



# Feasibility Study of The Burren as a Learning Landscape

Abbreviated report  
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## Glossary\*

### Terms

Cultural Landscape	A cultural landscape is an extensive geographical area where people live and where the physical landscape has been shaped by a history of human settlement
Experiential learning	Experiential learning is learning from experience, the student learning by doing
Landscape/ Place	Landscape is scenery (including the sea), its constituent parts (habitats and buildings) and the interactions with the society which inhabits it. 'Landscape' and 'Place' can generally be used interchangeably
Learning Community	A learning community is any group of people who share a common purpose and who are engaged in learning from each other
Learning Society	A Learning Society is one in which education is an active, collaborative process, enabling learners to understand, participate in and change the world around them
Place-Based Education (PBE)	PBE is a philosophy and approach for teaching in schools that has been developed in the United States. PBE is based on the principle that learning should be rooted in the local, including the local community
Place and Community Based Education (PCBE)	PCBE is used interchangeably with PBE
Place-Based Learning (PBL)	PBL is learning that is rooted in what is local; the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature and art of a particular place. PBL includes outdoors play and recreation, PBE, ecotourism and other types of lifelong learning

### Organisations and programmes

Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark	The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark was designated in 2011, as a constituent member of the European Geoparks Network. The Geopark, which is managed by Clare County Council, has three objectives; the provision of education and training, providing a platform for collaboration between groups and organisations to create a sustainable future for the Burren and to develop the Burren as a world-class sustainable tourism destination
Burrenbeo Trust	The Trust is a registered charity, based in Kinvara. It is dedicated to the Burren and its people with a programme

which includes education, research, advocacy and conservation

**Burren Community Charter**

The Charter is a 2010 Heritage Council funded initiative to develop a common vision for the Burren. The initiative was coordinated by the Burrenbeo Trust, Burren Connect, Burren Farming for Conservation, Burren IFA, and supported by the Heritage Council and the two local Heritage officers.

**Burren Connect**

Burren Connect was a tourism and environment project, based in Ennistymon, with multiple objectives, supported by Clare County Council, Shannon Development, Geological Survey, NPWS, National Monuments Services, Failte Ireland and the Burrenbeo Trust. Burren Connect has now been superseded by the Geopark

**Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN)**

BEN is a network of Burren businesses established in 2011, one of only two accredited ecotourism networks in Ireland

**Burren Farming for Conservation**

This is a targeted, farmer-led agri-environmental programme designed to conserve Burren heritage, environment and communities. It is co-funded by the Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Marine and the Dept. of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The BFCP offices are located in Carron

\*More detailed definitions of some of the terms and organisations are contained in the main text

## Executive Summary

This study has been commissioned by the Burrenbeo Trust which is a registered charity based in the Burren. The Trust works in the Burren's interest with farmers, academics, business people and with the Burren community in its broadest sense. It is involved in education, information dissemination, research, advocacy and active conservation work.

All places and landscapes have a learning potential but the Burren has that potential in abundance. For many decades it has had a reputation as the 'outdoor classroom' of Ireland, a field study experience that has been enjoyed by generations of students of geography, geology, botany, archaeology and other disciplines, from schools and colleges all over Ireland and from further afield. The Burren is world-renowned for its unusual flora, striking glacio-karst scenery and the density and quality of the archaeological heritage. Taken separately, each one of these characteristics represents a rich heritage, but, taken together, they comprise an exceptional legacy.

The importance of landscape/place as a medium for learning is increasingly recognised by educationalists. We learn most and best in our local surroundings. This is the underlying philosophy of Place-Based Education (PBE), an educational approach that has developed in the United States over the last two decades and which is now practiced in hundreds of schools across North America.

Can the Burren play a lead role in place-based learning? We are in no doubt that it can. The study sets out the following vision:-

*In twenty years' time the Burren is the European centre of place-based learning. The Burren is the heart of a network of learning communities that is an exemplar of social transformation through learning. As a result Burren communities are thriving and the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Burren is appreciated and celebrated as never before. People there make optimum use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as an educational tool and, thanks to an initiative in the Burren, Place Based Education (PBE) has become a standard form of learning in Irish schools.*

This report recognises many types of learning, including play in childhood and outdoor recreation and adventure by teenagers and young adults. This is another attractive characteristic of the Burren, the extent to which it enables learning throughout a lifetime.

The Burren enjoys key advantages as a learning landscape. These include being the home of a number of dynamic organisations, namely the Burrenbeo Trust, The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark and the Burren College of Art, all of which currently run innovative learning programmes. There are significant obstacles to overcome but we believe that the Burren can make significant progress in realising its potential as a learning landscape over the next five years.



Fanore beach

The Burren is therefore well positioned to make an important contribution to the development of learning approaches for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Kate Davies states that ‘the task of developing a learning society to facilitate humankind’s evolution towards sustainability is an urgent priority’. Given current trends, according to Davies, ‘our species will need to learn and change more in the next 50 years than it has in the past 50,000’.<sup>1</sup> How we learn is changing dramatically anyway, as a result of the increasing impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). In its white paper on education Cisco recognises the need for the ‘right technology at the right time for the right task’.<sup>2</sup>



Learning exercise at Gortlecka during Learning Landscape Symposium in 2012

The 5-year Framework Plan that is set out in this report is a response to those challenges. The Plan aims to create a Network of Learning Communities in the Burren by means of four interrelated strategies. These are:-

<sup>1</sup> Kate Davies (Director for Change at Antioch University Seattle), ‘A Learning Society’, in Resurgence and Ecologist, 257, Nov/Dec 2009

<sup>2</sup> Cisco White Paper, ‘Equipping Every Learner for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’, available at <http://www.cisco.com/web/about/citizenship/socio-economic/docs/GlobalEdWP.pdf>

1. A programme to enable local communities to fully participate in the learning network,
2. The development of PBE,
3. The exploration and development of innovative learning and
4. The encouragement of PBL entrepreneurship.

The Plan will be implemented in two phases. The Preparatory Phase depends on the deployment of the 'in house' resources of participating bodies, principally in the form of staff and volunteer time. The success of this phase and of the plan as a whole is dependent on the extent to which the local Burren organisations can harness their networking capability to secure valuable alliances to further PBL. The Main Implementation Phase requires external funding for a project manager and an educational coordinator/ trainer. These full-time positions are necessary to drive plan implementation over the period 2015 and 2018.

The Framework Plan aims to make the best possible use of the communal resources of the Burren and the learning resources within the region and beyond. The communal resources are the beguiling landscape, the communities of the Burren and a dynamic group of local organisations. The Burren communities include significant numbers of knowledgeable and well-educated individuals who are keen to participate in learning initiatives. The communities also include many people who are unemployed and under-employed and would be interested in upskilling and retraining to work in learning-related enterprises. The learning resources of the wider region are its universities and colleges and a burgeoning ICT sector.

The Plan requires a long-term commitment to a shared endeavour by that diverse group of bodies.

The Plan will bring social and economic benefits for the communities of the Burren and deliver important lessons for Ireland and the rest of the world. In the last year of the Plan we estimate that it will help to create more than 20 jobs, train more than 300 teachers in PBE, and involve more than 100 students and researchers in the



Winterage at Slievenaglasha

exploration of new learning paradigms. By Year 5 the Plan will be helping to bring more than 3,000 additional visitors to the Burren for PBL experiences, contributing €645,000 to the local economy.

While the Plan will deliver tangible material benefits the main benefits of the Plan cannot be easily quantified but are invaluable. They take the form of an improved quality of life for residents of the Burren and important lessons about place and learning for Ireland and the wider world.

Table 1. Summary of 5-Year Framework Plan

Phase	Period	Funding required	Priority Actions and Strategies
1. Preparatory Phase	2013-2014	0	1. Consultation with other stakeholders 2. Agree and establish a collaborative network for implementation 3. Secure the involvement of third level college(s) and ICT company(ies) 4. Apply for funding
2. Main implementation phase	2015 -2018	€360,000 - €465,000	Strategy 1: enabling communities Strategy 2: PBE Strategy 3: new learning paradigms Strategy 4: PBL entrepreneurship Assessment of Plan Secure long-term funding
3. Post-Plan	Post-2018	To be determined	Mainstream the Plan Strategies with supporting funding

## Chapter 1 Introduction

1. This study has been commissioned by the Burrenbeo Trust, a registered charity based in Kinvara that is 'dedicated to the Burren and its people'. The Trust, which was established in 2008, is engaged with farmers, academics, business people and community activists in order to sustain the Burren through education, information, research, advocacy and active conservation. The Trust seeks to create an appreciation of the Burren as a living landscape of distinction and to educate and advocate for its conservation.
2. The purpose of this study is to help to develop a realistic but innovative and visionary plan for the development of the Burren's rich potential as a learning landscape of international renown. Work began at the Learning Landscape Symposium in Kinvara in August 2012. This provided an opportunity to hear directly the views and experiences of learning landscape practitioners from the United States, Britain and other parts of Ireland. Since then the study authors have carried out a desk-top review and extensive consultation with stakeholders in the Burren and further afield. That process included two workshop held in January 2013, in Ballyvaughan and Ennis .
3. The underlying hypothesis is that, despite its fame as a place to learn and all that has been achieved in recent years, the educational potential of the Burren remains under-developed, that there is an economic potential based on learning that will sustain Burren communities and that the Burren can become an international centre for place-based learning.



Figure 1.1 The Burren as defined for the Burren Community Charter Project in 2010. The boundary corresponds to DED (District Electoral Division) boundaries, otherwise shown as red lines (Map base from NIRSA on-line mapping)

4. The extent of the Burren cannot be precisely defined. While the upland part is very distinctive the lowland margins are less so. This study adopts the area used for the Burren Community Charter project in 2010 (Figure 1.1 ) which has an area of 720km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 18,600. The eastern boundary roughly corresponds to the line of the M18 motorway. The town of Gort and a necklace of villages, surrounding a lightly populated interior, further define the area. Galway City lies 18 km. to the north and Ennis 13 km. to the south.
5. The Burren may already be described as a *de facto* learning landscape, given the quantity and range of educational resources that are located there. Moreover, the area has been an outdoor classroom for generations of students of archaeology and the natural sciences. These students are drawn not only from Ireland but also from Britain, continental Europe and North America. A 2012 heritage education audit for the Heritage Council recorded 31 separate heritage education providers in the area . The Burren is world-renowned for its unusual flora, striking glaciokarst scenery and the density and quality of the archaeological heritage. Taken separately, each one of these characteristics represents a rich heritage, but, taken together, they comprise an exceptional legacy.
6. There is a growing body of thought in western society that society is in crisis and that educational reform is the solution. The solution referred to is not education in the narrow sense of classroom teaching but a transformation of how society learns. Kate Davies, Director of the Centre for Creative Change at the University of Antioch Seattle, asserts that ‘the next step in human evolution depends on developing a society than can learn to live sustainably on the Earth’.<sup>3</sup> She points out that the Agricultural Revolution took thousands of years and the Industrial Revolution 200. In her view humanity now needs to change more in the next 50 years than it has done in the past 50,000.
7. Cisco, the ICT corporation, believes that ‘21<sup>st</sup> century learning is a global destination that applies as much to a village in India or Uganda as it does to modern cities such as Shanghai, Tokyo and New York. However, reaching this destination will clearly require a local journey, guided by an understanding of local traditions and circumstances, and drawing heavily on proven strategies and practices’.<sup>4</sup> The Cisco paper recognises that digital technology is perceived as a double-edged sword in education and that it may have failed to live up to the potential that was claimed a decade ago but argues that technology needs to meet the unique

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<sup>3</sup> Kate Davies, A Learning Society, in Resurgence and Ecologist, 257, Nov/Dec 2009.

<sup>4</sup>Cisco White Paper, ‘Equipping Every Learner for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century’ ,p15, available at <http://www.cisco.com/web/about/citizenship/socio-economic/docs/GlobalEdWP.pdf>

objectives of each educational system i.e. to provide the 'right technology at the right time for the right task'.<sup>5</sup>

8. Kate Davies has gathered together three strands of educational thinking from the last four decades; ecological literacy, place-based education and transformative learning, to construct a Learning Society model for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century<sup>6</sup>. She sets out six strategies for the Learning Society. Two of those strategies are Creating Learning Communities and Learning from Experience. She argues that Learning Communities are needed because collaborative learning, as opposed to solitary learning or learning only with like-minded people, is more likely to generate fresh perspectives and innovative thinking. The Learning from Experience strategy has two aspects. 'Hands on' learning is a proven educational technique but Davies' strategy also involves accessing the wisdom that is embedded in the experience of place.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p14

<sup>6</sup> Davies has combined ideas from a number of sources. These include:- Robert Hutchins, *The Learning Society*, University of Chicago Press, 1968, Edmund O'Sullivan, *Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, London, Zed Books, 1999; David Orr, *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*. State University of New York Press, 1992 and David Sobel, *Place Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*. MA, Orion Society, 2004

<sup>7</sup> The other four strategies proposed by Davies are; *Fostering a New Cultural Worldview*, *Thinking Systemically*, *Embracing Diversity* and *Whole Person Learning*

## Chapter 2 What is a Learning Landscape?

### 2.1 Introduction

9. The phrase ‘learning landscape’ was proposed by the Burrenbeo Trust, which commissioned this report, to describe the broad potential of the Burren as a place of learning. However, it is a phrase that is not in common use around the world and, when it is used, it has a variety of meanings. It is therefore necessary to clarify the phrase in a way that is appropriate to the notion of the Burren as a learning landscape.
10. In this report we deploy the word ‘landscape’ in a very wide sense to embrace both the physical landscape (scenery, including the sea), its constituent parts (habitats and buildings) and the interactions (e.g. farming and the arts) with the society which inhabits it. ‘Place’ has been suggested as a more appropriate generic because it avoids confusion between the traditional understanding of landscape as scenery and the broader, modern meaning<sup>8</sup>. In the academic literature ‘landscape’ and ‘place’ tend to be used interchangeably. *Tírdhreach Saíochta*, the learned wisdom of landscape, has been suggested as the Irish expression of the concept<sup>9</sup>.
11. All landscape has a learning capability, especially the landscape/place where we live. That capability is very broad and can be summarised in terms of five overlapping categories:-



**Play in nature:** unstructured play in nature is a very positive learning aspect of childhood,

**Outdoors Adventure:** teenagers and young adults gain valuable personal skills through participation in outdoor adventure pursuits,

**Place-based education (PBE):** Learning based on place is an effective educational methodology,

**Relevant Environmental Research:** Place-based, inter-disciplinary research leads to valuable new learning and insights, and

**Learning for enjoyment:** Learning about place is enjoyable and fulfilling

12. There is substantial evidence that playing in nature in childhood nurtures creative skills and a sense of environmental awareness. The drastic decline in this childhood activity in western

<sup>8</sup> Conor Newman, ‘Landscapes Я Us’, Proceedings of the Irish Landscape Conference , Heritage Council, 2009

<sup>9</sup> Suggestion made by Declan Kelleher, member of the education committee of the Burrenbeo Trust

society is causing considerable concern<sup>10</sup>. The educational benefits of outdoor activity for older children are less clear-cut but it is generally accepted that outdoor adventure pursuits engender self-confidence and self-reliance and teach other important life skills.

