- Join the music sessions at a local pub.
- Get involved in one of its iconic events including the Matchmaking Festival and the many music festivals that abound throughout the year.
- Enjoy the many Traditional Festivals and Events of the Burren from Horse Fairs to Bonfire nights, Castle Banquets to Sea Birds Festival, and Pattern Days to Criunniu na mBad.

*Slip Jigs – Give us a Drink of Water / Fig for a Kiss*

*"These tunes are as old as the hills. We often played them for set dancers, competitions and festivals. They were extremely popular back in the day!"*

- Christy Barry & James Devitt, Doolin Music House'



# 4

## Locality Experience Summary Achoimre ar Eispéireas Dúiche



*'It is a country where there is not enough water to drown a man, wood enough to hang one, nor earth enough to bury him. And yet their cattle are very fat; for the grass growing in tufts of earth, of two or three foot square, that lie between the rocks, which are of limestone, is very sweet and nourishing.'*

- General Ludlow, head of Cromwell's army in Clare in 1650 speaking of the Burren

# Locality Experience Summary Achoimre ar Eispéireas Dúiche DRAFT

As a destination, having the ability to offer a diversity of experiences throughout the region helps to increase length of stay, visitor spend, and the dispersal of visitors within the region.

**Table 2: Locality Experience Summary**

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher region offers a wealth of signature experiences in its various localities, as summarised in Table 2 below. The orange ticks (✓) represent a greater prevalence in the area than the black ticks (✓).

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Localities	HERO EXPERIENCE THEMES						
	Listening to Ancient Rocks				Savouring Life's Flavours in the Burren		
	Walk on the Edge of the World	Adventure On and Under in the Burren	Discover the Burren Way through the Living Landscape	See Life Shaped by the Ancient Farming Landscape of the Burren	Wellness the Wild Atlantic Way	Savour the Unique Flavours of the Burren	Immerse yourself in the Music and Dance
Ballyvaughan		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cliffs of Moher	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Doolin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ennistymon		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fanore	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Flaggy Shore, New Quay, Bellharbour, Carron		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kilfenora		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kinvara		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lahinch		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liscannor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lisdoonvarna			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



# Locality Summary: Flaggy Shore, New Quay, Bellharbour and Carron

## Achoimre Dúiche: An Ché Nua, Béal an Chloga agus An Carn

# DRAFT



The Flaggy Shore, one of the most northern points of the Burren sits out on the southern shores of Galway Bay. It is a rich wildlife habitat which was celebrated in a Seamus Heaney poem. It is famous for its limestone pavements, fossils embedded in the rock and it's soft coastal walk. New Quay became the popular name for the village of Burrin after a new quay was built in the village in 1837 and is popular with locals and visitors alike. Close by is Bellharbour and the area is renowned for it's oyster traditions, rich geology and archaeology experiences. Carron village lies in the centre of the Burren overlooking the region's largest Turlough. It is the only village in the high Burren and is a walkers paradise boasting nationally recognised walking trails.

### Hero Products

- The Burren Perfumery showcasing the process of making natural and organic cosmetics by hand.
- Poul nabrone Dolmen and it's iconic image on the Burren landscape.
- Immerse yourself in the food experiences of the Burren Food Trail and meet the artisans passionate about their local produce.
- The 123km Burren Way takes in the best of what the Burren has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites.
- Burren Hill Walks – Carron Turlough Loop and Carron Loop Walk.
- Local Burren Guides who share their knowledge and passion for the Burren.
- The Flaggy Shore, a Burren Geopark Geosite, famous for its limestone pavements and fossils embedded in the rocks.
- The Carron 'turlough' (disappearing lake), a Burren Geopark Geosite.

### Supporting Experiences

- The Flaggy Shore Heritage Trail.
- The Russell Art Gallery.
- Corcomroe Abbey, An Rath, Ringfort, Caherconnell Stone Fort.
- Michael Cusack Centre - tells the story of Michael Cusack, a founder of the GAA.
- Linnalla Ice Cream, Hazel Mountain Chocolate.
- Burren Outdoor Education Centre – Caving in the Burren, Rock Climbing, Kayaking, Hillwalking, Body Boarding, Snorkelling, Raft Building, Camping.
- Guided walks of the Burren with AdVenture Burren and Burren Wild Tours.
- Burren and Dolmen Cycleways with local Bike Hire.
- Choice of fine places to eat and stay.
- Events – Easter EGGSPedition; Burren in Bloom Festival; Burren Marathon Challenge.

### Experience Gaps

- Lack of parking, public toilets, signage and traffic / visitor management at The Flaggy Shore, Corcomroe and Poul nabrone.
- No off road cycling trails.
- Too much coach traffic has been specifically mentioned as undermining the local visitor and community experiences.
- A Blueway connecting coastal villages in the Flaggy Shore / Ballyvaughan area.





Across Ballyvaughan bay is the unspoiled village of Ballyvaughan with its picturesque backdrop of the Burren highlands. As a harbour village, its coastline offers a choice of water based activities and the village is home to a significant number of authentic pubs, award winning restaurants, shops, quality accommodation, attractions and outdoor activities. The “new” pier and slipway offers kayaking and provides a wonderful opportunity for other boating, fishing and sea activities.

### Hero Products

- The Burren College of Art specializing in undergraduate, postgraduate and alternative approaches to fine art education.
- Immerse yourself in the food experience of the Burren Food Trail and the wide range of award-winning restaurants and cafés.
- The 123km Burren Way takes in the best of what the Burren has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites. Some of the most spectacular views on the Burren Way are in Ballyvaughan and Black Head.
- Local Burren Guides who share their knowledge and passion for the Burren.
- Aillwee Cave, a Burren Geopark Geosite, formed by water flowing through cracks in the limestone hill, is one of the oldest caves in the Burren.
- Rock climb at Ail na Cronan with local experienced guides.

### Supporting Experiences

- Ballyvaughan Farmers Market.
- Ballyvaughan Heritage Trail.
- Birdwatching.
- Gleninagh and Newtown Castles.
- Aillwee Woodland Craft.
- Burren Hill Walks & Ballyvaughan Wood Loop Walk.
- Burren Fine Wine and Food, Gleninagh Lamb, Burren Gold Cheese @ Aillwee, Clareville House Kitchen Garden.
- Aillwee Caves Birds of Prey.
- Burren and Dolmen Cycleways with local Bike Hire.
- Children’s Playground.
- Choice of significant fine Award Winning eateries and places to stay.
- Events – Easter EggsPedition; the Tour de Burren cycle; Burren in Bloom; Burren Marathon Challenge and Vintage Car drives.

### Experience Gaps

- A place to showcase the John O’Donohue Story.
- Lack of parking, public toilets, signage and traffic / visitor management preventing visitors from stopping in the village.
- No off road cycling trails.
- Too much coach traffic has been specifically mentioned as undermining the local visitor and community experiences.
- A Blueway on the village coastline and explore the feasibility of a Blueway connecting Ballyvaughan to the Flaggy Shore.
- Greater usage of the harbour for water-based activities.





Fanore is on the northwest coast of the Burren and is home to a stunning beach, Black Head and magnificent views of the Aran Islands and Atlantic Ocean. Its golden arc of sand with the backdrop of bare limestone hills make this a very distinctive Geosite within the Geopark. There are beautiful sand dunes, the River Caher which is the only surface river that flows over the Burren limestone and the oldest archaeological remains in the Burren. The village is very pretty and is home to terrific traditional music sessions.

