



## Burren EcoTourism Network



Burren Eco Tourism Network (BEN) is a network of tourism enterprises with the objective of establishing the Burren as a premier internationally-recognised sustainable tourism region ensuring the future economic and social growth and sustainable development of its communities, environment and heritage. It seeks to support continued training, mentoring and accreditation in sustainable tourism for its members and for businesses interested in joining the Network.

The Network aims to be a recognisable network of enterprises in the Burren, who have achieved independent accreditation, demonstrate ecotourism 'best practice', positively discriminate in each other's favour, provide 'one voice' representation on issues impacting the Burren (where appropriate), and inspire conservation activism.

The Burren Ecotourism Network and the Geopark have enjoyed a special relationship since 2008, when the Burren Connect Project first instigated the establishment of the Network. The two organisations now work in partnership, having agreed in late 2012 to pool their resources in pursuit of their common objective. Both organisations are committed to the promotion of responsible tourism that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. They work together to promote the Burren and Cliffs of Moher

Geopark as a leading sustainable visitor destination, celebrated for high standards in visitor experience, conservation and learning.

## **Sustainable Tourism**

### **The Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism**

The Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism and its supporting training and mentoring programme is a framework that allows businesses in a destination to come together to build a sustainable tourism offering. It also allows each business that engages in the code to develop an environmental action plan.

The Geopark believes that the sustainability of the businesses within a destination along with the sustainability of products and experiences they offer contribute hugely to the sustainability of the destination as a whole. Through a partnership with the Burren Ecotourism Network, we are working to establish the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark as a premier internationally-recognised sustainable tourism destination.

### **What's involved**

The Code of Practice includes 6 key areas of good practice that must be achieved by each member of the Burren Ecotourism Network and also those businesses looking to join the network. The training programme is highly practical providing enterprises with the tools to establish baseline information and benchmark standards in the areas of energy, water, waste-water and waste management. The Code of Practice training programme also includes modules on interpretation, visitor communication, sustainable transport and conservation. At the end of the training programme each business is equipped with the necessary guidelines, templates and resources to draft an environmental policy that is appropriate to their own business and on reaching the code each businesses will have crafted an environmental action plan.

### **Environmental Policy Statement**

### Working together

We co-operate with all members of the Burren Eco Tourism Network to develop the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark as a sustainable tourism destination. We attend training and networking events throughout the year and participate in sub-groups set up by the Burren Eco Tourism Network. We collaborate with other BEN members across all the 6 key principles of the Geopark Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism.

### A cared-for landscape

One of our main focuses is to conserve our cultural and natural heritage. We adopt Leave No Trace principles at the Michael Cusack Centre and on the Cusack Way Walk from the Centre to Cahercommaun Stone Fort (OPW owned).

### A well-understood heritage

We give talks on local and national GAA history. One Fáilte Ireland staff member is a Wild Atlantic Way (WAW) Champion. We encourage our visitors to visit other local businesses and attractions.

We have a Geopark map at our reception area and a larger map on the wall which we use to show visitors the location and local attractions and we also provide advertising literature for these businesses.

### Vibrant communities

We contribute to the local community by hosting the following at the Michael Cusack Centre. Exercise classes run by Clare Sports Partnership and computer classes run by Clare County Council. Burren Beo and leader classes and seminars, organised by Burren Beo and Clare LEADER. Going WeLL, National Wellbeing programme for post primary schools in Clare (18 schools) and Limerick (27 schools). We are also working closely with the only post-primary secondary school in the Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark (Mary Immaculate, Lisdoonvarna) to enhance the wellbeing of all their students.

We co-ordinated the Carron Community Development Plan, which has a number of very progressive environmental actions to be implemented.

### Strengthened livelihoods

We contribute to the local economy by employing local people. We use local services and maintenance companies, we also shop locally and co-operate with other local businesses to promote the region.

We support local community fundraising events and help fundraising efforts for local charities.

### Environmentally friendly

Since May 2000 we have purchased all our electricity from Energia. This electricity is generated in Ireland from wind energy. All garden waste is composted and then reused in the garden.