13. There is growing support for Place-based Education (PBE), an educational philosophy and methodology which developed in the United States at the end of the last century. According to David Sobel *'Schools, in Ireland and in the United States, have progressively become isolated from their surrounding landscapes and communities. Children learn the nearby is mundane and insignificant; what's faraway is glamorous and important. Instead, especially in the primary years, education should be rooted in what's local and unique about their places....'*<sup>11</sup>
14. PBE is a teaching approach for primary and secondary schools with the following characteristics and benefits<sup>12</sup>:
  1. Learning takes place on-site in the schoolyard and in the local community and environment focusing on local themes, systems and content,
  2. Project-based learning experiences contribute to the community's vitality and environmental quality and to supporting the role the community plays in fostering global environmental quality,
  3. Learning is supported by strong and varied partnerships with local associations, organisations, agencies and businesses,
  4. Learning is inter-disciplinary and custom-tailored to local opportunities,
  5. Local learning serves as the foundation for understanding and participating appropriately in regional and global issues,
  6. Place based education programmes are integral to achieving other educational and institutional goals, and
  7. Learning is grounded in and supports the development of a strong and personally relevant connection to one's place.
15. An indication of the implications of embracing PBE is given by the guidance for Scottish teachers drawn up by Rebecca Boyd, who has studied PBE in American schools<sup>13</sup>. Boyd's six pointers are:-
  1. Learning and Caring about Place. Get the whole school community involved, parents, teachers and students.
  2. Responsible citizens. Provide opportunities for students to be involved in their local community.
  3. Active Learners. You need collaborative planning of school curricula, you need students to learn by doing and be the creators of knowledge.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: saving our children from nature deficit disorder (London: Atlantic Books) 2010

<sup>11</sup> David Sobel, 'Making school like a farmers market', in Burren Insight, Issue 5, 2013, p.4-5

<sup>12</sup> Attributes listed by Place-based Education Evaluation Cooperative (PEEC), a New England based group of organisations that include Antioch University New England

<sup>13</sup> Rebecca Boyd, 'Growing Kids who Care: Connecting School Place and Planet', available at [http://www.wcmt.org.uk/reports/762\\_1.pdf](http://www.wcmt.org.uk/reports/762_1.pdf)

4. Effective Contributors. Make students' concerns and questions central to the learning agenda, get students involved in supporting the school community e.g. fund raising.
  5. School in community. Be ambitious and outward looking; make the school a learning hub, a model for the whole community.
  6. Relevant for the real world. Use a range of assessment techniques including using people from the community for assessment.
16. Landscape is a complex medium which encourages a holistic perspective. Researchers doing collaborative fieldwork in landscape settings are more likely to uncover new knowledge and insights that are relevant to critical environmental issues. But all students of landscape, whether research fellows, amateur local historians, school-children or travellers with enquiring minds, are involved in an activity that is often enjoyable and can be deeply fulfilling. It seems that as human beings we possess a natural and inexhaustible curiosity about the places we inhabit and that we enjoy sharing that knowledge. These are key reasons why landscape/place is such a powerful learning medium.
17. A direct engagement with a landscape may be the ideal but this is not always achievable. Paradoxically, indirect engagement through other media e.g. film and TV, can be effective, inspirational even, the experience made 'better than the real thing' by the editing of reality. There is no better example of this than the work of David Attenborough on television, beginning with the Life on Earth series in 1979. Attenborough has inspired a new generation of environmentalists and helped to shape western society's perception of the modern world. Each new series of Attenborough documentaries has exploited new technology to depict the natural world as effectively and comprehensively as possible to a television audience.
18. Advances in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the increasing ubiquity of ICT enable more ambitious local level educational projects<sup>14</sup>. For instance, large scale and accessible, low cost educational programmes are now possible in the form of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). We are in an era of 'blended learning', in which learning processes combine on-line and face-to-face elements.<sup>15</sup> New learning initiatives have to take into account that 'today's learners are digital learners- they literally take in the world via the filter of computing devices: the cellular phones, handheld gaming devices, PDAs and laptops they take everywhere, plus the computers, TVs and game consoles at home'.<sup>16</sup> Paradoxically, as Cisco has pointed out the traditional classroom has become the place where the average student is now most disconnected from the digital world (See Fig. 2.2)

<sup>14</sup> See [http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/what\\_is\\_21st\\_century\\_education.htm](http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/what_is_21st_century_education.htm)

<sup>15</sup> Sean Flynn, 'DCU chief calls for digital learning strategy' in Irish Times, 11<sup>th</sup>. February 2013

<sup>16</sup> What is 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education at [http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/what\\_is\\_21st\\_century\\_education.htm](http://www.21stcenturyschools.com/what_is_21st_century_education.htm) accessed on 11th. February 2013

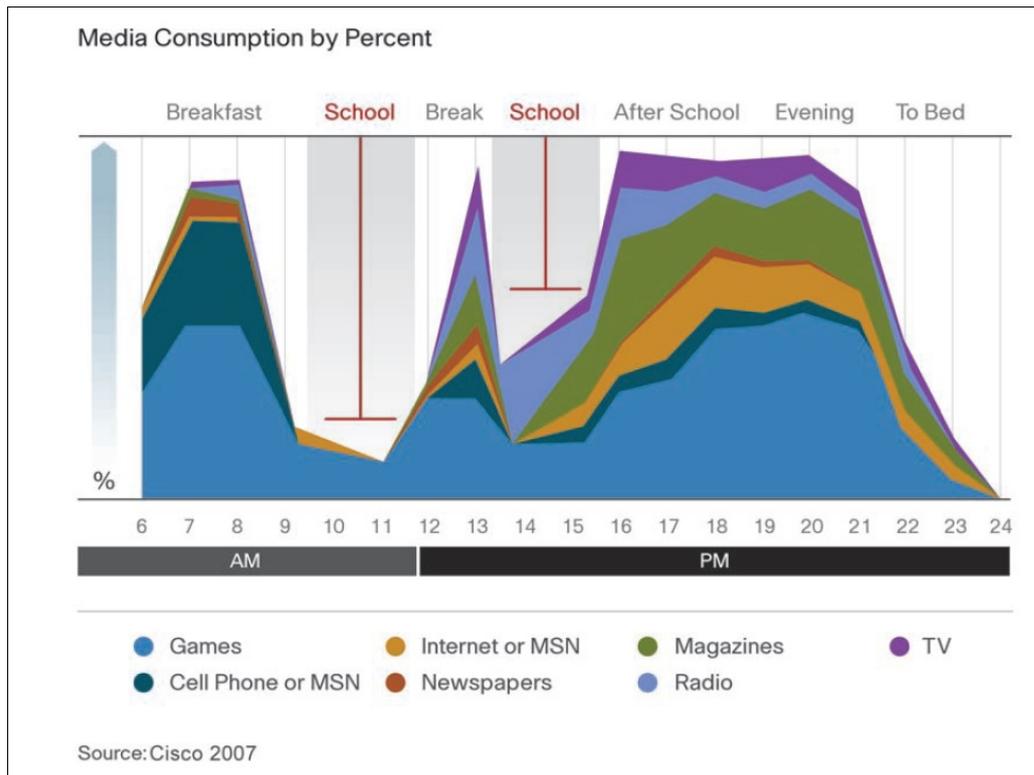


Figure 2.2 The daily media-consumption of a school-going student in the Netherlands (Source: Cisco White Paper, 'Equipping Every Learner for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century')

19. But ICT cannot become a substitute for direct experience of landscape, which requires the full engagement of the senses. Richard Louv approvingly quotes an associate professor of psychology that 'there is something wrong with a society that spends so much money, as well as countless hours of human effort- to make the least dregs of processed information available to everyone everywhere and yet does little or nothing to help us explore the world for ourselves'.<sup>17</sup>
20. All landscapes are learning landscapes to some degree. It is such a rich learning medium that virtually everywhere, whether inner city, forest, new suburb or farm, has a learning potential. And everywhere there are opportunities to enjoy landscape through learning. But this study of the Burren is based on the assumption that a few landscapes, such as the Burren, possess an exceptional learning potential which distinguishes them from the majority of other places. The remainder of this chapter examines that proposition, first setting out in more detail the characteristics of the learning process that involves landscape as the learning medium, and then putting forward criteria against which to measure the learning potential of a landscape

<sup>17</sup> Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, 2005 reprinted 2010, Chapter 5. Citing Edward Reed, *The Necessity of Experience*

## 2.2 A learning approach for landscape

21. Landscapes can be placed on a continuum of natural and 'unnatural' places, at one end of which are landscapes which are largely natural in character and, at the other end, places which have been transformed by human activity. Antarctica is an example of the former and an agricultural district or a city exemplifies the latter. Landscapes that are celebrated for their exceptional character can be found anywhere on this continuum. The Burren and most landscapes in Europe are 'cultural landscapes', i.e. landscapes that have been moulded by human occupation. Especially fine examples of cultural landscape are defined by the International Union for Nature Conservation in the following terms:-

***A cultural landscape** is an area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area with a distinct character with a significant aesthetic, ecological and/or cultural value and often with high biodiversity. Safeguarding the integrity of this traditional interaction is vital to the protection, maintenance and evolution of such an area.*<sup>18</sup>

22. According to this definition a cultural landscape of distinction has four elements; people, nature, the interaction of people and nature and that interaction over a period of time. Furthermore, our perception of a cultural landscape is determined by a range of disparate criteria i.e. aesthetics, ecology and culture. The definition therefore encapsulates a landscape experience of considerable richness and one would expect a learning potential of comparable richness.
23. Unlocking that potential requires an appropriate methodology. The most relevant learning approach for a cultural landscape is the Place-Based Education (PBE) model. This approach explicitly acknowledges the cultural dimension of landscape by anchoring the learning process in primary and secondary schools, which are established institutions in every community.

***Place-Based Education** is a learning approach in schools that is rooted in what is local; the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature and art of a particular place. The community provides the context for learning, student work focuses on community needs and interests, and community members serve as*

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<sup>18</sup> Adrian Phillips, Management Guidelines for IUCN Category V Protected Areas (Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, 2002), p. 9

*resources and partners in every aspect of teaching and learning (Source: PEEC, New England)<sup>19</sup>*

24. PBE is a compelling alternative to the conventional method of learning by textbook and whiteboard. Schools are key components of the social infrastructure of local communities and therefore ideal platforms for PBE. But formal education is only a small part of the learning universe. It is therefore desirable to identify those positive features of PBE which have a general relevance to landscape-centred learning, irrespective of the organisational setting.

Learning by doing

25. Learning by doing is often the best way and sometimes the only way of acquiring certain kinds of knowledge. Landscapes present two sets of experiential learning opportunities that are directly connected to landscape character; first, the crafts and skills associated with the making and maintenance of landscape e.g. farming and construction skills, and, second, those means of describing and making sense of landscape e.g. art and literature, geography and history, ecology and geology.

Holistic learning

26. Educators regard a holistic perspective as a basic aspect of a rounded education. When landscape/place is the learning medium, that emphasis is difficult to avoid, especially if the landscape is a cultural landscape. The potential scope of a curriculum of place is very broad, comprising temporal, spatial, ecological, political, imaginary and personal dimensions.<sup>20</sup>

Learning in community

27. Learning can be a solitary or a group activity. Part of the tradition of place-based learning in Ireland and elsewhere is the role of gifted amateurs, naturalists and local historians, compiling detailed studies of their localities. However, in a learning landscape the emphasis is on communal and cooperative learning. Sue Clifford of Common Ground has expressed some of the joys and pitfalls of community learning centred on place:-

*Knowing your place, taking some active part in its upkeep, passing on wisdom, being open to ideas, people, development, change but in sympathy with nature and culture which have brought it this far, will open the doors of dissent. But conversation, tolerance and the passing on of memories, are civilising forces. Whatever the forms of knowledge we shall*

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<sup>19</sup> Definition adopted by the US Rural School and Community Trust in 2002 and cited in a PEEC brochure available at [www.PEECworks.org](http://www.PEECworks.org). I have added the phrase 'in schools' to make clear the focus of PBE

<sup>20</sup> Jane Kenway, 'Beyond Conventional Curriculum Cartography Via a Global Sense of Place' in eds. Margaret Somerville, Kerith Power and Phoenix de Carteret, *Landscapes and Learning, Place Studies for a Global World* (Rotterdam. Sense Publishers, 2009), pp.195-206

*need for the next millennium, humanity and imagination must take a high priority in organising them.*<sup>21</sup>

#### Learning with the help of experts and enthusiasts

28. One demonstration of the importance of a teacher and mentor is the research finding that environmental values have a great deal to do with the hours spent playing as a child in nature and *the presence of an adult who taught respect for nature.*<sup>22</sup> If small children enjoy landscape through play and acquire their learning unconsciously, adults are more likely to enjoy landscapes through conscious learning experiences. Landscapes, especially cultural landscapes, are complex entities. The landscapes stimulate our curiosity but invariably their character cannot be satisfactorily unravelled without the help of the educated eye of a ‘teacher’<sup>23</sup> who knows the landscape.

### **2.3 Characteristics of a Learning landscape**

29. Based on the literature review and the above analysis, we conclude that a cultural landscape, which is also a learning landscape, has some or all of the following characteristics.

#### The landscape inspires

30. Certain landscapes and places inspire, a characteristic which can transcend cultural divides. The attraction can be expressed in aesthetic or spiritual terms and, where that attraction exists, the scope for intellectual stimulation and personal growth is enhanced. This inspirational quality is a key requisite of a learning landscape. An assessor of the Teton Science Schools (TSS) ‘Journeys’ PBE outreach programme in the Rocky Mountains had some difficulty explaining the success of the programme. He suggested that part of the explanation was that students, who were primary school teachers, enjoyed their visits to the scenic national park area where the learning took place<sup>24</sup>. More than half of the field study centres in Great Britain are in or beside designated National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The images below are from the websites of Spanish language schools in the Pyrenees, indicating that, while learning may be a satisfying end in itself, it is that much more enjoyable an experience when it is happening in a beautiful and inspiring place.

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<sup>21</sup> Sue Clifford and Angela King essay at <http://www.England-in-particular.info/cg/distinctiveness/d-place.html> accessed on 9th. February 2013

<sup>22</sup> David Sobel, Look, Don’t touch. The Problem with environmental education’, in Orion, July/August 2012 , p.p. 65- 72

<sup>23</sup> The ‘teacher’ may not necessarily possess a formal education

<sup>24</sup> Hayes, John, ‘An evaluation of Teton Science School’s Journey’s Place-Based Education Programme as Effective Environmental Education’ available at <http://digitalcommons.usu/etd/237>



31. Richard Louv argues passionately that nature nurtures creativity. There is a body of research supporting the idea that the ability to think in a creative way is shaped by childhood experience in nature. Louv asserts that ‘American creativity comes largely from our freedom, our space- our physical space and our mental space’ and wonders what will happen to ‘the health of our economy, when future generations are so restricted that they no longer have room to stretch?’<sup>25</sup>

A learning landscape has a rich and diverse heritage

32. The fertile hill country of central Tuscany supports a world famous viticulture (Chianti) and artisanal food industry and was at the heart of the Italian Renaissance. The villages and towns of the region are replete with medieval and renaissance art and architecture. This is a landscape with a rich heritage and therefore an enormous learning potential. By contrast, an area of forested and mountainous countryside, 100 km north-west of Mexico City, entered the world stage in 1975 when it was discovered as the wintering grounds of most of the eastern American population of the Monarch Butterfly. The area was designated a World Heritage Site in 2008. The Monarch makes a unique 4000 km migration between Canada and the north-eastern United States and the wintering grounds in Mexico. The sight of large pine trees festooned with Monarchs and the migration feat in itself are among the great natural wonders of the world. The Monarchs have bestowed fame on a previously little known rural area of Mexico and now support a small but growing tourism industry. However, the butterflies have not transformed the area into a landscape with a learning potential that is comparable to central Tuscany, where the whole landscape, not just one aspect of it, has an outstanding character.

The landscape is beguiling and scrutable

33. A learning landscape is both beguiling and scrutable. It possesses a wealth of visible detail that both attracts the eye and stimulates enquiry. That stimulation can ultimately lead to a satisfying comprehension of both what has been observed and then lead into the broader field

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder, London: Atlantic Books, 2009, Chapter 7 The Genius of Childhood: How Nature Nurtures Creativity

of knowledge that is partially revealed by the landscape. Contrast, for instance, the geomorphological learning potential of the central southern part of Ireland and the upland areas of the West, both regions moulded by glaciation in the last 20,000 years. The visible impact of glaciation in parts of the southern area is difficult to discern, to such a degree that, until recently, conventional wisdom was that there had been no recent glaciation of these areas.<sup>26</sup> However, in the upland west the effects of glaciation are so striking that they draw the attention of the least observant person. The western landscapes are ‘hands-on’? outdoor classrooms of glaciation while those other glaciated landscapes may only draw the interest of dedicated geomorphologists.

#### The landscape is contested

34. There are as many perspectives of landscape as there are people. Change and potential change in a landscape can bring to the surface contrasting perspectives which generate conflict. Educators with a special interest in landscape argue that the more contested a landscape, the greater its pedagogical potential i.e. the more it can teach about the human condition. It may often be the case that a recognition and accommodation of conflict can only be achieved through artistic endeavour e.g. art, music and story-telling, rather than by a process of objective enquiry. Anthropologist, Adrian Peace, has written that contested landscapes ‘expose the fragility and frailty of social life by contrast with the constancy and solidity of the physical order’.<sup>27</sup> Colonised landscapes and landscapes whose placenames derive from different cultures are especially revealing. It is no coincidence that some of the leading thinking on landscape learning is emanating from Australia, where there is a legacy of aboriginal cultures, renowned for their celebrations of place.<sup>28</sup> That sense of place is also a feature of Irish literature and social-scientific enquiry.

#### The landscape has adequate social capital

35. The communities of a learning landscape must have the capacity to fully participate in the learning culture, i.e. to become Learning Communities. There needs to be a community network with the capacity to plan and to coordinate the learning environment. Within

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<sup>26</sup> As recently as 1990, the revised edition of Frank Mitchell and Michael Ryan’s standard field guide to the Irish landscape described an area stretching from the Dingle peninsula to Wexford as ice- free during the last ice advance. It is now generally accepted that the whole of Ireland was ice covered. See Frank Mitchell and Michael Ryan, *Reading the Irish Landscape* (Town House, Dublin, 1990) Chapter 2 and Michael Viney, *A Smithsonian Natural History of Ireland* (Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> Adrian Peace, ‘A sense of Place, A Place of Senses. Land and Landscape in the West of Ireland’, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, V61, 2005, p.p. 495- 512

<sup>28</sup> See Margaret Somerville, Kerith Power and Phoenix de Carteret (eds), *Landscapes and Learning, Place Studies for a Global World* (Rotterdam, Sense Publishers, 2009)

communities the social capital will take a variety of forms. There must be an adequate resource of teachers; individuals with the knowledge, skills and time to tell compelling stories of place. Those teachers can be farmers, university lecturers or simply a local person who knows about where he or she lives. All landscapes benefit from this type of mediation. But learning landscapes, more so than others, cannot rely on impersonal media such as books, apps, signboards and films to convey the richness of the knowledge embedded in the local landscape.