### Hero Products

- Fanore Beach, a Burren Geopark Geosite, features a sand dune beach, the oldest archaeological remains in the Burren and spectacular biokarst limestone.
- Rock climb at Ballyryan and Ailladie – The Blind Man’s Cliff on the lunar cliffs with local experienced guides with over 25 routes to suit all levels from beginners to advanced climbers.
- Discover the secrets of Pollnagollum that inspired J.R.R Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings.
- Follow the setting of the sun on the lunar shores of the coast road of Fanor and watch the kaleidoscope of colours as it dips below the horizon.
- Climb Slieve Elva (345m) and experience the “mind healing” views of the Burren, Aran Islands, Cliffs of Moher and Connemara.
- Learn about this unique, stark limestone terrain by walking with local guides to discover its secrets.
- Learn about the magic of farming in the Burren with Fanore’s guided Farmland Nature Trails.
- The 123km Burren Way takes in the best of what the Burren has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites.
- Experience the Coastal Drive at sunrise and sunset.

### Supporting Experiences

- Black Head Loop and Caher Valley Loop Walk.
- Fanore to Ballyvaughan Trek.
- Burren Cycleway.
- Surfing off the Fanore coastline.
- Shore Fishing along the coastline.
- Choice of places to stay.
- Events – Sunday night music sessions with music handed down over the ages.

### Experience Gaps

- Not enough places to stop and eat.
- No festivals in the village.
- Too much coach traffic has eroded charm of the village and drive.
- Overcrowding at stops and buses pulling in to non-parking areas on the side of the road.
- Lack of parking, public toilets, signage and traffic management along the Coastal Drive.





Doolin is renowned for its traditional music sessions which were made famous originally by the talents of the Russell Brothers. It is a bustling little village and popular all year round, particularly during its lively festivals. The pier is the departure point for the Cliffs of Moher Cruises and, as one of the gateways to the Aran Islands, it's maritime stories connect the mainland with the islands. The village has a great selection of places to stay, great eateries and of course, it's famous pubs.

### Hero Products

- Doolin Cliff Walk connecting to the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk.
- Doolin Music House where the magic of music and its traditions are showcased in an intimate setting.
- Doolin's famous Traditional Music Sessions.
- Doolin Pier, a Burren Geopark Geosite, where you can walk on the limestone pavement, explore rock pools, and search for fossils.
- Doolin Pier, gateway to the Aran Islands and the connection between the communities of the islands and mainland.
- Doolin Cave, a Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark Geosite, home to the great Stalactite at 7.3 metres (23 feet). It is the longest free-hanging stalactite in the Northern Hemisphere.
- Kayaking under the Cliffs of Moher from Doolin Pier.
- The quality and immersive experiences of the Burren Food Trail.
- The 123km Burren Way takes in the best of what the Burren has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites.

### Supporting Experiences

- Cliffs of Moher Cruises and Aran Island Ferries.
- North Clare Sea Kayaking Tour Company.
- Doolin Rent-a-Bike.
- Doolin Cave Pottery.
- Doolin Pitch and Putt.
- Irish and Village Crafts.
- Doolin Cycle Hub and Burren Cycleway.
- Doolin Yoga and Holistic Treatments.
- Doolin Garden and Nursery.
- Great choice of places to stay and eat.
- Events – Russell Memorial Weekend Festival; Doolin Folk Festival; Doolin Craft Beer and Roots Festival; Doolin Motor Cycle Fest.

### Experience Gaps

- A Bus Park outside of the village with park and ride to Doolin Pier and Cliffs of Moher.
- Heavily congested coach traffic on Fisher Street with no enforcement of licensed stops in the village.
- No off road cycling trails.
- Un-managed visitor numbers have eroded the charm of the village.
- Lack of adequate foot paths, toilet facilities and parking.





The Cliffs of Moher, a Burren and Cliffs Of Moher Global Geopark Geosite, is one of Ireland's most visited natural attractions. They stand 214m at their tallest and have the most dramatic of vistas looking north, south or west to sea and the Aran Islands. Their beauty is matched by the elements of sea, wind, earth and the sounds of seabirds. With an eco-friendly underground visitor centre, award winning exhibition, Taste the Burren affiliated cafes, the Cliffs of Moher welcome visitors all year round.

### Hero Products

- Feel the power of the edge on the Coastal Walk from Hag's Head to Doolin.
- Marvel at the variety of sea bird species nesting at the Cliffs of Moher, home to one of the major colonies of cliff nesting seabirds in Ireland.
- Daily Guided Talks and Walks with the Cliffs of Moher guides.
- The exhilaration of Surfing Aileen's Wave (for advanced surfers only).
- The vista of the Cliffs from Hag's Head and the ruins of the castle.
- The healing power of St. Brigid's Well and it's spiritual connection as a holy place.
- Sunsets and sunrises at the Cliffs of Moher.
- The 123km Burren Way takes in the best of what the Burren has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites.
- Immerse yourself in the food experiences of the Burren Food Trail.

### Supporting Experiences

- O'Brien's Tower and its vistas over the Cliffs and out to sea.
- Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience and Exhibition.
- The Story of Cornelius O'Brien and the Cliffs of Moher legends.
- Moher Hill Open Farm and Leisure Park.
- The O'Brien Monument and it's connection to the Cliffs of Moher.
- Events – Burren Slow Food Festival; Annual Seabirds Festival.

### Experience Gaps

- Poor trail condition of the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk from Hag's Head to Doolin.
- Personal space to appreciate the significance and majesty of the Cliffs.
- Lack of parking and signage at St. Brigid's Well.
- The lack of showcasing the region as a *Place to Stay*.
- Over crowding at the Cliffs undermining the visitor experience.
- Lack of adequate toilet facilities and services at the visitor centre.
- Coach traffic is too heavy and no park and ride facilities – traffic congestion.





Liscannor is a village with a big history. Apart from being the locality where Cornelius O'Brien lived, it was also the birthplace of John P. Holland (1841 – 1914) who invented the submarine as a means of warfare. The little harbour's traditions included traditional fishing but it was an extremely important port for the exporting of Liscannor Stone which paved many streets of London, Manchester and Glasgow. Today, the village is a very popular seaside holiday destination full of great folklore.

### Hero Products

- Feel the power of the edge on the Coastal Walk from Hag's Head to Doolin.
- The magnificent vistas of the Cliffs of Moher and Aran Islands from Hag's Head.
- Yoga and Wellness holidays and retreats set to a back drop of the Atlantic Ocean and Cliffs of Moher, a Burren Geopark Geosite.
- The healing power of St. Brigid's Well and it's spiritual connection as a holy place.
- The John P. Holland Centre which tells the story of Liscannor's famous son and his invention of the modern-day Submarine.
- The 123km Burren Way takes in the best of what the Burren has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites.
- The quality and immersive experiences of the Burren Food Trail.

### Supporting Experiences

- The global trading connections of Liscannor Harbour.
- The Rockshop where you can bring some limestone to your life.
- Kilmacreehy Church and Graveyard.
- Moher Hill Open Farm for the family to all enjoy.
- Fishing at Liscannor Beach where crystal waters glisten.
- Clahane Shore Art Studio / Gallery.
- Burren Cycleway.
- Sandfield House Pitch 'n Putt.
- Local Wellness and Holistic Treatments and Retreats – Nóníní Therapies, Betula and Moher Lodge – Cliffs of Moher Retreat.
- Choice of charming places to eat and stay.
- Events – St. Brigid's Day.

### Experience Gaps

- Coach traffic is undermining the visitor experience.
- No Festivals and Events throughout the year.
- Lack of parking and signage at St. Brigid's Well.
- Poor signage to local experiences.
- No off road cycling trails.
- No place to buy or hire rods and fishing tackle.
- No diving centre.
- No boat trips or eco tours along the coastline to the Cliffs.
- No music sessions locally.