Cardboard packaging, newspapers, magazines, glass, cans, plastic bottles and used light bulbs and batteries are all collected for recycling in the correct manner. We are committed to further reducing waste to landfill. Over the past 30 years, our tree planting has created a new habitat for birds and other wildlife. Native Irish red squirrels and other wildlife have moved back into our garden.

### The Burren Code and Leave No Trace

The Burren Code principles are to help safeguard this important landscape. We ask that all visitors observe the Burren Code and Leave No Trace of their visit.

Leave the limestone pavement as you find it. Limestone pavement and orchid rich grasslands are listed as priority habitats in the European Habitats Directive and are protected by law.

Preserve natural habitats and leave wildflowers undisturbed.

Take care not to damage monuments, walls and buildings.

Respect landowners, their property and their livestock.

Park and camp in designated areas.

Leave no trace of your visit, take nothing but memories.

By reading and adhering to the principles outlined in the Burren Code, you will be in a position to make informed and responsible decisions while visiting this beautiful place. Beyond this, however, we would hope that your visit here would contribute positively to the local economy, helping local communities to survive and continue their important role in maintaining the heritage of the Burren.

## What else can you do?

- Be as informed and respectful as possible.
- Try to source local products and local providers.
- Stay a few days longer and explore on foot, bicycle or horseback.
- Be conscious of the fact that more than 95% of the Burren is privately owned land, and animals are grazing this land.
- Check out the available waymarked trails on Irish Trails [irishtrails.ie](http://irishtrails.ie) so you are sticking to the available paths for walks for visitors.
- Discover the local network of businesses that are accredited eco-tourism network providers ([burren.ie](http://burren.ie))
- Visit off-season and extend your stay so that your experience of the Burren will be enriched, as will the beneficial impact of your visit. One of the biggest problems with the region's tourism industry is its seasonality, with most visitors arriving during the summer months. This means there is very little full-time employment available for local people who are more likely to opt for year-round work in nearby towns and cities.
- Get to know the place on a more intimate level – take a walk, rent a bike, go for a horse ride – you won't be disappointed as the more you put in to the Burren, the more you will get out of it and in this way you can best support the communities of the region who host your visit.

## Leave No Trace Ireland



Leave No Trace Ireland is a network of organisations and individuals with an interest in promoting responsible recreational use of the outdoors. As large numbers of people seek the beauty and exhilaration of outdoor recreation, our collective mark on the environment and its natural processes increases litter, disturbance to water, vegetation, wildlife and livestock. These are all indicators of the need to develop a national ethic that protects both natural and cultural heritage. Techniques designed to minimise the social and environmental impacts to these areas are incorporated into the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics Education Programme.

## The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace

How to reduce the damage caused by outdoor activities:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Be considerate of others
3. Respect farm animals and wildlife
4. Travel and camp on durable ground
5. Leave what you find
6. Dispose of waste properly
7. Minimise the effects of fire

Leave No Trace Ireland promotes and inspires responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships. The programme strives to build awareness, appreciation and respect for Ireland's natural and cultural heritage and is dedicated to creating a nationally recognised and accepted outdoor ethic that promotes personal responsibility.

It encourages all outdoor enthusiasts (e.g. walkers, mountain bikers, canoeists, orienteers, horse riders) to do their part to maintain those lands used by the public for the benefit of the environment and for future generations. Practicing a Leave No Trace ethic is simple. Make it hard for others to see or hear you and leave no trace of your visit.

The Michael Cusack Centre is committed to adopting the following Environmental policies.

- Produce an annual Environmental Plan, stating our targets, objectives and an action plan going forward.
- Comply fully with all relevant legislation.
- Reduce our consumption of water where possible, minimise our waste, reuse and recycle where practical.
- Encourage our customers and suppliers to participate with us in protecting the environment.
- Provide employees with training to meet our objectives.
- Monitor and record our environmental impacts regularly and compare with our policies, targets and objectives.
- Inform interested parties of our policies.