The landscape is accessible for students and teachers

36. A learning landscape must be accessible for its students and teachers. This requirement covers a wide range of factors. In a cultural landscape it relates to access to both physical environment and local culture. Access to the physical environment includes matters such as the availability of publicly owned land, 'freedom to roam' legal provisions, rights of way, the availability of public transport and provisions for the physically impaired. Access issues in relation to community include a culture of hospitality and access to historical and other place-related documentation. Teachers and students also need the time to come to terms with a learning landscape. This raises practical matters of accommodation and the availability of other basic services in situ.

## 2.4 Conclusion

37. Some cultural landscapes possess a visible character that renders them landscapes of great learning potential. However, that learning is only properly harnessed by the involvement of local communities in the educational process.

Definition

**A Learning Landscape** is an attractive geographical area of considerable extent which has the capability, to an unusual degree, of arousing curiosity and sparking the imagination. A cultural landscape becomes a fully functioning learning landscape when its communities are participating in the learning process.

## Chapter 3. The Potential of the Burren as a Learning Landscape

### 3.1 Introduction

38. This chapter outlines the potential of the Burren as a learning landscape, primarily by reference to the criteria described in the last chapter. It should be stated at the outset that members of the Burrenbeo Trust and delegates at the Learning Landscape Symposium in August 2012, who were asked for their views on the status of the Burren as a learning landscape, were in no doubt about that status. Some of those questioned clearly thought that the answer was so obvious that there was no point asking the question. Nevertheless, we believe that it is necessary to ‘spell out’ the learning potential of the area, and, in the process, both highlight the Burren’s exceptional qualities of the Burren and identify its shortcomings.

### 3.2 The landscape inspires

39. A group of international experts met in the Burren in February 2013 to discuss climate change. The Green Foundation Trust, which organised the meeting, described the venue as ‘a unique location in the west of Ireland’. Asked why they chose the Burren, Eamon Ryan, Green Party leader and former Minister for Energy and Natural Resources, explained that it was ‘a stunning, rugged landscape on the western edge of Europe, which we believe will be inspirational.’<sup>29</sup> Local botanist, Cillian Roden, rhetorically poses the question of why conserve the Burren and answers



that ‘the best reason is the most obvious because, many, many people value and love this flora and this beautiful landscape.’<sup>30</sup> In his poem, ‘Postscript’, Seamus Heaney describes a moment in time in the Burren when gusts of wind ‘find the heart unlatched and blow it open.’ Sarah Poyntz, a resident of

Ballyvaughan used to write a nature column for the Guardian newspaper. She believes that ‘We are all searchers and often discoverers. If we are thoughtful we look for truth or beauty preferably both and almost always we wish for happiness. Sometimes we find them seemingly

<sup>29</sup> Dan Griffin, ‘Clare Hosts climate change ‘gathering’’, in *The Irish Times*, February 15<sup>th</sup>. 2013, p.9

<sup>30</sup> Cillian Roden, *The Burren Flora* in ed. J.W. O’Connell and A. Korff, *The Book of the Burren*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Kinvara: Tir Eolas, 2001) p.41

by chance. It was in the early 1980s that I found truth, beauty and joy. I found them in this place called the Burren.’<sup>31</sup>These quotations are a small sample of the very many descriptions of the Burren that deploy words like beauty, love and inspiration. These subjective qualities do not fit comfortably into the methodology of a feasibility study report but they are an essential aspect of the Burren as a learning landscape. The Burren makes a good learning landscape because people love being there. A related aspect is the singular physical appearance of the area. Other romantic landscapes on the western seaboard of Europe, e.g. the Iveragh peninsula and Connemara, the Lake District in England and the Scottish Highlands are also renowned for their beauty and they share a not dissimilar romantic character. However, there is nowhere else like the Burren. That distinctiveness renders it a place apart from the ‘everyday’ world, and therefore a place which is better equipped than most for contemplating the state of that everyday world.

### 3.3 A rich and diverse heritage

40. The Burren has an exceptional learning potential because of the extent to which the potential is spread across a very broad range of heritage. The Burren is renowned for its geology and geomorphology, ecology, botany, zoology, archaeology, farming



tradition and folklore. The landscape has a strong spiritual character and a music tradition that is fully alive through the playing of the Kilfenora Ceili Band and musicians such as Sharon Shannon, Michael Hynes and Chris Droney. That range of heritage encourages a rounded and balanced viewpoint and stimulates enquiry across intellectual boundaries, all characteristics of place-based learning in action.

### 3.4 The visible landscape is beguiling and scrutable

41. The physical landscape of the Burren has an exceptional capacity to arouse curiosity and to enable satisfying explanations of what can be seen. Those explanations can take many forms, including historical accounts, scientific discourse and folklore. The visible landscape of the Burren offers an inviting gateway into a diverse body of knowledge. The landscape is beguiling

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Poyntz, ‘The Power of the Burren’, in Burren Insight, Issue 3, 2011, p.3

and scrutable. This is illustrated below by reference to two specific areas of heritage, ecology and spiritual tradition.

42. The Burren supports a range of pristine and near pristine limestone habitats that draw scientists and amateur naturalists from far afield. More than half of the area belongs to the Natura 2000 network of European habitats (Figure 3.1). In 2010 an international group of coleopterists found a rare water beetle, *Octhebius nilssoni*, in Loughs Gealain and Briskeen. The beetle, which lives in cold, clear, well-oxygenated water in limestone lakes, had previously only been recorded in northern Sweden. The discovery in the Burren was of sufficient wider interest to be reported in the local and national media.
43. This is an example of relatively narrow educational potential. Cold lake waters and small beetles hold little attraction for most people and it can be safely assumed that the presence of the beetle, while it substantiates the ecological quality of the Burren, does not draw that many people to the area. Other Burren habitats and species, by contrast, have a wide appeal and therefore greater learning potential. Orchid-rich grasslands, limestone pavement and coastal cliffs are all Burren habitats that are full of sensory delights. These places can arouse an interest in nature that, in time, may deepen and focus on a more specialised area of knowledge, such as entomology or a species like *Octhebius nilssoni*.
44. Orchid-rich grasslands are part of a suite of Burren habitats that result from a dynamic relationship between farming and nature. Orchid-rich grassland, the product of a traditional grazing regime, is the most bio-diverse outcome of that relationship, whilst improved grasslands and hazel scrub show the consequences of different farming regimes. By the presence of these different habitats and farming types, and the ongoing Burren Farming for Conservation Programme, the present-day landscape of the Burren is able to tell a complex and important story about the role of farming in shaping landscape.



45. The ecological learning potential of other upland areas in the west is generally more limited because their characteristic

habitats are superficially less attractive and the landscapes are less revealing. Blanket bog is the characteristic habitat of these upland areas<sup>32</sup>. Like orchid-rich grasslands and other Burren habitats, blanket bog is an endangered, priority habitat. Bogs also play a vital role in the carbon cycle and their future management is therefore a significant element of the human response to global warming. The bogs contain 49% of Ireland's endangered bird species and 23% of the country's endangered flora<sup>33</sup>. Yet, despite their relevance and scientific importance, boglands do not present the same learning potential as the Burren. John Feehan has described how, historically, they have been regarded by most people as 'a wet desert, a tragic waste of land...' And they still appear to many as empty and inhospitable tracts, devoid of interesting detail. Scientific interest, rarity of species and habitats and relevance in relation to pressing environmental problems are all desirable attributes of a learning landscape but, before all else, a landscape should be attractive and sensually stimulating for a large number of people and the Burren has that quality.

46. In New Zealand Professor Wally Penetito has bemoaned the inability of the New Zealand educational system to find room for two co-existing, cosmologies, the Maori and the Western<sup>34</sup>. Ireland also boasts two cosmologies, a dominant Christian tradition and a druidic sense of place that predates Christianity. Both traditions find powerful expression in the Irish landscape through place names and folk lore that have survived into the modern era. In this respect Ireland is markedly different to most of the rest of the Europe. More than any other dimension, this

<sup>32</sup> There are also small areas of blanket bog in the Burren

<sup>33</sup> EPA, Bogland: Sustainable Management of Peatlands in Ireland, a STRIVE report by UCD for the EPA, 2011

<sup>34</sup> Wally Penetito, Place-Based Education: Catering for Curriculum, Culture and Community'. New Zealand Annual Review of Education, 18, 2009, pp.5-29

aspect of the Irish landscape experience sets it apart from other European places. Within Ireland the Burren landscape stands out as a repository of these traditions.

47. According to D.L. Swan, the Burren contains what ‘can be claimed to be the densest concentration of (ecclesiastical) sites in the country.’<sup>35</sup> Swan records 80 sites on his map and Lelia Doolan has recorded 43 holy wells.<sup>36</sup> These holy sites are part of the contemporary Burren landscape, a visible testimony to spiritual traditions which stretch back at least 1,500 years. This physical imprint in the landscape of contrasting and overlapping spiritual sensibilities illustrates both the scrutable and beguiling dimensions of the Burren. Nearly all the religious monuments are medieval or modern reconstructions and replacements of original structures yet the modern ruins and their sites draw our attention and there is a richness of detail in what remains to encourage a deeper learning.

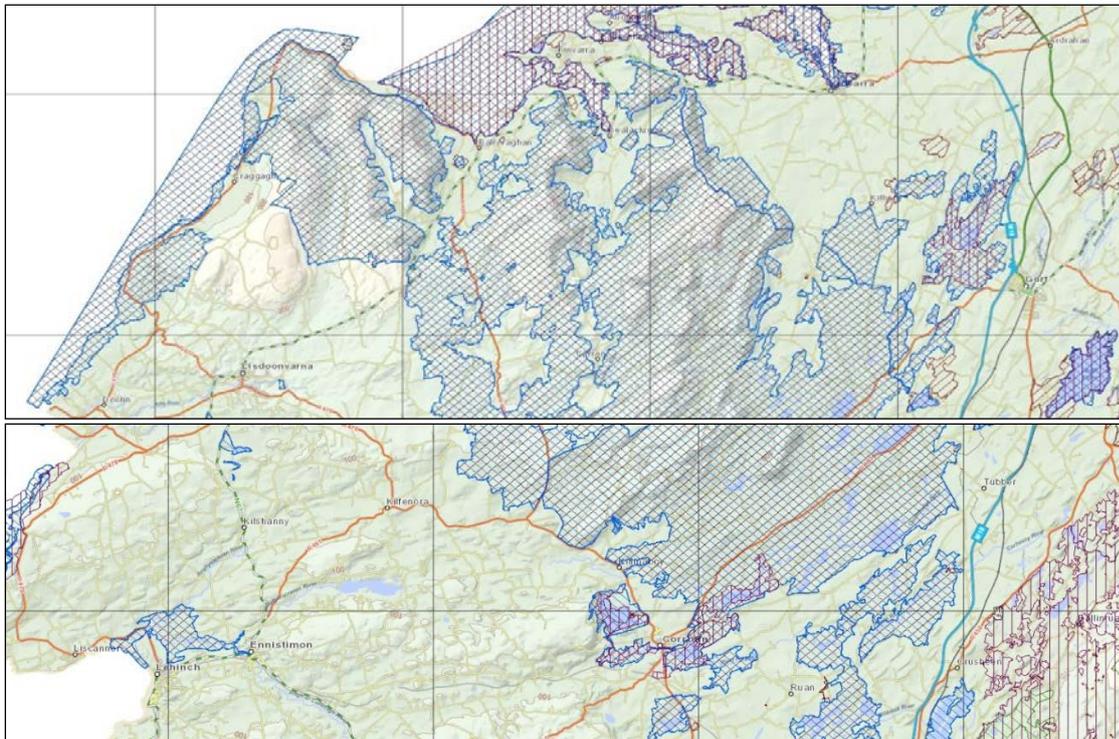


Figure 3.1 Natura 2000 sites in North Clare and South Galway. Nearly all of the upland Burren is SAC and large parts of the lowland Burren are designated (Source: NPWS website)

48. The Burren has also benefitted from surveying and recording by gifted and dedicated scholars in recent centuries, beginning with John O’Donovan and Eugene O’Curry of the Ordnance Survey in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. O’Donovan then wrote of the Burren as ‘the wildest and ruggedest district I have seen ...its history and topography are better preserved than those of

<sup>35</sup> D.L. Swan, the Churches, Monasteries and Burial Grounds of the Burren’, in *The Book of the Burren*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Kivara: Tir Eolas, 2001), p.p. 95 -118

<sup>36</sup> Lelia Doolan, op.cit.

any County I have yet visited'.<sup>37</sup> Survey and research continued through the last century, notably by T J Westropp at the turn of the century, Séamus O Duilearga between 1929 and 1935 and Tim Robinson in the 1980s and 90s. As a result of these endeavours the Burren possesses a record of folklore and traditional practices which is second to none. The Burren continues to be a focus of scholarship to the present day, and is arguably the most researched geographical area in Ireland<sup>38</sup>.

### 3.5 The landscape is contested

49. The frequency and distribution of landscape conflict in Ireland has prompted anthropologist, Adrian Peace, to describe the whole of the Irish countryside as 'a perennial site of struggle' in recent times.<sup>39</sup> Much of that struggle can be described as a conflict between competing heritage ideologies, summarised by Simon Bourke as follows:-

- heritage is a valuable commodity which can be conserved and exploited,
- heritage has an intrinsic value and is part of national identity and
- heritage is abundant and dispensable.<sup>40</sup>

50. As a landscape of abundant heritage, which is also a farming area and tourist destination and which is within the commuter belts of Galway and Ennis, it is inevitable that the modern Burren is a contested place. This was highlighted by the Mullaghmore dispute in the 1990s, a conflict over the building of an interpretative centre in the national park that became an international news story.

51. From the literature review it is clear that many educators believe that conflict in a landscape is an educational asset. The learning to be derived from a contested place is quite likely to come not from an analytical approach, but to revolve around literary and artistic projects which enable the exploration of conflict in creative and non-confrontational ways<sup>41</sup> The contested nature of the Burren landscape therefore offers a latent but fertile arena for future learning.

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<sup>37</sup> O'Donovan quoted by Lelia Doolan, Lore and Cures and Blessed Wells in Book of the Burren, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Kivara: Tir Eolas, 2001), p.p. 156-7

<sup>38</sup> Refer, for instance to the bibliography in Dunford, B. (2001) The Impact of Agricultural Practices on the Natural Heritage of the Burren Uplands, Co. Clare. PhD Thesis submitted to the National University of Ireland, Dublin, November 2001.

<sup>39</sup> Adrian Peace, 'A Sense of Place, A Place of Senses. Land and Landscape in the West of Ireland', Journal of Anthropological Research, vol. 61, 2005, pp. 495- 512

<sup>40</sup> Simon Bourke, Media and Heritage in Ireland. Representations of heritage in Irish newspapers and the praxis of determination. PhD dissertation at Dublin City University, Dublin, Ireland, 2009

<sup>41</sup> See Deirdre O'Mahony, *New Ecologies between Rural Life and Visual Culture in the West of Ireland: History, Context, Position and Art Practice*. Brighton: University of Brighton, 2012. Unpublished PhD Thesis

### 3.6 The landscape has adequate social capital

52. A learning landscape cannot function effectively without the participation of the people who live there. There are an estimated 80 community-led organisations in the Burren.<sup>42</sup> There is considerable evidence of a capacity for community-level initiatives at this time, e.g. the relaunch of Burrenbeo as a charitable trust in 2008 and the foundation of the Burren Ecotourism Network in 2011. The broad range of activities of the Burrenbeo Trust is a strong indication of the learning potential of the Burren i.e. Ecobeo environmental education courses for local primary schools, the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers, a Wild Child- Young Explorer's Club, regular guided walks and a heritage lecture programme. One of the three objectives of the newly formed Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, 'to create a platform for collaboration between agencies, projects and community groups' can be regarded as directly addressing the issue of the effective utilisation of local social capital. A healthy vigour is also evident at an even more local level, e.g. the setting up of the X-PO community space in Kilnaboy in 2008 and the organisation by X-PO of a 'Between Place and Space Gathering' in 2013<sup>43</sup>, the running of a local plebiscite in Ballyvaughan and Fanore in 2010 about a proposed Sea-water Pumped Hydro-electrical Storage Scheme and the community hall redevelopment project in Corofin in 2013.
53. In a learning landscape there is an especial need for able teachers. The 2012 Educational Audit includes a list of individuals living locally with heritage teaching skills available, in addition to those in schools and colleges and public agencies.<sup>44</sup> The audit does not cover teachers of art or artisanal skills or outdoor recreational skills. The changing socio-economic profile of the area shows an increasingly well-educated residential population. For instance, the number of professionals living in the Burren increased by almost a third between 2002 and 2006 indicating a broadening base of high-end skills in the local population. The proximity of GMIT and NUI Galway, both running courses with Burren topics, ensures continuing external academic support. The Irish Studies Centre in NUIG has expressed a keen interest in direct involvement in the Burren Learning Landscape Project.<sup>45</sup> There are also a number of ICT corporations with a keen interest in education, which have facilities close to the Burren, including Cisco and Hewlett Packard in Galway and Intel in Shannon. The presence of the Burren College of Art, now offering joint masters courses (ecology and art) with NUI Galway, gives the Burren an outstanding

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<sup>42</sup> Burrenbeo, Draft Burren Community Charter 2011

<sup>43</sup> See Deirdre O'Mahony, *op.cit.* The gathering event was funded by the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark

<sup>44</sup> Burrenbeo, A Review of Heritage Education and Training in the Burren, 2012, Draft report

<sup>45</sup> Nessa Cronin of the Irish Studies Centre, NUIG, has stated that she would be interested in participating in membership of a committee to progress the Learning Landscape project and believes that the Centre would be interested in partnering Learning Landscape projects

advantage as a learning landscape. There is no comparable institution to the college anywhere else in Ireland.