Lahinch is a very popular seaside resort with a superb beach (1.6 km long) on Liscannor Bay with a full open panoramic vista of the Atlantic Ocean. It's links golf course has been renowned for many years and in more recent times, Lahinch has become synonymous with surfing all year round. Shopping and popular eateries are all close by and sunsets are delightful. Summer time is full of fun and character with the village enjoying the great buzz from both Irish and overseas visitors alike.

### Hero Products

- Starting point of the 123km Burren Way which takes in the best of what the Burren has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites.
- Lahinch Golf Club – world renowned Links Course and host of the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open 2019.
- Choice of surfing schools and activity centres at Lahinch Promenade and Beach.
- Birdwatching along the coastline.
- The quality and immersive experiences of the Burren Food Trail.
- Lahinch Beach sunsets with its panoramic settings.

### Supporting Experiences

- Diving the crystal waters of the local coastline.
- O'Callaghan Angling.
- Lahinch Adventures – Climbing, Surfing, Archery, SUPs.
- Lahinch Surf School.
- Lahinch Surf Experience.
- Ben's Surf Clinic.
- Dive Academy.
- The Celtic T-Shirt Shop.
- Kenny Woollen Mills and Art Gallery.
- Wild Kitchen.
- Burren Cycleway.
- Shopping and retail.
- Children's Playground.
- Lahinch Seaworld and Leisure.
- Choice of quality accommodation.

### Experience Gaps

- No Festivals and Events.
- Require more off season activities.
- Restaurants and eateries.
- Blueway on the River Inagh.





Ennistymon is the old market town of North Clare. It's traditional colourful shop fronts are delightful and it is still the home of spontaneous music sessions and craic. With lovely eateries, art galleries and shops to browse through, Ennistymon is a quaint place to dwell and enjoy. With its Historic Town status, beautiful cascades 'The Falls', there is much to discover and explore among such friendly people ready to tell its stories.....

### Hero Products

- The Creative Story of Ennistymon - Salmon Poetry, Ennistymon Art Trail and the Courthouse Gallery.
- The quality and immersive experiences of the Burren Food Trail.
- Traditional Music Sessions of Ennistymon – airs handed down from the best.
- The Cascades and architecture of this heritage market town.
- Ennistymon Horse Fair and its history.
- 'An Gorta Mór' Memorial – the haunting memorial to the Famine.
- Willie Daly, The Matchmaker – Pub and Horse Trekking.

### Supporting Experiences

- Market House.
- Salmon Bookshop and Literary Centre.
- River Spa and Aqua Centre.
- Byrne's Wine Dine Stay.
- Charming local Cafes and Restaurants.
- Weekly Market – April to October.
- St. Tola Goat Farm & Cheese.
- Local Art and Craft Galleries – such as Foust Gallery and Art Studio, Byrne's Art Gallery and Violin Shop.
- Hand-crafted Flutes.
- Ennistymon Historic Town Walk.

- Old Ennistymon Society.
- Mindfulness and Holistic Sessions and Courses.
- Graveyard and Old Church of Ireland – views over to Hag's Head and O'Brien's Tower.
- Home of Poet Brian Merriman (1747 – 1805).
- Teach Ceoil Church.
- Choice of places to eat and stay.
- Green Hospitality at the Falls Hotel & Spa running on hydro power!
- Events – The North Clare Happiness Week; The Ennistymon Book Festival; Caitlin MacNamara / Dylan Thomas Weekend; Ennistymon June Mid-Summer Festival; Bonfire Night: Memories of St. John's Eve in Ennistymon.

### Experience Gaps

- Showcase of the Ennistymon Greyhound Story.
- Daily Guided Walks around the town.
- The Cascades Walk with River Feature.
- Blueway on the River Inagh.
- Tourist Information Point as a gateway to the Burren.
- Poor signage of the charming local cafes.
- Traffic congestion challenges particularly at Blake's Corner.





Kilfenora village is in the heart of the Burren and has been the focal point of North Clare farming for thousands of years. A close community, sitting in the Square, you can see village life go about its daily business with people coming and going. The village is home to Ireland's most famous Céilí Band, it introduced the first interpretative centre to Ireland, has a 10<sup>th</sup> Century Cathedral and has the Pope as Bishop! What a story to enjoy when you get there.

### Hero Products

- Kilfenora Céilí Band (over 100 years old) and its story at The Kilfenora Céilí Band Parlour.
- The Burren Centre – Live music show daily at 11am from Mid June to late July.
- Kilfenora High Crosses and Cathedral where the story of the past can be traced.
- Discover the extraordinary flowers and plants of the Burren – Maritime, Artic, Alpine and Mediterranean – all in one landscape.
- Immerse yourself in the food experiences of the Burren Food Trail and meet the artisans passionate about their local produce.
- Heart of the Burren Walks and learn about this unique, stark limestone terrain by taking a guided walk through the Burren National Park, a Burren Geopark Geosite and learn its secrets.
- Visit a Holy Site or Well with a local guide where you can connect with the past and be amazed by resilience.

### Supporting Experiences

- Burren Centre Tea Rooms for that village cup of tea and chat.
- Go back in time with the Kilfenora Timeline.
- E-Whizz Electric Bike Tours and Hire to cycle the bohoreens of the Burren.
- TV Series location of Father Ted - have fun on a Ted Tour with local guide.
- Burren Free Range Pork Farm.
- The Dolmen Cycleway.
- Events – Kilfenora Music Festival.

### Experience Gaps

- Very little encouragement to stop as you reach the village.
- Signage dated and worn.
- Very few music sessions available.
- Limited choice of accommodation and places to eat.
- No Daily Guided Walks.
- Too dependent on coach traffic but very few stopping to take in the centre and High Crosses.





Lisdoonvarna is the hub of Burren Festivals and Events. With a town always welcoming and ready to show you a good time, the character has been defined by two contrasting experiences – wellness and fun! Each come together to leave visitors feeling refreshed and renewed. With plenty of accommodation and dining options to suit all, and surrounded on all sides by the magic of the Burren, Lisdoonvarna is perfectly located to enjoy it all!

### Hero Products

- Immerse yourself in the food experiences of the Burren Food Trail and meet the artisans passionate about their local produce.
- Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival.
- Located on the 123km Burren Way which takes in the best of what the Burren has to offer, from the coast at Doolin to majestic wild-flower-decorated limestone terraces and from the remains left by the Neolithic inhabitants of the Burren to the rich heritage of early Christian churches and sites.
- The Victorian Spa Wells, a Burren Geopark Geosite, and learn of its therapeutic history with its rivers of rich mineral waters – magnesia, iodine and iron.

### Supporting Experiences

- Burren Smokehouse and fine foods.
- The award winning Wild Honey Inn.
- Pub Music Sessions.
- The Burren Cycle Way.
- Dolmen Cycle Way.
- Burren Brewery @ the Roadside Tavern.
- The Burren Craft Butcher.
- Lisdoonvarna Heritage Trail.
- St. Breckan's GAA Grounds.
- Lisdoonvarna Playground.
- Choice of fine pubs, places to eat and stay.
- Events – Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival; Father Ted Festival; Country Music Weekend; The Outing; Burren Slow Food Festival; the Burren Food Fayre.

### Experience Gaps

- Closure of the tap room at the Spa Wells and the Victorian Spa story of Lisdoonvarna.
- Lack of Wellness Experiences.
- Adventure Activities.
- Guided Walking Tours into the Burren landscape.
- Off Road Cycle Trails.





Kinvara is a pretty little village on the southern shores of Galway Bay in County Galway. Beautifully situated on the shores of Kinvara Bay, it is renowned for its fun and craic! On its doorstep, the hills of the Burren can be seen and it is a pivotal link between the three distinctive regions of the Burren – Burren Lowlands, Burren Highlands and Burren Coast.

### Hero Products

- Escape to a yoga retreat set to the back drop of the Burren landscape with natural wellbeing and wellness and where food and the landscape are also part of the experiences on offer.
- Dunguaire Castle and its medieval-type banquets giving a true taste of the past through food and music.
- The quality and immersive experiences of the Burren Food Trail.
- Learn the story of Winterage through the Burren Winterage Weekend and join communities in celebrating this farming tradition.
- Be a part of the conservation of the Burren by supporting Burrenbeo Trust in its Conservation programme.

### Supporting Experiences

- Take to the seas with a little boating or sailing on Galway Bay.
- The popular charm of Kinvara Pier.
- Family fun and learning at the Burren Nature Sanctuary.
- Bicycle Hire.
- Traught Beach.
- Kinvara Farmers Market.
- Charming cafes and eateries.
- Kinvara Arts Gallery and Arts and Craft Shops.
- Kinvara Walks.
- Choice of places to stay.
- Events – Burren Winterage Weekend; Criunniu na mBad; Fleadh na gCuach – The Cuckoo Fleadh.

### Experience Gaps

- Coastal Trail from Dunguaire Castle to the village.
- Guided Walks of the area.
- Lack of visible connection to Burren activities and events.
- Very little local Information on-line.
- A Blueway.



# 5

## The Action Plan An Plean Gníomhaíochta



*When you customise an experience to make it just right for an individual...you cannot help changing that individual.*

- The Experience Economy, Updated Edition, 2011

The recommendations listed on the following pages are those with the greatest potential to deliver the vision of the Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP). This Plan does not guarantee future funding, and is designed to encourage businesses to be proactive in creating unique experiences.

## Guiding Principles

To ensure the successful implementation of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher hero experiences, the following Guiding Principles have been established to guide certain recommendations and projects listed in this section.

- **All projects are self-sustainable**, meaning they do not solely rely on funding to be achieved or maintained.
- **All projects connect to the broader region** as they deliver benefits to more than one village in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region.
- **All projects are on-message** with the Burren and Cliffs of Moher hero experiences and are aligned to the broader mission of the Wild Atlantic Way.
- **All projects are innovative** and set the region apart from its competitors.
- **All projects add value to the region** and provide a direct and demonstrable link to either extending visitor length of stay, extending the length of the tourist season or developing a new market.



## CATALYST PROJECTS: (in order of priority)

1. Develop and implement an **Integrated Traffic and Transport Strategy** for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher.
2. **Upgrade 2km of the Cliff Walk** (1km either side of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre) through a partnership with land owners and National Parks to develop a management plan and future funding model that supports the land owners and allows for reinvestment and a sustainable walking infrastructure.
3. Develop a **winter Burren Music, Dance & Story Trail** connecting visitors with music, dance, stories and traditions of the place – people and villages.
4. Create a **‘Wellness the Wild Atlantic Way’** programme and dedicated section on the Fáilte Ireland website that looks at the broader definition of ‘wellness’ including connection, time in nature, and the need to sleep well, as well as the traditional, relaxation, healthy food and exercise elements.
5. Develop the **Burren Discovery Trail** to assist in dispersing independent travellers eastward to the Burren Lowlands and provide interpretive content to interpret the landscape and reveal the underlying stories.
6. **Support farmers keen to diversify** their business to include tourism with a business support programme and guidance on insurance and planning requirements and investment in sustainable tourism experiences.
7. **Be a Custodian for a day** - join the Geopark to experience what is involved in managing a Global Geopark.
8. Facilitate workshop(s) to assist in further developing and promoting a series of **cultural events that encourage year-round visitation** through dedicated timely funding.
9. Encourage the establishment of new **eco-friendly, responsible adventure experiences such as new cycling experiences along the green roads** including mountain-biking and the ‘edge’ experience.



**Hero Experience 1: *Walk on the Edge of the World along the Cliffs of Moher***

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
1.1	<b>CATALYST 2: Upgrade 2km of the Cliff Walk (1km either side of the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre)</b> through a partnership with land owners and National Parks to develop a management plan and future funding model that supports the land owners and allows for reinvestment, sustainable walking infrastructure.	Short-Term / Medium-Term	CCC, COM, CLDC
1.2	<b>Improve the Visitor experience through on-site visitor management and interpretation along the Cliffs of Moher</b> (within the Cliffs boundary) during peak season to help better manage visitor flows during these periods and work with land owners.	Short-Term / Medium-Term	FI, CCC/COM

**Hero Experience 2: *Adventure On and Under in the Burren: diving, surfing, caving – ‘the Edge’***

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
2.1	<b>CATALYST 9:</b> Encourage the establishment of new <b>Eco-friendly, Responsible Adventure experiences</b> such as new cycling experiences along the green roads and the ‘edge’ experience. Investigate the feasibility of a <b>leisure Bike Trail along the old Green roads</b> (similar to Lough Avalla and Rocky Road). De-zone the Green roads for safety.	Medium-Term	CCC, CLDC, FI
2.2	<b>Create a Caving experience</b> in the region that will once again bring new adventurers to the region.	Medium-Term	Aillwee Cave, Doolin Cave, BEN
2.3	Research and identify <b>Off-road Cycling trails</b> through the Burren Highlands and Lowlands.	Medium-Term	CLDC
2.4	Identify a <b>Blueway</b> for Kinvara Bay, The Flaggy Shore, Ballyvaughan Bay and the River Inagh – Ennistymon to Lahinch.	Medium-Term	CCC, CLDC, LTGs
2.5	<b>Elevate and promote the Rock Climbing experiences</b> of the Burren where interest and demand for climbing outdoors has grown (already attracting foreign climbers, especially from the US).	Short-Term	FI, CCC, CLDC, LEs, LTGs

See Page 52 for Acronyms



**Hero Experience 3: Walk the Burren Way through the Living Landscape shaped by 360 million years of water and Thousands of Years of Farming Traditions**

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
3.1	<b>Consolidate the position and brand of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark</b> as a landscape of international significance.	Short-Term	CCC
3.2	<b>Develop a ‘Burren Guides’ training programme for all guides and bus drivers</b> including an accreditation programme similar to that used in other UNESCO sites (Uluru, Galapagos, Antarctica, Savannah Guides). This should be a prerequisite to getting a bus license/stop approval and would ensure that proper respect is given to these significant sites.	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK
3.3	Work with OPW/DCHA and CCC to <b>review and redesign the approach and experience at Poul nabrone</b> to create a greater sense of arrival and revise the interpretation to reflect the new findings from the archaeology that explains the international significance of the site (over 1000 years of use of the same portal tomb).	Medium-Term	OPW/NATIONAL MONUMENTS, OPW/DCHA, CCC
3.4	Reinvigorate the <b>Wildflower Walk Season</b> with local walking guides to share this iconic May experience with visitors.	Short-Term	BEN
3.5	Continue to collate information about the walking and cycle routes in the region and <b>encourage visitors to get off the beaten track through Guided Experiences with Local Guides</b> whose knowledge of the Holy Wells, sacred sites, and natural phenomenon are core to the Wild Atlantic Way’s principle theme of Connectedness.	Short-Term	GEOPARK, BEN, CLDC