54. The social capital of the Burren is concentrated in the communities around the periphery of the area. Some of this capital must currently be regarded as latent because of the limited identification by these communities with the Burren and therefore their limited involvement in Burren-centred initiatives<sup>46</sup>. This particularly applies to Gort and Kinvara. Gort is by far the largest Burren community (2600 population in 2011) and Kinvara the fourth largest (600 population in 2011). Table 3.1 offers a rough measure of the capacity of settlements to host educational events, based on a number of criteria which are set out below the table. Gort is the best resourced place but Ballyvaughan, Corofin, Doolin, Kinvara and Lisdoonvarna all have significant assets. The 2012 Burrenbeo Landscape Learning Symposium demonstrated the capacity of Kinvara to host a two-day, 100-delegate colloquium. On the basis of Table 3.1, three other Burren settlements, Ballyvaughan, Gort and Lisdoonvarna could host an event of comparable magnitude, and two settlements, Corofin and Doolin, could host somewhat smaller events. There is also significant capacity in even smaller settlements as witnessed by Carron hosting the Winterage Festival in 2012.



Sheep judging at the North Clare Agriculture Show an annual event in Corofin since the show society was founded 1948

<sup>46</sup> In a 2012 SWOT analysis conducted with stakeholders in Gort by the West Regional Authority, 'The Burren' was not mentioned in any context. See West Regional Authority, Small Towns Study-sustainable development for the West Region, (WRA, 2013)

Table 3.1 A rough guide to the capacity of Burren settlements to host learning events

	A.Size	B.Trans	C.Acc	D.Pub	E.Edu	F.VC	G. C/B	Score
<b>Ballyvaughan</b>	0	1	3	3	3	0	2	12
<b>Boston</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Carron</b>	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	5
<b>Corofin</b>	1	0	2	2	1	1	2	9
<b>Doolin</b>	0	0	3	3	1	1	2	10
<b>Fanore</b>	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
<b>Gort</b>	2	2	2	3	2	0	2	13
<b>Kilfenora</b>	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	5
<b>Kilnaboy</b>	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	5
<b>Kinvara</b>	1	1	2	3	2	0	2	11
<b>Lisdoonvarna</b>	1	1	2	3	2	0	2	11
<b>Ruan</b>	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
<b>Tubber</b>	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2

Note. The table shows 7 criteria, each criterion weighted to show relative capacity in terms of different characteristics, principally the presence or absence of services or facilities. The settlement score is the sum of the 7 weightings. It is important to stress that this is a rough guide only.

- A .Settlement size >1000 pop, 2, >500 pop 1
- B. Public Transport, intercity bus and train 2, frequent regional bus 1 all year round;
- C. Accommodation, hotel 3, hostel 2, B and Bs 1;
- D. Pubs, Restaurants, cafes, pubs, restaurants, cafes, 3, pub-restaurant and pubs, 2, pub,1;
- E. Educational institute, 3<sup>rd</sup> level, 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> level 2, primary 1;
- F. Visitor centre, visitor centre,2,
- G. Active community body or business association, presence 2, absence 0

55. The Burren College of Art is the only institution within the Burren with the capacity to host sizeable events on an independent basis (accommodation excluded). There is no institution in or near the Burren with a capacity to run a residential programme teaching place-based education, such as can be provided at Teton Science Schools in Wyoming or Dartington Hall in Devon.



### 3.7 Conclusion

56. The Burren amply fulfils the criteria of a learning landscape that is encapsulated by the learning landscape definition given in Chapter 2, i.e., ‘it is an attractive geographical area of considerable extent which has the capability, to an unusual degree, of arousing curiosity and sparking the imagination’. However, the learning landscape definition goes on to state that a cultural landscape only becomes *fully functioning* as a learning landscape when its communities are participating in the learning process. In the Burren and, indeed, everywhere else, that ambitious status lies somewhere in the future because it requires unprecedented social transformation. But there are signs of progress, in particular the positive outlook that is being generated by initiatives such as the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme and the expanded curriculum of the Burren College of Art, and by the setting up of the Burrenbeo Trust, Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers and the Geopark.

## Chapter 4 The Demand for Place-based Learning

### 4.1 Introduction

57. The previous chapter established the credentials of the Burren as a learning landscape and made the point that the area is already an important student destination. This chapter provides a quantitative description of educational and tourism trends which are relevant to the further development of the Burren as a learning landscape. The demand estimates are necessarily tentative given the novelty of the learning landscape concept and the dearth of relevant, up-to-date data, in particular data specific to the Burren. For this reason the study uses conservative estimates of the share of market segment that can be captured by the Burren in the target markets identified.

### 4.2 Formal Education

58. There are 427 Schools with over 72,000 pupils within an hour’s drive of the Burren. There are currently 58,000 teachers in Irish schools, 32,000 in primary schools and 26,000 in post-primary schools. Place-based learning is not a significant aspect of teaching in Irish schools at the present time but there are grounds for believing that this will change. Place-based Education (PBE), which is an educational approach embracing place-based learning is widely practiced in North America, is being promoted by educators across the world and PBE is an approach which is in keeping with the educational ethos in this country.

	<b>Primary Schools</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Post Primary Schools</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>
<b>Total - Ireland</b>	3,300	516,450	723	359,047
<b>Total - Burren</b>	24	1,959	4	1,563
<b>Galway City</b>	26	7,045	10	6,627
<b>Galway County</b>	218	20,608	36	12,225
<b>Clare</b>	119	13,462	18	12,121
<b>Target Market</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>41,115</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>30,973</b>

59. Nationally, The Transition Year Programme at post-primary level is now being offered in over 500 schools with 50% of students availing of the programme. It provides a bridge between the more dependent type of learning associated with Junior Cycle and the more independent learning environment of Senior Cycle. It encourages the development of a wide range of transferable critical thinking and creative problem solving skills. The programme has three main aims:-

- Education for maturity, with an emphasis on personal development, including social awareness and social competence
- The promotion of general technical and academic skills, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and self-directed learning
- Education through experience of adult and working life as a basis for personal development and maturity.

The future demand for PBL in formal education is summarised below under relevant institutional contexts.

#### In Service Training

60. Teachers form one of the most important interfaces between society and the individual. The quality of teachers' work is a key determinant of the educational success of students. Education systems therefore seek to provide teachers with opportunities for in-service professional development in order to maintain a high standard of teaching and to retain a high-quality teacher workforce.
61. A significant proportion of teachers believe that professional development on offer does not meet their needs: over half reported wanting more than they received during the previous 18 months. Place-based learning offers teachers an alternative way to engage with different learning styles, improve communication skills and to enable them to deal with the daily challenges they face through their careers and in the classroom.
62. There are also opportunities to provide Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training programmes in the Burren for archaeologists, geologists and other environmental professionals. As a signatory to the European Landscape Convention, the government has committed to improving public awareness of the importance of landscape and ensuring that everyone involved in landscape planning and management has adequate training.

#### Universities and colleges

63. The number of students enrolling in 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Education in Ireland increased from 137,150 in 2006 to 193,187 in 2011, representing growth of 40%. In the academic year 2010/2011 there were 193,187 students in the third level sector, 158,447 were studying undergraduate programs while 34,740 were participating in Post Graduate programs. There are five 3<sup>rd</sup> Level Colleges near the Burren, NUIG (National University Ireland Galway), GMIT (Galway Mayo Institute of Technology), UL (University of Limerick), LIT (Limerick Institute of Technology) and Mary Immaculate Teacher Training College (Limerick).

#### Summer Camps

64. There are 47 Irish Summer Colleges inside and outside the Gaeltacht and they attract over 26,000 students every year from June - August. (Concos and Foras Na Gaeilge). These courses typically last anywhere from 10 days to 3 weeks and involve a residential stay away from home which can be expensive. The popularity of the Irish College experience has led to a rapid growth in non – residential type camps that offer shorter, cheaper and more varied learning experiences that appeal to both primary and post primary school students

### 4.3 Non – Formal Education

#### Life Long Learning

65. The distinction between Adult Education and Lifelong Learning is increasingly blurred as society embraces the idea of learning throughout life. An ageing population, changes in work culture and the need for upskilling to meet the requirements of both the labour market and society, all present educational challenges. In this context Lifelong Learning is becoming regarded as an essential behavioural trait rather than a minority pursuit or an optional luxury. The Burren, through place-based learning, can play a major role in a lifelong learning programme for a substantial local population. There are in excess of 100,000 people living within a 40-minute drive of the Burren.
66. Nationally, participation levels in lifelong learning courses over the past 5 years have grown from 80,000 to 107,000 in 2011. Thousands of courses are available to people of all ages and interests. Many of these courses provide no certification – they are simply for enjoyment, and reflect the friendly and enjoyable atmosphere in which they are delivered. However, Ireland performs relatively poorly when compared to other European Countries. The percentage of the population engaged in life-long learning in 2011 was only 6.8%, significantly behind the 12.5% target agreed at Lisbon<sup>47</sup> and the much higher rates in other countries.

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<sup>47</sup> EU Treaty of Lisbon 2007

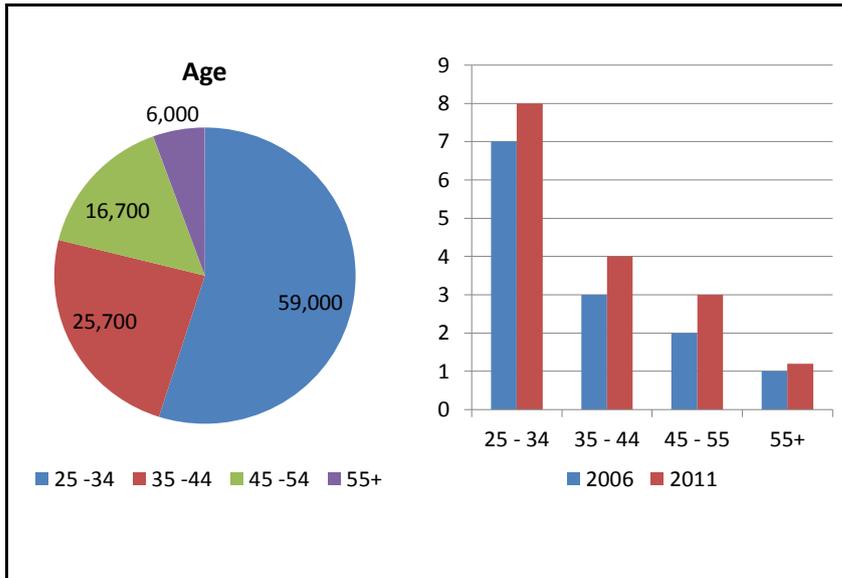


Figure 4.1 Participation in Life-long learning in Ireland

67. Education and Training play a vital role in generating and sustaining economic activity and the availability of a well-educated and flexible workforce can help attract income and job creating opportunities into rural areas. The educational attainment profile of older adults in Ireland is relatively poor by international standards. It can be concluded that the scale of potential demand for further education amongst the adult population now and into the future is substantial.

International Life Long Learning

68. There is a growing market for people who want to learn new skills in a challenging environment. This trend is emphasised in the recent European Travel Commission report on Tourism Trends for Europe, which states:-

*"...time poverty prompts many people to save up time to spend later. There is a growing trend towards 'sabbatical' holidays, which can become the 'trip of a lifetime'. Such trips often feature personal challenge or self-development, including long distance walking or cycling, taking cookery or painting classes...The lack of time for creative development in many peoples' lives will lead to an increase in 'creative tourism', with tourists developing their creative skills on holidays, and destinations vying to improve their creative offer."* Travel has become a means of self-expression, self-definition and a whole fashion in itself. The consumer is becoming more sophisticated and tourists now choose holidays that will give them a different and rewarding experience. Many visitors no longer wish to be passive spectators and the search for meaningful and authentic experiences has emerged as a significant trend in the tourism market. While Heritage/ Culture will continue to remain the most popular reason to visit Ireland, the Burren

can provide engaging experiences in the education, eco tourism and volunteer tourism markets to appeal to the International Life Long Learning Market

#### Cultural Tourists

69. These tourists are interested in heritage, culture and the natural environment. They want to explore and discover local authentic experiences that give them a sense of the unique character of a destination and its people. They like to experience a destination at their own pace and seek out,

- the opportunity to immerse oneself more fully in nature, through the environment itself, a diverse range of active experiences and the people encountered along the way, and
- A rich culture and history that educates, stimulates and inspires

70. Learning experiences currently on offer in the Burren include Heritage and Culture, Ecology, Art, Painting, Wellness, Music and Traditional Crafts. The International Ecotourism Society reports a 34% annual growth in demand for ecotours in the past 20 years and sector analysts predict more growth, suggesting that 'early converts to sustainable tourism will make market gains.'

#### Educational Tourists

71. Travelling to learn a language is an increasingly important market in many countries and Ireland is actively promoting itself as a destination to learn English as a Foreign Language. Ireland is a very sought-after EFL destination, so much so, that despite the economic crisis, language courses are still in popular demand. According to Failte Ireland, 96,250 students went to Ireland to learn English in 2010 and increased by a further 10% in 2011. The average student spends €400 per week on courses, accommodation, meals and leisure and typically stays 20 weeks. (Failte Ireland Press Release 2011). With an appetite for learning, they are seeking to enhance their knowledge through experiences that will broaden the mind. They like a destination to be easy and accessible, are keen to learn as much as possible and are open to organised trips and tours. For these tourists the Burren offers many options for immersive day experiences and makes a great destination for an organised trip. The Burren can explore partnerships with EFL Colleges to promote and organise these trips.

#### Volunteer Tourists

72. Doing good while travelling is a popular trend in the 20 -25 age group, involving combining a holiday with volunteer work. The Burren is home to the successful Burren conservation volunteer programme and can take advantage of this growing market. A 2008 study by Tourism

and Research Marketing, which surveyed 300 organisations, estimated the market size to be 1.6 million volunteer tourists per year and put the value of the market at around £1.3 billion.

#### 4.4 Target Markets

73. The Burren has significant appeal as a learning landscape in both the domestic and international markets. We have identified segments in each market which we believe represent the best opportunity for Burren learning experiences.

##### Domestic Market

74. In the domestic market, the Burren will appeal to a range of diverse group across the formal and non-formal education sectors. The Table below sets out a forecast of demand by each category at Year 5.

Segment	Activities	No of Schools	Population	% Uptake	Estimate Year 5
Primary Schools	School Tours	363	41,115	10%	36 Schools
	PBE Programs	363	41,115	10%	36 Schools
Post Primary Schools	Transition Year	64	30,973	20%	12 Schools
	Junior Cert	64	30,973	20%	12 Schools
Summer Camps	Local		3,255	10%	325 People
	National		875,947	0.25%	2,189 People
Third Level	Research	5			5 Trips
	Field Trips	5			5 Trips
In-service Training	Primary		31,928	1%	319 Teachers
	Secondary		25,808		64 Teachers
Life Long Learning	Local		18,534	5%	926
	National		100,000	2%	2,000

- Primary Schools: They can choose from a wide range of educational programs (Wild Child) which are available in schools or in the Burren itself. The Burren also offers a wide range of play and adventure courses/activities for the School Tours Market
- Secondary Schools: They can enjoy wonderful learning opportunities through field trips and exploration in the Burren. Students can also avail of the many hard adventure activities (rock climbing, hiking, Kayaking) and soft adventure activities (teambuilding, survival skills) which will appeal to transition year students. The strongest demand will come from schools within 1 hour's drive of the Burren.
- Third Level Colleges: can avail of great research opportunities in the Burren and participate in civic engagement initiatives with local communities.
- In Service Training - Teachers can take PBE courses and avail of opportunities to learn new skills to help them in their career. Local Teachers can participate in training for the development of the new Burren Module for the Junior Cert

- Life Long Learning - This will include play and adventure for locals as well as a range of training courses to help local communities. These courses will include, culture, heritage, tourism, agriculture, business, health and wellness.