**Hero Experience 4:** *See Life shaped by the Ancient Farming Landscape of the Burren to see the Ancient Traditions Continue*

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
4.1	<b>CATALYST 6: Support Farmers keen to Diversify</b> their business to include tourism with a business support programme and guidance on insurance, planning requirements and investment in sustainable tourism experiences that will create future hero experiences. Create an Agri-Tourism Farm Diversification programme for the Burren farmers and landowners to enable them to sustain their “Living Landscape” through new opportunities in visitor experiences, access to heritage sites, food produce, accommodation, etc.	Short-Term	IFA, AT, CLDC
4.2	<b>CATALYST 7: Be a Custodian for a day</b> – join the Geopark to ‘clean-up’ a site or fix a dry-stone wall. Discover what is involved in managing a Global Geopark.	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK
4.3	Create an <b>International Educational-tourism Cluster of Products</b> that can actively promote the region and its links to farming, conservation, sustainable best practice and sustainable tourism.	Medium-Term	GEOPARK
4.4	Due to the synergy between the Burren, Cliffs of Moher and Aran Islands, it will be important to have regard to other plans, programmes and policies for the Aran Islands and/or Connemara when seeking to deliver a more sustainable and holistic visitor experience in connecting the stories, activities and experiences of both destinations.	Short-Term	FI

**Hero Experience 5:** *Experience Wellness the Wild Atlantic Way through Immersion of the Senses*

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
5.1	<b>CATALYST 4: Create a ‘Wellness the Wild Atlantic Way’ programme</b> and dedicated section on the Fáilte Ireland website that looks at the broader definition of ‘wellness’ including connection, time in nature, and the need to sleep well, as well as the traditional relaxation, healthy food and exercise.	Short-Term	FI, BEN
5.2	Collective <b>bundling and marketing of the Burren Wellness Experiences</b> connecting the villages and businesses within the Burren.	Short-Term	BEN, CT, FI
5.3	A locally <b>Guided Holy Sites Experience</b> to be developed for sites that are deemed suitable for visitation. The guided experience would include a set of visitor guidelines for visiting the sites including an instruction not to leave objects at the sites.	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK, BEN



### Hero Experience 6: Savour the Unique Local Flavours of the Burren

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
6.1	<b>CATALYST 6: Support Farmers keen to Diversify their business</b> to include food tourism initiatives to expand the immersive food experiences of the Burren Food Trail creating future hero experiences.	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK, CLDC
6.2	<b>Expand the Burren Food Trail</b> through encouragement of the benefits of participation and membership to non-BEN members, and adoption of the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism.	Short-Term	BEN

### Hero Experience 7: Immerse yourself in the Music and Dance of the Burren and see the Lineage of Stories, Songs & Sounds of the Sea

Actions			
7.1	<b>CATALYST 3:</b> Develop a <b>winter Burren Music, Dance and Story Trail</b> connecting visitors with music, dance, stories and traditions of the place – people and villages. This trail has the potential to become a world class experience as it builds on the authenticity and quality of Clare musicians and their stories.	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK, BEN
7.2	Establish a <b>Retail Experience Mentoring programme</b> using existing enterprises that have high quality and Burren connected retail.	Medium-Term	BEN, LEO
7.3	Create the <b>"Where To Go Next" Connection in each village and town</b> , and at each iconic location which will guide visitors to less well-known experiences and locations encouraging them to slow down, stay and /or extend their stay. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connecting the inspiration of the Burren with famous artists, authors and poets John O'Donohue, W.B.Yeats and George Bernard Shaw who carved their names into the autograph tree in Coole Park, north of Gort.</li> </ul>	Short-Term	FI, CCC
7.4	<b>CATALYST 8:</b> Facilitate workshop(s) to assist in further developing and promoting a series of <b>Cultural Events that encourage Year-Round visitation</b> through dedicated timely funding, including: <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Music Festivals and Events (Teach Ceoil, Kilfenora Music Festival, Russell Bros, etc.)</li> <li>Taste the Burren Food Trail and Events, Burren Slow Food Festival and Burren Food Fayre</li> <li>Festival of Finn</li> <li>Burren in Bloom</li> <li>Burren Rocks</li> <li>Seabirds Festival at the Cliffs of Moher</li> <li>Crinniu na mBád</li> <li>Burren Heritage Week Walks</li> <li>Father Ted Festival</li> <li>Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival</li> <li>Winterage Festival</li> </ul> </div>	Ongoing	FI, CCC



## ENABLER 1: Visitor Management and Dispersal

A key issue for both the Burren and Cliffs of Moher is the environmental pressures that are already being witnessed during peak periods. To help ensure the future sustainability of the region's natural and cultural assets and communities, it will be imperative that an appropriately resourced visitor management, traffic and transport strategy is developed and delivered.

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
E1.1	<p><b>CATALYST 1:</b> Develop and implement an <b>Integrated Traffic and Transport Strategy</b> for the Burren and Cliffs of Moher, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop alternative itineraries for bus operators from Dublin and Galway that include overnight stops in County Clare.</li> <li>• Regulate buses stopping at sacred sites, including Poul nabrone, to require respectful interpretation of these sites and a visitor contribution to their conservation.</li> <li>• Through the Cliffs of Moher engagement with the bus companies, give preference to buses staying overnight in County Clare.</li> <li>• Implement the recommendations of the Doolin Masterplan to reduce the impact of bus traffic on the village and provide adequate enforcement in the village.</li> <li>• Upgrade the Cliffs of Moher carpark and establish the operation of formal park and ride facilities in Doolin and Liscannor.</li> <li>• Review of suitable bus size (many are too big and wide now) and frequency on the coast road (via Fanore), and revisit the idea of making the coastal drive a one-way system.</li> <li>• Investigate the feasibility of using 'intelligent transportation systems', the de-zoning of minor roads (particularly green roads), and the reduction of speed limits on select roads.</li> <li>• Encourage dispersal of FIT traffic to quieter locations such as Kilfenora, the Burren Lowlands and South Clare through the renovation and updating of existing attractions and the creation of new products and experiences (e.g. Holy Island, Scatterry Island, Loop Head).</li> <li>• Extend the 'Tourism for Conservation' Geopark programme to introduce a Visitor Code of Practice with the visitor management and active conservation programmes.</li> <li>• Investigate the cost and potential revenue of applying a differential rate levy to fund new sustainable transport options such as Local Link Clare.</li> <li>• Investigate the application of an Environmental Management Charge for group tour visitors to high volume sacred sites across Ireland to reinvest in maintenance and site management.</li> <li>• Work with Galway County Council on a joint strategy for the Burren with a third of the Burren in County Galway.</li> <li>• Review of the number of bus licenses issued, itinerary routes and the stop locations in the Burren. Ensure that the routes do not use minor roads.</li> <li>• Enforcement of the Integrated Visitor Management, Traffic &amp; Transport Strategy will be required on the ground.</li> </ul>	Short-Term	FI, CCC, NPWS, CoM



### ENABLER 1: Visitor Management and Dispersal (cont.)

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
E1.2	Establish the Burren as an internationally important location through the Geoparks programme with ongoing work in each community and development of a <b>'Burren Guides' training programme</b> .	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK
E1.3	Development and implementation of the <b>Cliffs of Moher Strategy</b> .	Short-Term	CCC, COM
E1.4	<b>Present the transport challenges and Masterplan solutions for Doolin.</b>	Short-Term	CCC, FI
E1.5	Give <b>preference to tour operators that include an Overnight Stay</b> in the region in packaging and distribution arrangements at the Cliffs of Moher.	Short-Term	COM
E1.6	<b>CATALYST 5:</b> Develop the <b>Burren Discovery Trail</b> to assist in dispersing independent travellers eastward to the Burren Lowlands and provide interpretive content to interpret the landscape and reveal the underlying stories. Use the Drive to generate interest in alternative geosites and attractions.	Short-Term	FI, CCC, GCC
E1.7	Investigate the <b>feasibility of Public Toilets</b> in high-use areas such as Fanore and Doolin and review the facilities, traffic management, interpretation, signage, etc. at all hero products.	Short-Term	CCC
E1.8	Position the Burren Geopark to drive the <b>Research, Monitoring and Experience Development</b> activities of the region.	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK
E1.9	<b>Develop a Yearly Action Plan</b> for the Geopark.	Ongoing	CCC/GEOPARK Oversight Committee
E1.10	Undertake <b>an analysis of the accommodation facilities</b> and work to <b>attract inward investment</b> for new facilities. Strengthen incentives to improve and upgrade existing accommodation businesses.	Ongoing	CCC, FI
E1.11	Continue to <b>raise awareness that the Geopark is primarily a landscape in private ownership – promote appropriate visitor behaviour</b> relating to littering, parking and respect for farm infrastructure.	Ongoing	CCC/Geopark



**ENABLER 2: Better Collaboration Between Groups**

At present, the Burren and Cliffs of Moher offering is quite fragmented outside of the umbrella of the Burren Geopark platform. From a visitor perspective, this causes a lack of cohesion in the overall delivery of the visitor experience which can make the difference between whether or not visitors choose to visit and stay in the region. To ensure a clear, cohesive message is being delivered to visitors, tourism groups will need to come together to provide a co-ordinated approach to tourism, one that is driven by clear communication and promotion.

Actions	Timeframe	Lead
<p>E2.1 Establish <b>links between Clare Tourism, The Burren &amp; Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark and the Local Tourism Organisations and Groups</b> to promote the region as a premium destination for overnight stays. This Plan recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Burren Geopark takes the lead</b> for the delivery of the VEDP for Clare County Council.</li> <li>• Clare County Council needs to establish an <b>oversight committee</b>, chaired by the Geopark to include the Cliffs of Moher, Planning, Transport, and other key sections of the Council, together with Fáilte Ireland, CLDC, OPW/DCHA, NPWS, LCG's, BEN, CT, LEO, Coillte, LEO, CETB, Burrenbeo Trust, Burren Programme, UCG, UCD, (and others as agreed) to meet on a quarterly basis to review progress of the plan and work plan. This Committee would create a central point for identifying and providing the guidelines for infrastructural development, funding opportunities, business regulations, supports, etc.</li> <li>• For <b>Clare Tourism</b> to include the Geopark in decision making and to ensure the right skills are in place for the marketing of the Burren. This should include expanding the range of partners involved in Clare Tourism (similar to those partnering with Donegal Tourism) to deliver a more seamless experience from marketing to visitor engagement on the ground.</li> <li>• Collectively promote the region to tour/bus operators for <b>overnight stays</b>.</li> <li>• Elevate the promotion of the experience of the Burren as a <b>premium special destination</b>, with dedicated promotion of the unique experiences best suited to Free and Independent Travelers (FITs).</li> <li>• Facilitate the development of <b>local community tourism groups</b> in Liscannor, Lahinch, Ennistymon and Kilfenora (Kinvara too if none in place) and provide ongoing support to BEN and existing groups to create an integrated network of all the villages in the region to support a collective "roadmap", collective marketing and promotion for the region. This can then feed into the Visit Clare promotional platforms.</li> <li>• Implement the <b>branded signage</b> as developed by the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark.</li> </ul>	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK



## ENABLER 2: Better Collaboration Between Groups (cont.)

Actions	Timeframe	Lead
<p>E2.2 <b>Improve the pre-trip planning information</b> provided about the Burren on key websites and enroute planning in key brochures and guide books to reflect the main messages and hero experiences including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New photography and drone footage required to bring the Burren story to life with more outdoor, active and inspiring footage.</li> <li>• Elevate the experience of the Burren as a premium special destination, collectively promoting the Burren through its FIT experiences. Change the messaging to the theme of ‘Connectedness’ where meeting the locals and / or visiting the landscape with local guides is the true experience.</li> <li>• A guided walk of each town provided via a ‘tear off’ town / village walking map available in local shops to encourage customer engagement in the hero experience by locals.</li> <li>• Create a new section on the Wild Atlantic Way on wellness presenting remarkable experiences from yoga to healthy food showcasing the Burren.</li> <li>• Increase the use of social media by local groups through aligning the efforts of each community under the guidance of Clare Tourism.</li> <li>• Work with Shannon Group on developing a showcase of local produce and artisan crafts from the Burren at Shannon Airport along with messages about the Burren Experience.</li> </ul>	On-going	FI, CCC/ GEOPARK, BEN, CT
<p>E2.3 <b>Support the ongoing role of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark</b> to continue to raise the international recognition of the environmental significance of the area.</p>	Short-Term	CCC, FI
<p>E2.4 <b>Support the aims of the Geopark in its ongoing work with the local communities</b> who are integral to the experience.</p>	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK, BEN



**ENABLER 3: Inspire and Create Confidence in Sharing Stories**

To ensure the region takes a unified approach in sharing the Burren and Cliffs of Moher story, the development and implementation of an integrated marketing programme that is supported by capacity building and experience development programmes and tools are required. This will not only help to boost industry confidence, but will also generate destination Ambassadors that resonate with the global tourist market.

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
E3.1	Implement <b>Business Support programmes</b> through local and regional agencies to help deliver the Visitor Experience Development Plan. Assist businesses in understanding how they can enhance the overall delivery of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher story.	Short-Term	FI, CCC/GEOPARK, LEO
E3.2	Identify and support the next wave of <b>Wild Atlantic Way Champions</b> in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region.	Short-Term	FI, CCC/GEOPARK

**ENABLER 4: Effective Marketing and Promotion**

In order to grow seasonal and sustainable tourism to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher, increased marketing and promotion of the region will be required to achieve cut-through, particularly in high-value markets, and in supporting markets such as business and incentive travel.

Actions		Timeframe	Lead
E4.1	Develop a ' <b>Burren Marketing</b> ' training and upskill programme through the Geopark for all business owners, staff and local communities, to know their villages, towns, region and landscape and to be on "message".	Short-Term	FI, BEN
E4.2	Fáilte Ireland and Cliffs of Moher to <b>actively promote alternative experiences in the region</b> to reduce the pressure on the Cliffs and promote overnight stays.	Short-Term	FI, CoM
E4.3	Create a niche <b>Premier Eco Conference and Incentive programme</b> building on the success of Burren College of Art programmes.	Mid/Long-Term	BEN, CCC/GEOPARK
E4.4	Develop a <b>Joint Ticketing initiative</b> to cross-sell visitor experiences, increase dwell time in the Burren and increase season extension. Ensure that the initiative is promoted in-destination and is integrated into any trip planning tools.	Short-Term	CCC/GEOPARK, BEN



As a part of implementing the framework for developing memorable visitor experiences, Fáilte Ireland has committed to pursuing the principles of Responsible Tourism as set out in the Cape Town Declaration (2002). As such, the following measures of success have been established around the four key components of Responsible Tourism, that is, a balance between visitors, industry, community and the environment.

These measures are to serve as key performance indicator areas which should be reported on annually to help ensure responsible and sustainable tourism growth is achieved in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region.

Due to inadequate available data, a priority is to establish benchmarks for the KPIs outlined in the table below.