International Market

75. The international market includes Cultural, Educational and Eco Tourism markets as well as the growing number of single travellers, also represents a significant opportunity for the Burren. It has been difficult to forecast the demand from International Markets as much of the available data is out-of-date or useful comparisons could not be found. In most instances top line data was available for Ireland as a whole, but not for specific regions. For the purposes of this feasibility study we have forecasted a modest percentage of the top line market, which we feel can be achieved by Year 5.

	<b>Overseas Visitors</b>	<b>Cultural Tourists</b>	<b>English Foreign Language (EFL)</b>	<b>International Education</b>	<b>Volunteer Tourism</b>
<b>Market Size</b>					1,600,000
<b>Total Visitors</b>	6,200,000	3,400,000	96,250	24,873	
<b>Market Share</b>		0.25%	1%	1%	0.025%
<b>Available Market</b>		8,500	962	248	400

76. In analysing the demand, we identified a number of trends in the market place which we believe provide opportunities to grow the demand for learning experiences in the Burren. These are summarised below.

**Slow travel**

77. Slow Travel is the name given to a form of tourism that involves saying ‘no’ to haste, ‘no’ to high carbon emissions and ‘yes’ to a relaxed pace. Walking and cycling holidays, multi-destination train journeys all fall under the slow travel category. When the main purpose of a holiday is, traditionally, to offer respite, travelling slowly makes sense to many. The movement therefore steers away from air travel and intensive driving holidays and encourages people to favour alternative options. There is a strong emphasis on engaging with local communities and having

as low an environmental impact as possible. It consequently has an ecological focus which goes hand in hand with ideas of low-carbon emissions and sustainability. Instead of staying in hotels, tourists head to luxury lodges where sustainable materials are used, renewable energy systems are employed, and the accommodation operates in harmony with the natural environment. This type of holiday is becoming popular with couples, families and backpackers.

### **Eco Tourism**

78. International Ecotourism Society reports a 34% annual growth in demand for ecotours in the past 20 years and sector analysts predict more growth, suggesting that 'early converts to sustainable tourism will make market gains'. Ecotourism is about experiencing a holiday that is based in nature, ties in with the local community and is sustainable, both environmentally and culturally. It gives you a chance to experience an authentic Ireland, rooted in the nature, food and lifestyles of the region.

### **Volunteer Holidays**

79. The increased desire for an ethical holiday, to give something back as well as to experience the real culture of the countries visited has led to a burgeoning market for volunteer tourism. A 2008 study by Tourism and Research Marketing, which surveyed 300 organisations, estimated the market size to be 1.6 million volunteer tourists per year and put the value of the market at around £1.3 billion. Doing good while travelling has been a trend for years, but organizations have long required one or even two weeks' commitment, arguing that it takes time for people to get trained and make a difference.

### **The Single Traveller**

80. Over the last two years, there has been significant growth in the number of people who have opted to go on holidays by themselves. This rising trend for solo travel is down to many wanting to pursue a personal interest, get away from stresses of everyday life or to leave recession-hit friends behinds. One in ten British Holiday Makers have travelled alone in the past 12 months, equating to almost 3.3 million solo travellers. 2.4 million of these were singles and just under 1 million were non-singles, taking a break away from their partner. Between 2008 and 2033 the singles population is expected to grow by 27% to reach 22.8 million adults in Great Britain. Between 2008 and 2033 the singles population is expected to grow by 27% (compared to overall population growth of 19%).
81. The growth of tourism in these niche markets bodes well for the development of the tourism industry in the Burren. However, we do not believe that these markets are sufficiently large to support a major learning landscape programme. We have explored the idea of a profitable tourism enterprise funding a non-commercial landscape learning programme. David Sobel had

suggested this approach, citing the Teton Science Schools in the Rocky Mountains as an example. TSS run a wide-ranging PBL programme and had bought out a profitable local safari company<sup>48</sup>. However, the market for eco- and cultural tourism in the Burren is not comparable to the US market for a Rocky Mountain wilderness experience. In the course of our desk-top review we have been unable to identify a more comparable example. A range of bodies in the Burren are currently involved in learning-related tourism activity. We have interviewed several managers and no one has identified a revenue earning potential that could underpin a significant learning initiative. The general impression is one of effort to sustain existing operations. We therefore conclude that there is no realistic prospect of a new or existing Burren tourism operation being able to sustain a learning landscape initiative by visitor/tourist revenues received.

## 4.5 Conclusion

82. There is a significant potential demand for learning experiences in the Burren. In the domestic market Primary and Post Primary Schools and In- Service Training for Teachers represent the biggest opportunity. In the international markets Cultural Tourists and Volunteer Tourists represent the biggest opportunity, especially the Solo Traveller. Although these are sizeable markets, funding a comprehensive learning landscape plan from the revenue of a PBL business is not a realistic prospect in the foreseeable future.

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<sup>48</sup> David Sobel, pers. com. at Learning Landscape Symposium in Kinvara in 2012

## Chapter 5 Development Opportunities and Obstacles

### 5.1 Introduction

83. The underlying perspective of this study is a very long term one. It concerns utilisation of the Burren landscape into a distant future and is based on a due recognition of a local cultural heritage that stretches back thousands of years and of a natural heritage that spans geological time. However, a primary purpose of the study is to chart a practical course of action in the short term. To do that a realistic assessment of current socio-economic conditions is required. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 summarise the current situation in the form of SWOT and PEST charts. The charts are based on the discussions and information gathering that have taken place, including the two workshops held in January 2013. The SWOT chart (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) summarises the inherent development potential of the Burren (Strengths and Weaknesses) and the wider economic context of the Burren (Opportunities and Threats). The PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological) chart summarises that broader environment in more detail.

### 5.2 Key Opportunities

84. Over the last three decades there has been growing concern in western society about the dysfunctional nature of global economic systems in relation to environmental sustainability and human welfare. These ideas have gained little traction in Ireland until recently. But the current economic crisis has undermined, if not overturned, traditional verities, and is stimulating a more engaged discourse about the future. An intellectual environment may be taking shape in which new initiatives can begin to thrive. That environment will be nurtured by refocused policy and fiscal support at EU level, where an overarching objective of the EU's 2020 Strategy of Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth is to be supported by the rural development programme 2014-2020, which will promote development through the sustainable management of natural sources and climate action.
85. Educational reform is a focus of enquiry throughout the western world. There is a widespread belief that existing educational systems are not fit for purpose. This criticism comes from contrasting perspectives. There are those arguing that schools and colleges are not providing a sufficiently skilled and adaptable labour force while others despair of an educational system giving excessive attention to market needs, to the ultimate detriment of the individual and of society. Both sets of critics have appropriated the label of 'A Learning Society' to describe a

potential alternative. Both sets of critics are in agreement that education must be treated as a life-long pursuit and not something that is restricted to educational institutions<sup>49</sup>.

86. The Burren presents an opportunity to demonstrate the learning model, rooted in place and community, that has been expounded by Kate Davies. This is a network of learning communities in which the emphasis on gaining knowledge and wisdom is through lived experience and the engagement of not just the intellect but the whole person. There is already an embryonic network of learning communities in the Burren, which includes the Burrenbeo Trust, Burren College of Art, Burren Connect, X-PO and the Burren Ecotourism Network, all of which are connected formally and informally to third-level colleges in Galway and elsewhere in Ireland. There has been considerable involvement by local colleges in the Burren in recent years. These institutions often have a specific goal to engage with the wider society. For instance, as a result of the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI), an outreach philosophy is a cornerstone of successive NUI Galway Academic and Strategic Plans. There are several colleges currently or recently involved in collaborative projects in the Burren (NUI Maynooth at Coole Park, the Centre for Irish Studies, NUIG with X-PO, Department of Archaeology, NUI Galway and Caherconnell Fort). The Learning Society and PBE are exciting concepts and there is reason to be confident that the Learning Landscape Initiatives will find willing and able university partners. The rapidly changing world of Information Communications Technology is increasing opportunities for effective networking and for enjoyable and effective learning opportunities in all kinds of situations. ICT makes possible the delivery of sophisticated learning packages in relatively remote locations, it makes possible effective networking between spatially remote locations e.g. the networking of rural communities in different parts of Europe, even communities on different continents. The Netbox project is an example of this. Netbox<sup>50</sup> is funded by the EU and is a collaboration between 6 villages across Europe. The aim of the project is to pilot and validate a model for educationally self-sufficient rural communities where traditional consumers of educational services can become producers of educational services and content. These communities are identifying and harnessing all available skill, knowledge and educational assets locally to address identified educational needs in their local communities. Consortium partners are using best practice in online learning, social networking design and a blend of Asset Based Community Development and Needs-based Community Development approaches to achieve the aims and objectives of the project.
87. Ireland is a European centre of ICT. According to Foreign Direct Intelligence, Ireland will be the third 'most digitally engaged country in the world by 2015'. Nine of the top ten US ICT

<sup>49</sup> See Kate Davies, A Learning Society, in *Resurgence and Ecologist*, 257, Nov/Dec 2009.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.netboxproject.eu/about-us/?PHPSESSID=b3f385a2a06c17fccac77e8a72c41a04>

companies operate in Ireland and, within Ireland Galway is emerging as an increasingly important centre of ICT (IBM, Cisco Systems and Hewlett Packard all have operations in Galway).<sup>51</sup> There may be opportunities to develop new learning approaches through the innovative use of ICT to explore landscape.

88. In Chapter 4 we recounted how life-long learning in the form of ‘cultural tourism’ is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in the world and within that sector, ‘creative tourism’, which is tourism that gives visitors the opportunity to develop creative potential through active participation, is an increasingly important segment. The Burren has a potential to support substantial cultural tourism and creative tourism activity. This can be the basis of a profitable local tourism industry and a means of supporting non-commercial educational programmes. These would bring diverse socio-economic benefits to the locality including an enhanced quality of life through the widespread availability of learning opportunities and a reinforcement of a conservation ethos in local communities (thereby safeguarding local heritage in the long term). The Caherconnell Archaeological Field School, set up in 2010, a partnership between the visitor centre and NUI Galway, is a local example of a creative tourism initiative. The participants (paying €1900 for 2 weeks), who do not require prior experience, gain practical experience of an ongoing dig. We suggest that the programme of the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers (BCVs<sup>52</sup>), could be ‘commercialised’ to incorporate summer work-camp opportunities for paying visitors and therefore provide income to support other activities of the BCVs and the Trust.
89. Place Based Education (PBE) is a means of reinvigorating school curricula and of enhancing local communities by strengthening the linkages between local schools and their communities. PBE is supported by educationalists around the world and has gained significant momentum in the United States. There is good reason to believe that PBE would be enthusiastically adopted by the Irish educational system. ‘The importance of environment based learning’ was one of the five principles of the 1971 Irish primary-school curriculum and those principles are reiterated in the current curriculum. The current curriculum contains the categorical statement that, *‘First-hand experience that actively engages the child with the immediate environment and with those who live in it is the most effective basis for learning’*<sup>53</sup>. In 2012 Minister Ruari Quinn gave a strong endorsement of a place-based learning approach when he launched the plan for the Learning Landscape symposium in Kinvara and teachers who attended that symposium were enthusiastic about the potential of PBE in Ireland.

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<sup>51</sup>Information from IDA website

<sup>52</sup> The BCVs were established by the Burrenbeo Trust in 2010

<sup>53</sup> Department of Education, Primary School Curriculum, 1999, Introduction, p.15

90. The existence of a Burren-based organisation with a strong reputation as a conservation body and an impressive track record for delivering a range of educational programmes over the last four years is a decided asset.

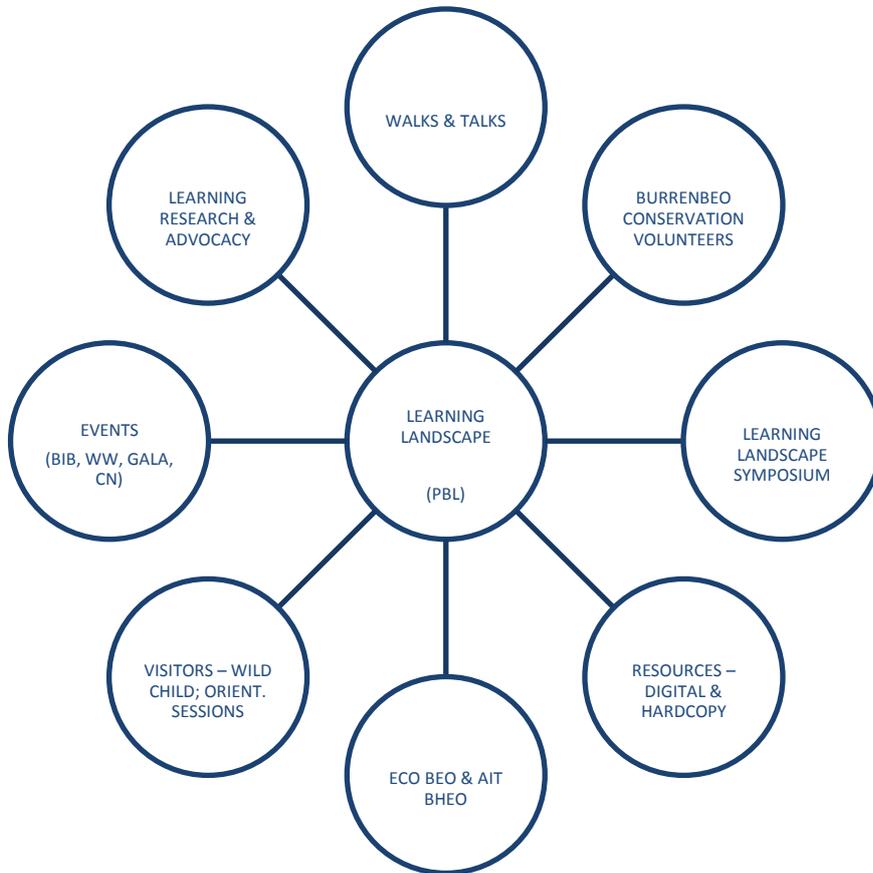


Figure 5.1 An ‘in-house’ representation of the current work of the Burrenbeo Trust as ‘A learning organisation connecting you to Ireland’s Learning Landscape’.  
(BIB is ‘Burren in Bloom’ festival, WW is the Burren Winterage Weekend, Gala is an annual promotional event and CN is Culture Night in Kinvara)

91. Through its involvement with local schools and organising local events, the Trust has now forged strong links with local communities as well as with educational institutions and experts outside the Burren. The Trust is involved in a range of activities which span the scope of this study and the proposed Plan (Refer to Figure 5.1). The Trust has also shown considerable ability in the use of ICT for education.

92. The Burren shares the characteristics of other peripheral rural areas in having an economy characterised by the high percentages of the workforce in part-time and seasonal employment. It also shares the characteristics of other rural areas with outstanding landscapes of having relatively large numbers of well-educated residents, many of them

retired or semi-retired. These characteristics represent a significant economic asset in relation to the development of a learning landscape.

### 5.3 Key obstacles

93. The Burren is a peripheral area of a peripheral European country in economic crisis and therefore the general social and business environment is a very challenging one at this time. The situation is manifested in a number of ways e.g. unemployment and emigration, infrastructural deficits such as poor quality public transport and declining traffic at Shannon Airport. The most pressing challenge is how to fund any new initiative. There is both a high degree of uncertainty about potential funding sources and an absolute lack of funding at the present time. During the course of our study we have looked at where funds have come from historically and also where new sources of funding might be available. Most existing EU funding programmes end this year, a new round of programmes being finalized for 2014 - 2020 as we write this report. Given the extent to which the Burren has benefitted from EU funding in recent years, and, in particular, the fact that a new Life Environment project (The Burren Tourism for Conservation project<sup>54</sup>) is now underway, there is limited prospect of substantial EU financial assistance for a learning landscape project. On the domestic front Budget 2013 has seen significant spending cuts across all government departments which might support this project, including the Department of Education and Skills, Department of Arts, Heritage and Culture, and Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. Charities, traditionally reliant on government funding, have also had their incomes fall while struggling to deal with the dramatic drop in donations from the private sector and philanthropic sources.
94. The funding environment is not entirely negative. The Irish government has made clear its commitment to supporting educational and training initiatives to tackle unemployment. Given the educational focus of this project, it is likely that some envisaged actions will be eligible for grant aid.