Performance Indicator	Measure	Source
<b>Visitors</b>		
<b>Increase average length of stay</b>	Visitor Nights, Numbers	FI Statistics
<b>Increase FIT, luxury and higher spend visitors</b>	Accommodation occupancies, tour operator bookings	Irish Hotels Federation, Tour Operators
<b>Coach licenses and daily booking to the Cliffs of Moher and Aran Islands monitored against capacity limits from May to October</b>	Maximum capacity and conditions set through the Transport Strategy and enforced May to October	Cliffs of Moher, CCC, Bus / Coach / Ferry Bookings / Licenses Issued / Geopark
<b>Improve brand /proposition awareness</b>	Website Traffic	Google Analytics
<b>Improve visitor satisfaction – value over volume</b>	Visitor Satisfaction Survey, Visitor Reviews	Holiday Maker Survey, TripAdvisor, OTA Reviews
<b>Extend the length of the season</b>	Off-peak Visitation	FI Statistics
<b>Increase visitor take-up of key messages</b>	Use of Hashtags	Social Media
<b>Disperse visitors within the Burren</b>	Traffic counts	FI, CCC
<b>Industry</b>		
<b>Increase visitor expenditure with more bed nights</b>	Increased Visitor Spend	FI Statistics
<b>Increased sale of added-value packages to the corporate market</b>	Increased Length of Stay	Accommodation providers
<b>Increase tourism related jobs</b>	Number Employed in Tourism Related Sectors	Central Statistics Office
<b>Increase industry take-up of key messages</b>	Use of Hashtags	Social Media
<b>Increase industry collaboration in-region</b>	Joint Ticketing to be established among Businesses	Ticket Sales
<b>Increase visitor experience packages and itineraries online</b>	Increase in New Experiences, Online Sales and Dwell Time	Business Online Sales, Google Analytics, WAW and Trade Websites



Performance Indicator	Measure	Source
<b>Industry continued</b>		
<b>Get 80% of the businesses contracting online and through Mobile Friendly compatible sites</b>	Online Business Surveys and Tracking	Trade Websites, Online Training Workshops
<b>Workshops/toolkit for a clear distribution plan that suits the business</b>	Number of Trade at Workshops	FI WAW Team and Trainers
<b>Increase the quality of visitor attractions / experiences through the small capital grants scheme – bring standards of attractions from ‘good’ to ‘brilliant’/‘world-class’</b>	Number of Small Capital Grants Awarded Number of Participants in the National Quality Assurance Framework Number of Brilliant / World-class Ratings	Fáilte Ireland
<b>Community</b>		
<b>Improve community perceptions of tourism</b>	Community Survey	To be Designed
<b>Increased Community Association involvement in Tourism Committees</b>	Local Tourism Committees with Community Representation	Tourism Committee Reports
<b>Environment</b>		
<b>Effective management of the environment, including natural, cultural and heritage assets</b>	Environmental Impacts of Key Sites	CAAS Environmental Monitoring Geopark Code of Practice, Monitoring App & Heritage Map Viewer
<b>Trade adoption of the principles of <i>Leave No Trace</i></b>	Number of Trade Adopted	Trade Websites



## Making it Happen

Fáilte Ireland will facilitate the implementation of this plan and the establishment of a new Implementation Group to support the ongoing delivery of the plan.

**Fáilte Ireland**, in its role will provide a suite of bespoke supports for the destination to include the following:

- Tailor made skills and training programme for the region
- Development of new and improved saleable experiences
- Distribution plan
- A small grants scheme (subject to availability of funding)

The **Implementation Group** will operate from 2019 to 2023 and will be formed from representatives of all key stakeholders, including:

- Key national and regional agencies: Fáilte Ireland, Clare County Council, OPW, NPWS, and CLDC
- Key influencers from industry representing a cross section of tourism experiences and key tourism groups

Implementation of the VEDP and delivery of the hero experiences will require each stakeholder agency or organisation to make a shift on how they tell their story and in selecting what projects and initiatives gain support moving forward.

However, each new or enhanced visitor offering needs to do more than just 'tell a story'. It needs to provide visitors with an opportunity to experience the elemental qualities of the region, to encounter the true essence of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher culture, and to leave feeling inspired.

It is the responsibility of each agency, product provider and business operator to embrace this approach and to put themed experiences at the top of the list of the things we share with our customers.

What that means for each organisation is:

**Fáilte Ireland** – will focus on working with the trade that deliver the hero experiences, and help those businesses not currently doing so to start delivering and sharing their unique story.

**Tourism Ireland** – should focus on telling the stories connected to the hero experiences as a priority in their marketing, social media, and publicity.

**Clare County Council** – as providers of industry development and supporters of sustainable development including new infrastructure, they need to encourage businesses, either through mentoring or group support, to embrace a hero experience and deliver it. They should also give preference to those who best deliver on the hero experiences.

**Office of Public Works** – as their primary responsibility includes the maintenance, ownership and upkeep of Government of Ireland buildings, they should fulfil the role of management and development of the sites.

**National Parks and Wildlife Service** - has responsibility for the protection and conservation of Ireland's natural heritage and biodiversity. They are integral to the VEDP as 80% of the region has SAC status.

**Educators** – as educators in tourism, they could assist tourism operators in creating and delivering hero experiences.

**Local tourism groups** – need to work together to share their hero experience stories with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, and work with businesses to help them find and share their hero experience under the common themes established in the VEDP.

**Individual businesses (trade)** – need to find which hero experience they best deliver, deliver it to their customers and encourage their customers and the marketing agencies to share that story with the world.



# 6

## Appendices Aguisíní



A wide range of stakeholders were consulted during the course of the preparation of this Plan.

## Individual organisations and agencies include:

- Ailwee Cave
- Ballyvaughan Development Committee
- Burrenbeo Trust
- Burren Centre
- Burren Hazel Mountain Chocolates
- The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global GeoparkLIFE
- Burren College of Art
- Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN)
- Burren Nature Sanctuary
- Burren Lowlands
- Burren Perfumery
- Clare County Council
- Clare Local Development Company
- Cliffs of Moher
- Doolin Cave
- Doolin Music House
- Doolin Tourism
- Ennistymon – The Courthouse Gallery
- Fáilte Ireland
- Heart of Burren Walks
- Lisdoonvarna Fáilte
- OPW Heritage Services

The views of **local communities and participants in the Burren** were of fundamental importance in the development of the Plan.

Public meetings were held in eight locations and were attended by 119 people over a 6 day period during February 2017.

EarthCheck, Boland Marketing and TEAM Tourism would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who attended these meetings and to

whom they met on-site – for their input, advice and generous hospitality.

In addition to the consultation, a significant number of **plans and strategies** have informed this Plan. These include:

- *Clare County Development Plan - 2017 to 2023*
- *Tourism Development & Innovation – A Strategy for Investment 2016 - 2022, Fáilte Ireland*
- *Wild Atlantic Way Operational programme 2015-2019, Fáilte Ireland*
- *Clare County Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 - 2021*
- *Draft Visitor and Traffic Management Plan for the Burren National Park 2017*
- *Integrated Tourism Strategy for County Clare 2011 - 2014*
- *County Clare Heritage Plan 2011 – 2017*
- *Burren UCD Geopark Draft Policy Report Parts 2 & 3 March 2017, GeoparkLIFE*
- *Geopark Marketing Communications Plan 2016 - 2017*
- *Technical Evaluations of the Burren – ‘The Fertile Rock’*
- *Signage Plan for Visitor Attractions in the Burren 2011*
- *Burren Coach Tourism Study 2014, GeoparkLIFE*
- *Burren & Cliffs of Moher Visitor Survey 2014, GeoparkLIFE*
- *Burren Connect Project Geoparks Ireland 2009*
- *Burrenbeo Trust 2016*
- *Cliff Edge Instability and Safety Issues along the Cliffs of Moher Coastal Walk adjacent to the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Centre*
- *Guidelines for the Licensing of Bus Passenger Services*
- *Ballyvaughan Development Group Submission for Development Plans*
- *Burren Centre proposal for an Analysis and Development Study*
- *Lisdoonvarna Fáilte Vision Document*
- *Lisdoonvarna Spa Wells*
- *Submission from Burren Ecotourism Network*
- *Sustainable Tourism and Conservation Management: Mapping Policy*
- *CAAS Monitoring Report*
- *The Dating of Poul nabrone and Poul nabrone Sanitary Solutions Report*



## Partner Acronyms

**AT** – An Teagasc  
**BT** – Ballyvaughan Tourism  
**BEN** – Burren Ecotourism Network  
**BBT** – Burrenbeo Trust  
**BC** – Burren Centre  
**CCC** – Clare County Council  
**CETB** – Clare Education Training Board  
**CC** – Ceoltas Ceoltóirí  
**CLDC** – Clare Local Development Company  
**CoM** – Cliffs of Moher  
**CT** – Clare Tourism  
**DCHA** – Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht  
**DoE** – Department of Education  
**DT** – Doolin Tourism  
**DTTAS** – Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport  
**FI** – Fáilte Ireland  
**GAA** – Gaelic Athletic Association  
**GCC** – Galway County Council  
**Geopark** – The Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark  
**HC** – Heritage Council  
**IFA** – Irish Farmer's Association  
**ILC** – Irish Lights Commission  
**ITOA** – Irish Tour Operators Association  
**LC** – Local Communities  
**LEO** – Local Enterprise Office  
**LEs** – Local Enterprises  
**LF** – Lisdoonvarna Fáilte  
**LTGs** – Local Tourism Groups  
**NPWS** – National Parks and Wildlife Service  
**NTO** – National Trails Office  
**OPW** – Office of Public Works  
**OPW Heritage Services** – Office of Public Works

**OPW National Monuments** – Office of Public Works

**SH** – Shannon Heritage

**TIL** – Tourism Ireland Limited

**UCD** – University College Dublin

**UCG** – University College Galway

**UL** – University of Limerick

**UnaG** – Údarás na Gaeltachta

**UNESCO** – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
 Global Geoparks

**VSCG** – Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group

## Funding

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects. As of the date on which this Plan was published, none of the projects referred to within the Plan have secured funding from Fáilte Ireland. Reference made to projects in this Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer. Developers are required to comply with relevant legislation and the provisions of Statutory Policies, Strategies, Plans and Programmes, including those relating to environment and planning.

## Timing

**Short-term** – Year 1

**Medium-term** – Years 2 and 3

**Long-term** – Year 4+

**Ongoing**

## Alignment with Existing Plans

This Plan has been aligned with all agency plans (CCC, Údarás na Gaeltachta, LEO, OPW and NPWS). In doing so, it both supports existing plans and seeks to gain leverage from their strategies and actions.

**NOTE:** Recommendations listed do not guarantee funding and will have to go through the same application process for all projects. Seek out what agencies are offering funding as the new stream of funding is in place now for LEADER, FLAG and the new Fáilte Ireland Capital and Small Grants Schemes .



## Introduction

This Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that all existing and future tourism projects and initiatives within the Burren and Cliffs of Moher experience plan area are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner. The VICE (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) Model for Sustainable Tourism is an approach that this Plan is developed from and strives to implement.

Fáilte Ireland recognises the need to integrate environmental considerations into this Plan in a way that responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment. Environmental considerations including inland and coastal water quality and amenity, climate change, traffic, biodiversity, built and cultural heritage, landscape and communities, all play a vital part in our tourism sector.

The protection, enhancement and promotion of our most important tourism asset – the natural environment has been an integral part of the formation of this Plan as is evidenced in the following:

- Environmental assessments and resulting measuring and monitoring,
- A firm commitment to ensuring sustainable and responsible tourism principles are practiced,
- Compliance with statutory decision making and consent granting at Plan implementation stage, and
- Integrating requirements for environmental protection and management.

## Environmental Assessment

Consideration has been given to the requirement to undertake environmental assessment of this Plan in order to ensure full legal compliance and to further integrate protection, enhancement and promotion of the environment in developing and implementing the Plan. The following sets out the two types of environmental assessments that were considered.

### 1. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Plan was examined for the need to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). On initial examination of the Plan it was determined that full SEA would be required. The assessment process was undertaken having full regard to SEA Directive 2001/42/EU and to Statutory Instrument No. 435/2004 as amended. The outcome of this process can be referenced in the relevant environmental documents that accompany this Plan.

### 2. Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The Plan was examined for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment (AA). On initial examination of the Plan and in completing screening for AA it was determined that Stage 2 AA would be required. The assessment process was undertaken having full regard to the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and to Statutory Instrument No. 477/2011. The output and outcome of this process can be referenced in the relevant environmental documents that accompany this Plan.

The outcome of completing the above environmental assessments has resulted in the following:

- Identifying and mitigating where relevant potential environmental impacts resulting from the Plan,
- Altering where relevant aspects of the Plan in order to protect and enhance various aspects of the environment, and
- Developing a suite of mitigatory actions, including environmental monitoring of the Plan during implementation and operation.



## Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

This Plan conforms and commits to sustainable growth of tourism in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region and, in completing the above-mentioned assessments, demonstrates the strong commitment to the VICE Model for Sustainable Tourism Development. The implementation of the following guiding principles is key to the success of the Plan.

### Guiding Principles for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

- Assess the feasibility of developing and implementing visitor management plans where relevant
- Encourage the adoption of a responsible tourism approach with ongoing monitoring of environmental impacts
- Increase awareness and appreciation of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher region's unique landscape and environment
- Increase environmental performance among tourism businesses
- Encourage sustainable modes of transport and ensure they are accessible to tourists
- Introduce and implement minimum sustainable standards for tour guides
- Monitor the quality of visitor experiences and local social/cultural impact at key sites
- Ensure the Burren and Cliffs of Moher visitor experiences are accessible to all where possible
- Support voluntary and community-led environmental protection projects, which in turn benefit tourism
- Advocate for the protection of key environmental and tourism assets
- Improve tourist management, particularly in mature and established tourist areas
- Encourage tourism related businesses to engage in the Leave No Trace Programme

## Implementation and Consent

This Plan is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management. These include the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

Implementation of this Plan shall be consistent with and conform with the above and will involve Fáilte Ireland helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with this consent-granting framework.

In order to be realised, projects included in this Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which this Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

Further detail on requirements in this respect are set out in Section 9.2 of the accompanying SEA Environmental Report.

## Integrating Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects that emerge as part of specific, competitive, themed and time-bound grant schemes or as part of wider strategic partnerships. These include projects relating to land use, infrastructural development and land use activities and attractions. Reference made to such projects included in this Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer.

In order to achieve funding for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities, stakeholders shall be required to demonstrate compliance as relevant, with measures and requirements relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management.

These measures are further detailed in Section 9.3 of the accompanying SEA Environmental Report.





*‘People will forget what you said, they will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel’*

*“Déanfaidh daoine dearmad ar cad a dúirt tú, déanfaidh siad dearmad ar cad a rinne tú, ach ní dhéanfaidh siad dearmad riamh ar chonas a mhothaigh siad de bharr tusa.”*

- Maya Angelou



**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority