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<sup>54</sup> Burren Tourism for Conservation LIFE 11 ENV/IE/000922, 2012-2016

Table 5.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Burren

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Exceptional learning resources in form of both rich natural and cultural heritage	Local social capital limited by small and dispersed population, concentrated on Burren perimeter
Great wealth of available information and research	The Burren is split between two local authority areas and two economic regions
A long tradition of learning about the Burren	Physical access to countryside restricted in relative international terms
A local pool of knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers of all ages and backgrounds	Limited public transport within the area and generally deficient infrastructure (roads, signage, broadband and public facilities)
The Learning Landscape concept is a new and radical idea	The Learning Landscape concept is a new and radical idea
An in situ third level college, the Burren College of Art	Limited hotel and other accommodation in the Burren itself
Established links with local universities and colleges	Shortage of venues for large learning events
The presence of a dynamic local body dedicated to landscape conservation i.e. Burrenbeo Trust	Limited identity with the Burren of people living in Kinvara and Gort
The successful and on-going Farming for Conservation Programme	A general weakness of identity with the Burren throughout the area
The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark	No international designation to acknowledge the special landscape quality
Good-value land and property available for purchase in the Burren	Lack of PBE in the Irish educational system
Burren Ecotourism Network, Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers	Wet climate
The Burren's international reputation as a heritage destination and as a place to witness best practice management	Relatively unknown compared with 'Ring of Kerry', Connemara and Cliffs of Moher
An extensive diaspora of Burren lovers throughout the world	Relatively small population in the immediate hinterland and poor international transport connections
Great scope for outdoor adventure	Limited scope for local private funding given small size of Burren population

Table 5.2 Opportunities and Threats

Opportunities	Threats
A time of change and opportunity in society	Continuing austerity, limiting financial resources available for environmental initiatives in Ireland
Widespread recognition in the commercial world of the need for new learning approaches	Deterioration of the heritage resource through decline in conservation management and poor development choices in the Burren
Wild Atlantic Way tourism initiative	Wild Atlantic Way tourism initiative
New Burren LIFE project (Tourism for Conservation)	Relative weakness of government institutions which limits their capacity for constructive intervention at local level
Revival of Shannon Airport under new management	Further reduction of routes from Shannon Airport
World-wide growth in eco-tourism	Eco-tourism developing as a superficial tourism product
World-wide growth in demand for life-long learning	Incoherent and conflicting policy in the absence of an overall Burren management approach
Progressive Irish school curricula, including the new junior cycle curriculum	The devaluation of learning through landscape because of a lack of quality control
International interest in, and growth of, place-based educational philosophy	
Traditions of flexible and part-time working, available pools of potential and actual teachers	



The free bus service from the National Park Information Point in Corofin, into the national park, which was introduced in 2012

Table 5.3 PEST Chart

<p><b>Political</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational Policy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lisbon Objectives in Adult Education and Training – 12.5% of population to take part in Life Long Learning (currently 6.8%)</li> <li>○ Restructure of the VEC's into 16 Education and Training Boards</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Growing international popularity of PBE</li> <li>• Environmental Policy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ European Landscape Convention and Development of a National Landscape Strategy (NLS)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Government Tax Policy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inheritance/ Gift Tax</li> <li>○ Tax Relief on Charitable Donations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Forum on philanthropy to increase charitable donations by 60% over 4 years</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25% of Irish Population engaged in some formal/ non formal education.</li> <li>• Rising unemployment - people have more time, less money and are beginning to enjoy appreciate the outdoors.</li> <li>• Rising obesity levels among young kids and teenagers due to no exercise</li> <li>• Emigration from rural areas, leaving older population.</li> <li>• People going back to basics with a strong emphasis on GYO and volunteering</li> <li>• More Irish People Holidaying at home, taking shorter breaks</li> <li>• Growth in Cultural Tourism – increasing demand for participative and interactive holiday experiences</li> <li>• The idea of a Learning Society</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing Austerity             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lower Economic Growth</li> <li>○ Cuts to Government Grants</li> <li>○ Higher Taxes – less disposable income in local community</li> <li>○ Falling private donations</li> </ul> </li> <li>• High levels of unemployment increase demand for life-long learning</li> <li>• Ireland as a value for money destination for – UK Tourists increased by 5% in 2011 to 6.2m visitors</li> <li>• Uncertainty regarding the Euro and Europe</li> <li>• Independence of Shannon Airport</li> </ul>	<p><b>Technical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Connected Economy             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rapid adoption of Smart Phones</li> <li>○ Popularity of Applications for Smart Phones</li> <li>○ Consumers overloaded with information</li> <li>○ Constantly connected to Social Media – Facebook/ Twitter</li> </ul> </li> <li>Limited access to broadband/3G</li> </ul>

95. The Burren does not have an area-based management structure of any kind. It is a small part of the administrative areas of two local authorities which have limited development resources and decision-making powers and an even smaller part of the administrative areas of other public agencies such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). An EU LIFE funded, Burren tourism and conservation project has begun, led by Clare County Council and involving six other public agencies and two universities as partners, but does not directly benefit the Galway part of the Burren. The ground-breaking Burren Farming for Conservation Programme is another current programme under two government departments. This absence of an overall management structure is a distinguishing characteristic of outstanding landscapes in Ireland. In response to the question, 'What needs to happen in the next five years?' that was posed in the

project workshops in January, most of the discussion focused on management, with some respondents emphasising the need to recruit a project manager and others stressing the need for effective networks of communication. With a number of uncoordinated actors and programmes in the Burren at the present time, there is always a danger of duplication of effort, the pursuit of competing or conflicting initiatives and, in general, a sub-optimal utilisation of scarce resources.

96. The creation of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark in 2012, with its work over the next four years supported by an EU LIFE grant, bodes well for the development of the Burren as a learning landscape. The Geopark has three objectives, two of which are particularly relevant to the concept of the Burren as a Learning Landscape. Those are to provide information and training in collaboration with education providers and to create a platform for collaboration between agencies, projects and community groups. The Burren also has impressive organisational assets in the shape of the Burren College of Art, the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers and the Burren Ecotourism Network.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

97. If there is anywhere in Ireland where the idea of a learning landscape with a network of learning communities, can flourish, the Burren is that place. First, it has an exceptional landscape legacy and second, the vitality of local Burren organisations stand out at this time. However, formidable obstacles cannot be ignored, most notably the scarcity of funding for initiatives of any kind, the generally depressed economic situation and the absence of an integrated management structure for the Burren.

## Chapter 6 A Framework Plan for the Development of the Burren as a Learning Landscape

### 6.1 Introduction

98. This chapter sets out a 5-year plan for the development of the Burren as a learning landscape. We assume that the well-developed programme of the Burrenbeo Trust will continue and that the educational role of the newly formed Geopark will become increasingly significant. The plan is therefore primarily about an integrated approach and the promoting of initiatives that probably would not otherwise take concrete shape in the foreseeable future. The project brief required a report containing a 'clear, concise and realistic' plan. To that end we have prepared a framework plan as distinct from a business plan with a detailed timeframe and budgets. There are two main reasons for this, financial and organisational. At the present time, as the previous chapter has described, there is both a lack of potential funding and a high level of uncertainty about future funding opportunities and market conditions. Therefore, from a financial perspective, proposing a detailed business plan is unrealistic. The second reason is that the focus of this plan is a landscape as opposed to an organisation or a business sector. While landscape management plans with detailed budgets are not uncommon, these are usually plans for organisations which have clearly defined landscape management roles i.e. they own the land or they have a statutory responsibility for the land. The Burrenbeo Trust, which has commissioned this study and is the chief promoter of the concept of the Burren as a Learning Landscape, does not own land and does not have a statutory landscape role, nor does it have the resources to implement an ambitious plan by itself, even if this was a desirable course of action (which is not the case). Therefore, a plan to develop the Burren as a learning landscape will necessarily involve the participation of several autonomous bodies. While this report is based on a wide-ranging consultation, the formulation of a plan that has been agreed by all the stakeholders was outside the scope and time-frame of the study.
99. A third consideration is that a learning landscape primarily represents harnessing the potential of a public good, a type of intervention which relies heavily on public funding and/or private philanthropy. A learning landscape does offer commercial opportunities and we expect rewarding learning experiences to become an increasingly important aspect of businesses like those in the Burren Ecotourism Network. Given the extraordinary heritage of the Burren, Burren organisations are better placed than most to extract a commercial return from the learning potential of landscape. We have explored the scenario of a profitable

learning business making a substantial contribution to the setting up and running of a learning landscape infrastructure but have concluded that this is not a realistic proposition because of market conditions and the financial risk involved. It is our opinion that learning in the Burren, in the main, is, and will continue to be, a free or 'at cost' learning experience for the great majority of its 'students'.

100. While the prospect of substantial public or private funding in the immediate future is poor, the medium to long term outlook is better. The ideas set out in the Plan are compatible with the policy direction of the European Commission which will be the basis of European grant assistance from 2014 onwards. The cohesion policy of the Commission will focus on:-

- Specific sub-region territories,
- Community-led projects by local action groups,
- Projects carried out through integrated and multi-sectoral initiatives, taking into account local needs and potential, and
- Projects that include innovative features, networking and cooperation.<sup>55</sup>

It will be seen that these characteristics closely correspond to aspects of the proposed Framework Plan and we can therefore anticipate, with some confidence, that relevant new funding options will become available.

101. An improving domestic scene is also envisaged. The Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising, which reported in 2012, recommends the setting up of a National Social Innovation Fund and other actions, which will result in an increase in philanthropic giving from €500m to €800m by 2016.<sup>56</sup> The government has an on-going commitment to supporting educational initiatives as a route to economic recovery and economic sustainability and it can be expected that training components in the Framework Plan will be eligible for grant assistance through SOLAS, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and other agencies (Refer to Appendix 2).

102. The 5-year Framework Plan has two stages; a preparatory stage, in which organisations operating in the Burren, utilising in-house resources, forge essential partnerships, followed by a development phase supported by grant assistance and involving partnerships with colleges and ICT companies outside of the Burren.

103. The Framework Plan requires a concerted and comprehensive approach but aspects of the Plan could be implemented on an incremental basis. The Plan identifies those aspects which we consider should be prioritised.

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<sup>55</sup> European Commission factsheet on Cohesion Policy 2014-2020

<sup>56</sup> Report of Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising, May 2012

## 6.2 The Plan Vision

104. The Framework Plan represents a first critical step towards realising the goal of the Burren as a premier learning landscape. We have set out the following vision for 2033.

*In twenty years' time the Burren is the European centre of place-based learning. More than ever the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Burren is appreciated and celebrated. Burren communities are thriving. They are making optimum use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and indigenous knowledge as educational tools and they have transformed themselves into a network of learning communities. The network has become an exemplar of social transformation through learning. Thanks to an initiative in the Burren, Place Based Education (PBE) is a standard form of learning in Irish primary schools.*

## 6.3 The Plan Rationale

105. All landscapes have a learning potential. The medium of one's own surroundings provides a natural and effective way to learn. While all landscapes have that potential, the potential of the Burren landscape is exceptional. That potential is determined by the physical character of the landscape and by its interaction with local communities over the millennia. It is a place which stimulates enquiry, creativity and original thinking (See Chapter 3). That interaction between place and people is at its richest at a very local level, the neighbourhood and the townland, the parish and the village. That local level is also the most active level of social interaction. Therefore, a learning model, based on the very local, fully engages effective media for learning (landscape and community) and some of the most effective networks of social support and information dissemination (family and community). Recent advances in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) facilitate the scope for networking at a local level and within dispersed communities in relatively remote places. Teaching ICT skills has become a priority in Irish schools and there is now a strong emphasis on the traditional skills of numeracy and literacy. Learning through landscape is a good way to acquire and to hone these diverse skills.

106. There is a widely held view of a need for fundamental reform of education to meet the social and environmental challenges of this century. Chapter 1 introduced this issue. This Plan is based on the concept of a Learning Society, comprising networks of learning communities, within which learning is a life-long adventure and much of the learning that takes place is

rooted in community.<sup>57</sup> The envisaged Burren Network of Learning Communities will be centred on the Burren and comprise the communities of the Burren and bodies involved in the Burren e.g. the local authorities in Ennis and Galway and universities around the world. It will be a diverse network of spatial communities (the Burren towns and villages), NGOs (e.g. Burren Ecotourism Network and Burrenbeo Trust), public agencies (e.g. Galway County Council, NPWS, Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, educational bodies (e.g. local schools, Burren College of Art, NUI Galway and UCD) and ICT companies.

107. Regardless of the perceived need for change in how we learn, profound change is taking place regardless, driven by the pace of innovation in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the ubiquity of ICT devices. With information and interpretation becoming available everywhere at the touch of a screen or the scroll of a mouse, ICT offers powerful and accessible learning tools.

108. But ICT can be a deadening filter, separating individual from place, and sapping the vitality of what should be rewarding learning experiences. From this perspective ICT is a threat, part of the problem of a growing disconnect between society and the places that it inhabits. However, the exceptional physical character of the Burren offers the prospect of a 'blended learning' experience, *par excellence*. Here ICT can be harnessed in innovative ways to explore a striking place, more resistant than most places to the deflating and alienating effects of electronic and digital mediation.

109. The Framework Plan aims to make the best possible use of the communal resources of the Burren and the learning resources within the region and beyond. The communal resources are the Burren's beguiling landscape, a beautiful place and the communities that inhabit it, and a dynamic group of local organisations. The learning resources of the wider region are the universities and colleges and a burgeoning ICT sector. The Plan requires a long-term commitment to a shared endeavour by that diverse group of bodies. The Plan will bring significant economic benefits for the communities of the Burren and deliver important lessons for the rest of the world.

## 6.4 The Framework Plan

110. The overarching strategy of the Framework Plan is to create a thriving network of learning communities centred on the Burren. As previous chapters have described, the Burren already

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<sup>57</sup> Kate Davies (Director for Change at Antioch University Seattle), 'A Learning Society', in *Resurgence and Ecologist*, 257, Nov/Dec 2009

stands out as a place where people come to learn. That capacity has developed in an incremental manner. The Framework Plan aims to consolidate that progress and to enable radical transformation.

111. The Framework Plan comprises four individual strategies. These are:-

1. A programme to enable local communities to fully participate in the learning network,
2. The development and roll-out of PBE,
3. The exploration and development of innovative learning methodologies including ICT based methodologies, and
4. PBL entrepreneurship.

The strategies are inter-related, each one potentially benefiting the others and all contributing to the vision of the Burren as a premier learning landscape.

112. The most radical aim of the Framework Plan is to enable local Burren communities to be proactive participants in a learning network (Strategy 1). Achieving this aim will be assisted by recent advances in ICT and their application to rural communities<sup>58</sup>. The need for effective networking was a leading outcome of the public workshops run for the Study. The primary school is a key institution in local communities. Traditionally, the curriculum of a primary school has been largely unrelated to its local community and environmental setting but dictated by the contents of standardised curricula and their associated text books. A central aim of PBE is, through a new teaching approach, to put the school at the heart of the community through focusing the school curriculum on the local community and environment. Establishing PBE is a critical dimension of the Plan (Strategy 2).

113. There is a very widely held view that we need to find new ways to learn. Whether we like it or not developments in ICT are transforming how we learn. The pervasive influence of ICT in contemporary lives has alarmed some educationalists<sup>59</sup>. Can a constructive role be found for ICT other than its networking role? Is there a blended learning model that can combine the best of PBL and ICT? Are there other learning media that, combined with landscape learning, can provide a new educational model? These questions highlight one dimension of the contemporary search for ways of learning which can best harness the power of human curiosity and creativity. That search is the focus of the third strategy of the Plan.

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<sup>58</sup> See for example the on-going Netbox project grant aided by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission, in which the Meath Partnership and Oldtown are the participating Irish organisation and local community respectively. We would anticipate applying the Netbox ICT model in the Burren but with the focus on learning in relation to local culture and the application of ICT for that purpose

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods: saving our children from nature deficit disorder (London: Atlantic Books) 2010

114. The Burren is an exceptional place which attracts people to learn. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, members of the Burren Ecotourism Network and other local businesses are offering an increasing range of learning opportunities for visitors and residents. But the learning potential of the area is far from being fully utilised. Part of the brief of this study was to explore new learning opportunities with commercial potential. The Framework Plan includes a PBL entrepreneurship strand with a worked-up business plan (Strategy 4). Strategy 4 overlaps with Strategic 1, the promotion of entrepreneurial activity representing the commercial dimension of the local network of learning communities that will be fostered.

### **6.5 Strategy 1: Enable local communities to participate in the Learning Network**

115. This strategy creates the setting for place-based learning (PBL) in the Burren. The strategy has two main components; the establishment of a collaborative network of organisations to optimise learning potential, and strengthening the capacity of the local communities of the Burren to enable them to play a full part in PBL.
116. An embryonic network of organisations for PBL is already taking shape. There is considerable cooperation and liaison between local organisations, unsurprising as they share common goals in relation to community participation, heritage conservation and environmental education. This strategy overlaps two of the three goals of the new Geopark, i.e. the provision of information and training and collaboration with education providers, and the provision of a platform for collaboration between agencies, projects, communities and businesses. We would therefore hope that the Geopark would play a lead role implementing the strategy.
117. It is important to formalise the learning network to some degree in order to optimise the use of limited resources, thereby minimising conflict and confusion, the duplication of effort and the dissipation of energy and ideas. This is the first stage and a crucial stage of the strategy.
118. The most challenging task of the network will be to strengthen the capacity of local communities to enable their participation in PBL. By local communities we mainly mean the geographical communities of the Burren e.g. Ballyvaughan and Gort, although the strategy also includes local 'communities of interest' such as farmers, primary school teachers and tourism providers. The task requires a sustained commitment by the locally operating public agencies and NGOs over a long period. We envisage a task in two stages, the setting up of an enabling organisation to coordinate the initiative, followed by a long term outreach programme. The box over the page sets out aspects of the envisaged community

strengthening. The strategy has four components; animation, training, organisation and evaluation. The animation task is especially relevant to the sizeable peripheral communities which do not have a strong affinity with the Burren and therefore do not appreciate the opportunities that it presents. Training is a crucial programme of the strategy and something which we would expect to be supported by government through SOLAS and LEADER funding. We anticipate the deployment of Netbox IT methodology and ‘train the trainer’ schemes to enable Burren ‘teachers’, whether farmers, tourism operators or whoever, to disseminate skills within Burren communities and to the wider world. There needs to be an organisational structure to enable ideas and assistance to be efficiently transferred through the network. Finally, the strategy must be capable of evaluation to enable lessons to be learnt and the wider dissemination of the Burren model.

Table 6.2. Summary of Strategy 1: Network of learning communities

Actions	Priority actions	Other actions
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a Learning Landscape committee and secretariat</li> <li>• Secure a university partner</li> </ul>	
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure external funding for an outreach programme managed by a project manager</li> <li>• Implement 3-year project (Refer to detail in table)</li> </ul>	

A programme to enable local communities to participate in the Learning Network

<p><b>Animate</b></p> <p>This is the most extensive and resource intensive aspect of the strengthening task. The project will give particular emphasis to the large peripheral communities of Kinvara, Gort and Crusheen, which traditionally do not have a close association with the Burren</p> <p>A Burren-wide animation project comprising meetings and workshops to explain PBL to the communities of the Burren and stimulate their interest in the opportunities presented by PBL (We would expect this project to involve approximately 14 local communities in the Burren area as defined by this study).</p> <p>Competitions to reward PBL initiatives and to help strengthen local identity and identification with local heritage. Award schemes for Burren heritage learning programmes e.g. Burren Gaisce<sup>60</sup> and an award for best community heritage learning project, a scheme of practical support for local learning initiatives<sup>61</sup>, events to showcase PBL initiatives, A ‘Know your Place’ lecture programme</p>	<p><b>Train</b></p> <p>A wide range of training is envisaged, particularly in relation to ICT for networking and learning purposes. The Netbox model will be modified for the Learning Landscape, enabling skill transfers to and within the Burren e.g. X-PO Killinaboy community skills disseminated via Netbox to other communities in the Burren. Working with new Education and Training Boards (ETBs), availing of SOLAS and LEADER programmes. Training to include:-</p> <p><u>Eco-businesses</u>: Provide a heritage training programme for Burren eco- business operators,</p> <p><u>Farming community</u>: Provide support to enable farmers in the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme to train other farmers in environmentally friendly farm practice</p> <p><u>Other communities</u>: Establish linkages with other communities in Ireland and Europe (both communities which are similar to the Burren and communities from very different places) to create opportunities for inter-cultural learning.</p>
<p><b>Organise</b></p> <p>Set up a Burren Learning Landscape Committee and a Local Learning Committees (LLCs) in every community<sup>62</sup> to enable, at very local level, implementation of PBL projects across the Burren at community level. The local committees will be the conduits for community support initiatives etc.</p>	<p><b>Evaluate</b></p> <p>Where possible programme initiatives should be based on measurable objective criteria. Funding bodies will expect programme to be assessed and capable of independent assessment. Need a baseline study, monitoring and post-programme evaluation</p>

<sup>60</sup> Gaisce, the President’s Award, is an award scheme for young people in the ages between 18 and 25. It is based on four personal challenges in the spheres of community involvement, personal skill, physical recreation and adventure journey. The national award provides a potential vehicle for a Burren programme that is focused on the communities of the Burren and the landscape heritage. The award scheme will be developed in consultation with Gaisce, Clare and Galway County Councils, NPWS and other local organisations

<sup>61</sup> The programme will enable the recognition and celebration of distinctiveness within the Burren e.g. in the manner of the projects of Common Ground (See <http://www.england-in-particular.info/cg/sculpture/s-essay.html>). Projects could be as diverse as the research of local field names and development of an app, the design and making of a tapestry depicting local history, restoration of a lake habitat. The programme could incorporate existing programmes such as ‘Tidy Towns’, which was started by Bord Failte in 1958 and is now administered by the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government (see <http://www.tidytowns.ie/interior.php?id=2>). The programme will include practical training in a broad range of skills e.g. the use of GIS to record and display local knowledge, the use of social media to promote local initiatives

<sup>62</sup> The LLCs are not necessarily new groups but can be an existing group such as a local development association or a tidy towns committee, which adopt the role of a local learning committee. The LLCs will be the local conduits for the various enabling actions described in the strategy. They will also be the point of contact for external groups e.g. university departments.

## 6.6 Strategy 2: Develop Place-based Education (PBE)

119. This is a strategy which builds directly on the work of the Burren Beo Trust in local schools over the last ten years. In Chapter 2 we outlined the scope and potential of PBE as it has developed in the United States. The development of an Irish PBE training programme would be an outstanding achievement of the Burren network of learning communities. There is good reason to believe that the Irish education system would be receptive to PBE. ‘The importance of environment based learning’ is a stated principle of Irish primary school teaching since 1971 and the current, 1999 curriculum states that:-

*‘First-hand experience that actively engages the child with the immediate environment and with those who live in it is the most effective basis for learning’<sup>63</sup>.*

120. In 2012 Minister Ruari Quinn gave a strong endorsement of place-based learning, when he launched the plan for the Learning Landscape symposium in Kinvara. All the teachers we have interviewed for this report have been enthusiastic about PBE. These include staff of St. Patrick’s College in Dublin City University, who would be interested in being involved in the development of a PBE training programme<sup>64</sup>. Training options cover a wide range that could include any of the following:-

- a 20- hours in-service course in the local education centres,
- a one week residential course in the summer,
- a module of teaching diploma/degree and
- a masters course in PBE.

121. The Burrenbeo Trust has ten years’ experience working in local primary schools with teachers and trainers.<sup>65</sup> The experience of Ecoceo<sup>66</sup> is a solid foundation for the development of PBE training programmes for primary school teachers in Ireland. Ecoceo is not PBE because it is delivered by an external provider, the Burrenbeo Trust, and the Burren-specific content of Ecoceo is not suitable for other parts of the country. PBE represents an institutional reform which goes beyond the ambition of Ecoceo but is entirely consistent with the philosophy underlying Ecoceo. The schools and their staff which have availed of Ecoceo are likely to be receptive to the PBE initiative.

122. We propose that initially the Trust sets up a PBE working group, involving Trust staff, Ecoceo trainers and primary school teachers who have participated in the Ecoceo programme. That

<sup>63</sup> Department of Education, Primary School Curriculum, 1999, Introduction, p.15

<sup>64</sup> Susan Pike, Senior Lecturer, St. Patrick’s College, pers. com

<sup>65</sup> This includes the work undertaken as Burrenbeo Teoranta, before the setting up of Burrenbeo as charitable trust.

<sup>66</sup> A 20-week course for older children in Burren primary schools, designed and run by Burrenbeo Trust

working group will undertake a preliminary scoping exercise to set out a PBE development programme. The exercise will include liaison with the local education centres and also contact with third level education colleges to identify a third-level partner.<sup>67</sup> We envisage that this scoping stage will be carried out utilising in-house resources and volunteers.

123. We anticipate that the PBE programme put forward by the working group will include the appointment of a full-time coordinator/ trainer to implement the programme. This will be the main cost of a grant-supported programme. However, we also anticipate that the programme will utilise a register of volunteer trainers (retired teachers and others in the community with relevant skills) interested in participating in the PBE initiative. The PBE programme will include training and support for those trainers so that volunteering for PBE is a wholly enjoyable and rewarding experience.<sup>68</sup> We anticipate that the extent of the programme in the life-time of the Plan will primarily be Galway and Clare but that the programme will be a precursor to a national programme.<sup>69</sup>



124. The primary education level is the focus of the Plan because this is the level where there is most international experience of PBE and where implementation is most straightforward. In the longer term, 2018 onwards, there will be greater opportunities to promote PBE at

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<sup>67</sup> It is not inconceivable that, given local experience of Ecoceo, an in-service training programme for existing primary school teachers could be devised and implemented without a third level college partner. This is a matter that can be decided by the PBE steering group. (But such a PBE programme would require an external assessment)

<sup>68</sup> See, for instance, the STRAW Project in California.

<sup>69</sup> We would expect courses offered to attract teachers from all over Ireland but most of the training will be within the region

secondary level, particularly as a result of the introduction of the new junior cycle curriculum<sup>70</sup>.

125. It will be important that examples of successful PBE projects are showcased and it is expected that the annual or bi-annual Learning Landscape Symposium will become an important venue for reporting on PBE projects.<sup>71</sup>

Table 6.3. Summary of Strategy 2: Develop PBE

Actions	Priority actions	Other actions
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up a local PBE Working Group</li> <li>• Identify a University Partner</li> </ul>	Publicise initiative at 2014 LL symposium
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure funding for a 3-year PBE training programme incl. the hire of full-time coordinator/trainer</li> <li>• Roll out programme in Clare and Galway</li> </ul>	

## 6.7 Strategy 3: Explore new learning paradigms

126. Strategies 1 and 2 represent the imaginative deployment of new learning approaches. They reflect a widespread dissatisfaction with the conventional education model but they do not reflect the scope of potential alternative learning pathways (See Table 6.4). The third strategy is an exploration of these new learning paradigms. This is the main research component of the Plan, which will provide a solid basis for the development of the Burren as a learning landscape beyond the time-frame of the Plan. The exploration will be led by external organisations (universities and ICT companies) in partnership with a local body or bodies and will be rooted in a local knowledge of the Burren.

127. Developing and implementing Strategy 3 requires a collaboration involving at least one third level college, an ICT company and a Burren educational partner. It primarily involves the development and testing of approaches which will eventually result in new learning programmes.

<sup>70</sup> The PBE programme does not conflict with the Aithbeo programme of the Burrenbeo Trust and the Trust's involvement in local secondary schools will provide valuable experience for the future extension of PBE to the secondary level.

<sup>71</sup> The symposia will be used to promote both the Burren Learning Society model and PBE specifically

Table 6.4. Examples of potential landscape-learning pathways to explore

Landscape Element	Learning Focus/Medium
natural and cultural heritage	MOOC <sup>72</sup>
natural and cultural heritage	gaming (digital media)
Nature	biomimicry <sup>73</sup>
human-nature interaction	biophilia <sup>74</sup>
human-nature interaction	inter-disciplinary research
social conflict	art and drama
emotional and physical well-being	evolutionary psychology
landscape change	ethics (obligations to future generations)

128. ICT offers new ways to learn. Exploring the harnessing of ICT for place-based learning in the Burren is an attractive proposition because of the strength of the ICT industry in Ireland and in the local region in particular and the proximity of third level colleges in Galway, within sight of the Burren. MOOCs (massive open online courses) and Gaming are examples of ICT that may have a valuable educational role in association with PBL. Increasing internet connectivity has heralded the advent of MOOCs and it may be possible to combine MOOCs with tailored ‘field experiences’ to enable large numbers of students to learn in an engaging, accessible and cost effective manner. Gaming is a growth sector of ICT, with a strong presence in Ireland. Gaming combined with PBL might present an accessible and effective learning methodology.

129. Conventional education is characterised by the division of knowledge within narrow fields of learning and a sharp division between the arts and the sciences. This structure restricts the scope for collaborative engagement. PBL provides an attractive corrective. It encourages a collaborative engagement across the disciplines, opening up the new possibilities for creative and imaginative thinking. The Burren College of Art in a collaboration with NUI Galway is already pioneering a new approach through its masters courses in art and ecology

130. Certain enabling actions are required to maximise learning potential in the Burren. These are the creation and maintenance of an on-line archive of Burren research, which will facilitate

<sup>72</sup> MOOC, Massive Open Online Course

<sup>73</sup> Biomimicry ‘is the science and art of consciously emulating life’s genius. It is using nature’s blueprint to solve the technological and design challenges we face’ (Katy Egan and Sophie Nicol in Burren Insight, 2012

<sup>74</sup> Biophilia, a hypothesis put forward by Edward O. Wilson in 1984, stating that the human species has a genetic disposition to seek out an intimate connection with the natural world

inter-disciplinary learning, and the establishment and maintenance of a register of Burren experts, individuals with a particular area of expertise available to participate in educational programmes.

Table 6.5. Summary of Strategy 3. Explore New Learning Paradigms

Actions	Priority actions	Other actions
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify partners to formulate research programme</li> <li>• Secure programme funding</li> </ul>	
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out research programme and formulate new learning programmes</li> <li>• Publication of research, presentations at conferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an archive of Burren research</li> <li>• Establish a register of Burren experts</li> <li>• Establish bursary for inter-disciplinary research</li> </ul>

## 6.8 Strategy 4: Encourage PBL Entrepreneurs

131. There are numerous examples of attractive learning experiences in the Burren currently being offered by a variety of organisations, including entrepreneurs, colleges and community bodies. We are in no doubt that there is great scope for further expansion of PBL activities, which are likely to be supported by funding under the EU Cohesion Policy 2014- 2020 and philanthropic funding such as that available via Social Entrepreneurs Ireland. Appendix 1 sets out a range of ideas brought forward during consultation, some of which may be able to be translated into successful businesses. An important role of the full-time project manager for the Framework Plan will be to provide a mentoring service for prospective PBL entrepreneurs. The Plan also includes specific funding for business mentoring.

132. Training and upskilling are priorities. The government is committed to spending in these areas and we believe the pursuit of this strategy will help secure funding and training interventions in local communities. The creation of Solas and the 16 ETB (Education and Training Boards) has been prioritised in order to deliver meaningful training interventions to tackle unemployment.

133. Another key element of this strategy is to work with local entrepreneurs and tourism operators to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the growth in life-long learning and educational tourism. As part of this strategy it is envisaged that the following resources/ supports will be made available to local communities within the Burren:

- Access to a range of training interventions designed to help people retrain, learn new skills and generate new income opportunities. Some of these courses could include, Start Your Own Business, Marketing, Finance and Train the Trainer and could be delivered by the new Education and Training Boards (ETB)
- Provide local business owners with the knowledge and tools to create new and unique learning experiences in the Burren focusing on the growing tourism markets
- Mentoring Services in areas of finance, marketing, business plans and grant applications for both entrepreneurs and communities
- Information Evenings organised by Grant Agencies to inform people and communities about the state supports and grant aids that may be available for learning projects in the area.
- Provision of Networking Opportunities for local people through the organisation of training and social events.
- Outreach Programme with a local university where students could provide assistance to local entrepreneurs and communities in developing Feasibility Studies, Market Research, Business Plans and Financial Projections for new enterprises.

134. Strategy 4 involves a focus on the commercial potential of the Burren Learning Network. It was a requirement of the study brief that the plan would benefit existing providers. Therefore this strategy is directed at either business ideas that do not compete with existing businesses and ideas that will provide commercial opportunities for existing providers. It is envisaged that the programme to develop a network of learning communities will generate considerable entrepreneurial activity.

135. A Burren Summer College modelled on the Irish Gaeltacht College for learning Irish, but instead offering an intensive rural community learning experience for young people, was one of the most promising ideas put forward during the consultation programme. Learning Irish on a residential course is a traditional rite of passage for many Irish teenagers. Every year over 26,000 students attend Irish Colleges and contribute €35m to the local economy, roughly €1,346 per student. To take two examples, Colaiste Chamus, in the Connemara Gaeltacht, and Colaiste Chu Chulainn in Gweedore, County Donegal. Colaiste Chamus was founded in 1973 with 52 students. There were then 2 teachers and 10 host families involved.

The college purchased its own site in 2000 and has since developed its own facilities. There are now about 1500 students, attending 7 courses, which are run in July and August every year. (<http://www.colaistechamuis.ie/about.html>). Colaiste Chu Chulainn opened in 2011 with a focus on Gaelic games. In 2012 it attracted 60 students for a 10 day course. In 2013 bookings increased to 85 students for the 10 day course and 70 students for a 3-week residential course. The average cost of a 3-week course is €680 and children spend €50 pocket money per week.

136. Proximity to a substantial local market (Galway city) and good motorway access from Dublin make the Burren a good location for such an initiative. Ideally, the College would be in either Kinvara or Ballyvaughan, sizeable coastal communities which have the necessary facilities and range of cultural and sporting activities as well as outstanding landscape settings.

Table 6.6. Strategy 4: Encourage PBL entrepreneurs

Actions	Priority actions	Other actions
Phase 1	Publicise this report to encourage entrepreneurs	
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animation and Training (shared with Strategy 1)</li> <li>• Project staff to provide mentoring, incl. assistance with funding applications</li> </ul>	Engage business mentors

## 6.9 Plan Delivery

137. The Preparatory Phase of the Framework Plan involves deploying the ‘in house’ resources of participating bodies, principally in the form of staff and volunteer time. The success of the Preparatory Phase and of the Plan as a whole is dependent on the extent to which local Burren organisations can harness their networking capability to secure alliances to further PBL. The Main Implementation Phase requires external financial partners to fund programmes which will include the recruitment of a project manager and an educational coordinator/ trainer. These full-time positions are necessary to drive plan implementation over the period 2015 and 2018. We estimate that between €360,000 and €450,000 is required to fund the Implementation Phase (See Appendices 2 and 3).

138. Implementation also requires partnerships with external institutions. These will be mutually beneficial relationships, the external partners providing essential services but also enjoying practical and reputational benefits from involvement in innovative community based initiatives. NUI Galway, the nearest university, with a well-developed outreach ethos and owning an existing field-centre facility in the Burren<sup>75</sup>, is an obvious partner but most of the universities in Ireland have a Burren interest. Cisco, the ICT corporation, which has a facility in Galway and a strong interest in educational reform might be interested in this project.
139. In addition to participating in research and outreach programmes, the external partners would assist in grant applications, carry out baseline assessments<sup>76</sup>, assess plan implementation, and disseminate the Burren experience to the rest of the world.
140. The Framework Plan is only a first step in realising the vision of the Burren as a European centre of place-based learning. Sufficient progress needs to be made within the period of the Plan to demonstrate the potency of the Plan vision and to lead to the Plan strategies being incorporated into the core programmes of the network partners.

## 6.10 The Benefits of the Plan

141. The impact of a community oriented plan or project can be assessed by posing the following questions:-
1. Demographic Impact: Will the proposed development lead to an increase/ decrease in the number of permanent residents or seasonal residents in the community? How will this impact on community life?
  2. Employment and Income: Will the proposed development create new employment opportunities for local people, new income opportunities for local business people and help improve the standard of living in the area?
  3. Demand for Public Services: Will the proposed developments lead to an increased demand for public services such as recreational areas, schools, policing and broadband?
  4. Quality Of Life: Will the proposed development improve social cohesion within the communities resulting in a better quality of life for all?
  5. Environmental Impact: How will the proposed development affect the local environment, will it benefit or harm it?<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The Community Knowledge Initiative originally supported by Atlantic Philanthropies

<sup>76</sup> The design of baseline surveys and the subsequent assessment of the progress made towards achieving the Plan Vision are matters to be discussed and agreed when the partners have agreed the plan and strategy

<sup>77</sup> [http://www.lic.wisc.edu/shapingdane/facilitation/all\\_resources/impacts/analysis\\_socio.htm](http://www.lic.wisc.edu/shapingdane/facilitation/all_resources/impacts/analysis_socio.htm) Mary Edwards, Community Guide to Development Impact Analysis – (Land Information & Computer Graphics, Wisconsin)

Table 6.7 5-Year Framework Plan

Phase	Period	External funding required	Priority actions and Strategies	Other Actions and Strategies
1. Preparatory Phase	2013-2014	0	1.Consultation with other stakeholders 2.Agree and establish a collaborative network for implementation 3. Secure the involvement of third level college/college(s) and ICT company 4. Apply for funding	Agree protocols between bodies re. publication of Burren information and knowledge
2. Main implementation phase	2015 -2018	€360,000 - 465,000	Strategy 1 Strategy 2 Strategy 3 Strategy 4 Assessment Secure long-term funding	
3. Post-Plan	Post-2018	To be determined	1.Mainstream the Plan Strategies with supporting funding 2.Disseminate knowledge of the Burren Learning Communities	

142. Table 6.8 is a summary of the expected impact of the Framework Plan in the Burren based on that approach. In the last year of the Plan we estimate that it will help to create more than 20 jobs, train more than 300 teachers in PBE, and involve more than 100 students and researchers in the exploration of new learning paradigms. By Year 5 we estimate that the Plan will be helping to bring more than 3000 additional visitors to the Burren for PBL experiences, contributing €645,000 to the local economy (Refer to Appendix 3)

Table 6.8 Summary of expected impact of the Framework Plan

<b>Type of Impact</b>	<b>Nature of Plan Impact</b>
<b>Demography</b>	The plan is likely to lead to a small increase in permanent residents and a considerable increase in visitors
<b>Employment and Income</b>	The plan will create training, employment and business opportunities. It will increase income levels, largely as a result of up-skilling and the increased availability of part-time but well paid employment opportunities
<b>Demand for Public Services</b>	The plan will generate a demand for improved ICT services and improved physical access to the landscape
<b>Quality of Life</b>	The plan will improve quality of life through enhancing pride of place and community spirit, and making available an expanding range of life-long learning experiences
<b>Environmental Impact</b>	The plan will have a positive environmental impact through disseminating knowledge of local cultural and natural heritage and promoting sustainable management practices

143. However, the Framework Plan is much more ambitious than most community-oriented initiatives. The long-term impact of a successful Plan will be profound. PBE will be an established educational approach in Irish schools and the network of Learning Communities in the Burren will be a model for social progress throughout Europe 6.11 Next steps

## 6.11 Next Steps

144. Steps should be taken immediately to establish the group that will oversee establishing the network of learning communities. We also recommend a number of actions that will benefit PBL in the Burren and that we believe should proceed regardless of the adoption of the Framework Plan.

### Set up a collaborative network

145. We envisage the initial collaborative network to include the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark (Clare County Council), Galway County Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Office of Public Works, Burrenbeo Trust, Burren College of Art, Clare and Galway Education Centres, Burren Outdoor Education Centre, Burren Farming for Conservation office and the Burren Ecotourism Network. We envisage the network being established in 2013 following circulation of this study report and a meeting to discuss and agree the operation of the

network. The minimum steps required to support the network would be the appointment of a participating organisation to act as secretariat, and the agreement of the participating bodies to meet on a regular basis to report on actions and to agree initiatives.

Recruit third level college and ICT partners

146. We propose that at an early stage, ideally at the outset, ICT companies and third level colleges are recruited as network members. This would be facilitated by hosting a seminar about the Framework Plan. We suggest that invitees would include partners in the on-going Burren Tourism for Conservation Project (UCD and NUIG), the Burren College of Art and representatives of bodies which have been consulted during the course of this study and have expressed an interest in further participation (Centre for Irish Studies, NUIG, St. Patricks College, Dublin City University and GMIT<sup>78</sup>). Our expectation would be that academic and ICT partner staff would play a significant role in writing up grant applications to enable Phase 2 of the Framework Plan to proceed in 2015.

Other actions

147. In part the Framework Plan represents a consolidation of progress that is already being made by a number of bodies including the Burrenbeo Trust and the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark. We believe that it is important, at this point in time, to establish a mechanism to ensure that information and knowledge about the Burren is made available and disseminated in a coordinated manner and that protocols are established to ensure the reliability and quality of information and knowledge. These initiatives are particularly relevant to on-line information. The internet represents a powerful and increasingly important tool for learning. The uncoordinated development of Burren websites is undesirable. We propose that the necessary coordination and quality control would be a task for the collaborative network described above.

148. An audit of heritage education in the Burren has been carried out and a detailed Burren Heritage Course has been designed.<sup>79</sup> The learning network should progress this course by agreeing the delivery and by sourcing the requisite funding. It is desirable that course attendance would be strongly encouraged for member of the Burren Ecotourism Network. We believe that consideration be given to making attendance compulsory for BEN members, part of the mandatory training programme already required to qualify for full membership.

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<sup>78</sup> Specifically, Nessa Cronin, Centre for Irish Studies at NUIG, Susan Pike in the Education Dept. St Patrick's College, Dublin City University and Deirdre O'Mahony of X-PO and at the College of Tourism and Arts, GMIT

<sup>79</sup> See 'Review of Heritage Education and Training in the Burren' a 2012 report supported by the Heritage Council under the Burren Community Charter Project

This will strengthen the BEN credentials and bestow a competitive advantage for BEN operators.

## 6.12 Conclusion

149. The study has investigated the learning opportunities that are inherent in place and community. The 5-Year Framework Plan charts the beginning of a journey that will enable the Burren to become a premier learning landscape in Europe. That journey involves making the best use of methodologies that are known to work, like learning communities and Place-based Education, and exploring entirely new ways of learning. We have, for instance, included an exploration of learning that combines PBL and ICT. In this respect and others the Plan is ambitious; an ambition that matches the challenge of finding a learning approach that is fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and does justice to the exceptional learning potential of the Burren.

## Appendix 1 Learning Development Opportunities in the Burren

This appendix summarises ideas which either do not form part of the development plan or only receive a minor mention but which, nevertheless, could make a significant contribution to the learning resources of the Burren. They include ideas that could be part of a future plan or ideas which might be supported by this plan if they are brought forward for consideration.

### Expand the GOYA Gang

The GOYA Gang (Get Off Your Arse Gang) was established in Kinvara in 2007 ( <http://goyagang.com/>).

The objective of the Gang is ‘adventure in the community for the community’. There are currently 40 boys and girls (mainly girls) aged 12 -18 in the Gang, doing a range of outdoor recreational pursuits (kayaking, open boating, caving, rock climbing and orienteering). The Gang gets financial support from the Irish Sports Council and from the Clare and Galway Sports Partnerships. There is considerable involvement by Seamount College (staff and students). This is a growing project, which has attracted national interest. It could provide a template for similar initiatives elsewhere in the Burren, in particular initiatives involving the other secondary schools in Gort and Lisdoonvarna.

### Set up a language school

English language schools in the Pyrenees have been cited as an example of learning in a beautiful setting. There was a small language school in Corrofin and the Holywell in Newtown, Ballyvaughan was originally developed as a language school. The bulk of language schools in Ireland are in Dublin and other cities and the extent of their students’ exposure to North Clare is a day-trip to the Cliffs of Moher visitor centre. There may be scope to market the Burren as an English language learning destination on the basis of its relative remoteness and outstanding physical and cultural heritage<sup>80</sup>.

### Create an International Centre for Place-Based Learning in the Burren

While a major thrust of this report is the development of the potential of local communities making use of existing infrastructure, realising the full potential of the Burren as a learning landscape is probably constrained by a lack of facilities for educational purposes in the Burren. There are no residential PBE facilities in the Burren at this time other than the relatively limited facilities offered by the Outdoor Recreation Centre at Turlough, Belharbour and the NUIG field centre at Carron. There are educational institutions elsewhere in the world e.g. Teton Science Schools in Wyoming and the Dartington Trust in Devon which run extensive educational programmes. These organisations are

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<sup>80</sup> Green-Spiral, outside Gort, is offering English language courses for teenagers and families this Summer 2013. According to Green-Spiral, their ‘novel methodology sees the acquisition of a second language as an adventure instead of a passive learning process.’ See <http://www.green-spiral.com/>

located within landscapes which have a high learning potential but, in both cases, the organisations have a large campus with extensive private grounds

The Irish property market is seriously depressed at this time and presents a good opportunity for property investment by cash-rich buyers. The 2011 census shows that nearly half the dwellings in some Burren villages were unoccupied at the time of the census. There are also several large commercial properties vacant e.g. the Whitethorn Centre and Coast Hotel in Ballyvaughan. If a new centre were to be developed, in order to maximise its educational potential, the centre, ideally, should be in an existing relatively large village with convenient access to the countryside. Ballyvaughan stands out in this regard and also because of its attractive coastal setting and the possible synergies with the Burren College of Art. Coole Park, run by the NPWS, would also be an attractive location for a PBL facility. The 405 hectare estate has a wealth of natural and cultural heritage, but is underutilised. The construction of the M18 section to the north of Gort in the near future will considerably improve access between the estate and the town by taking the heavy traffic off the existing N18.

#### Establish long-term relationships between local schools and adjacent landowners to enable outdoor learning

The landscape learning aspect of the Land Trust movement in the United States is primarily based on the acquisition of lands near schools so that children can get hands-on experience of nature and the stewardship of landscape. Irish primary schools usually occupy small sites with little scope for environmental education. Even schools in a rural area such as the Burren do not necessarily have convenient access to farmland and habitats. There is scope for the development of long-term links between schools and landowners to facilitate environmental educational opportunities.

#### Beo Cros: develop a network of low impact 'shelters' for visiting students<sup>81</sup>.

The shelters would provide basic accommodation with broadband access. They would be managed by local landowners and would be available for rent at low cost most of the year and at high cost in the tourist season. This idea has been presented as a network of 'individually designed shelters' to be located in 'wilderness' locations'. But this is not a practical proposition given the environmental constraints and regulatory controls that apply to most of the Burren. However, a network of basic accommodation, available for rental by visiting students, that is located within existing settlements, might have potential (See commentary above about the large quantity of vacant and under-utilised accommodation in Burren villages).

#### Training Brokerage

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<sup>81</sup> Including learners, writers, artists and conservation volunteers

An existing or new organisation could facilitate and promote learning initiatives in the Burren as a training brokerage. This organisation would help arrange local training interventions for communities and also work with local tourism operators to capitalise on opportunities presented by the growth in life long learning and educational tourism.

Given the high levels unemployment and the growing problem of Youth Unemployment, the provision of relevant training programs at a local level, will help people to retrain, learn new skills and hopefully find new employment. Under Theme 4, enhancing the General Competency Skills of the Life Long Learner, there is a requirement for sectoral or regional networks to provide particular competency training for the employed and unemployed who may have been at an educational disadvantage. This presents an opportunity to create a new skillnet either focused on developing learning networks within communities or providing training in ecotourism and wider tourism activities. The Skillnet would be able to provide a subsidy to learners thereby making the courses more affordable.

This organisation will collate and organise all relevant learning resources and teachers in the community and seek to match them with opportunities. This organisation could also work with SOLAS and Enterprise and Training Boards, to arrange for courses to be delivered in the community using local trainers and education providers where possible. It would also work with local business owners to help them develop unique learning experiences in the Burren for the tourism markets and promote them nationally and internationally.

## Appendix 2 Summary of Funding Sources other than commercial banks<sup>82</sup>

One of the biggest challenges in delivering this plan will be access to funding. During the course of our study, we have looked at where funds have come from historically and also where new sources of funding might be available. As we write this report, there have been a number of developments which have informed our overall plan and these include;

- Budget 2013 has resulted in significant cuts to all government department including Department of Education and Skills, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, which are of most benefit to this project.
- New EU Budgets (Structural Funds) are being agreed for the period 2014 – 2020 period and once these have been finalised opportunities for funding will become much clearer.
- The Creation of Solas and the 16 ETB (Education and Training Boards) have been prioritised in order to deliver meaningful training interventions to tackle the high levels of unemployment. Training and Upskilling to get people back to work are 2 key priority areas and the current government is committed to spending money on these programs.
- Two of Irelands largest philanthropic funds that support Irish Non – Profits , Chuck Feeney’s Atlantic Philanthropies and Declan Ryan’s One Foundation are in the process of being wound down, and this has left a \$50m funding gap in this sector.

In light of the above funding challenges, we have identified a number of alternative funding opportunities to deliver the early stages of this plan which we hope can build a solid platform to achieve the vision set out in the plan. These funding opportunities involve (1) Local Government (2) Private Philanthropy and (3) EU Funding Programs.

### 1. Local Government

#### 1. Community Employment Scheme – Department of Social Protection

This is an employment programme which helps long term unemployed people to re- enter the workforce, by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine. The programme assists them to enhance and develop both their technical and personal skills which can then be used in the workplace. The CE programme is sponsored by groups wishing to benefit the local community, namely voluntary organisations. DSP gives allowances and funding to assist with community employment programmes, including participant’s wages, supervisor grants, material grants and specific skills training grants.

Supervisor Grants are paid at the rate of €522 per week, while participants are paid €208 per week. If a scheme were to be run with 1 supervisor and 5 participants, this could mean a grant to the community in the amount of €81,244.

<http://www.welfare.ie/Community-Employment-Programme-.asp>

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<sup>82</sup> Material particularly relevant to the Burren Learning Landscape initiative is highlighted in yellow

## 2. Animator Project – Leader RDP

Leader's main aim is to strengthen the rural economy and to improve the quality of life in rural areas. Through focusing on the key principles of innovation, sustainability, economic viability and linkages with other organisations, LEADER can make a significant contribution to sustaining our rural economy, communities and environment.

### **Axis 3 Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy**

- Diversification into non-agricultural activities
- Support for the creation and development of micro-enterprises
- Encouragement of tourism activities
- Basic services for the rural economy and population
- Village renewal and development
- Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage
- Training and information for economic actors operating in the fields covered by Axis 3
- A skills-acquisition and animation measure with a view to implementing local development strategies.

We believe that this project to develop a local learning network would fall under the AXIS 3 measures above and would deem the project eligible for Leader Funding. The funding could be sought under the animation project, and this would provide a grant of €30K to employ somebody to co-ordinate and lead the project.

## 3. Skillnets

A Skillnets network (a 'Skillnet') is a group of companies that come together to carry out cross-organisational training related activities which may not be possible on their own. Companies jointly address their training needs, collaborate with other enterprises, and engage experts, trainers, certifying bodies, industry bodies and others to work with them to achieve their goals. Since 1999, Skillnets has facilitated almost 70,000 Irish enterprises, in over 400 networks to improve the range, scope and quality of training and allowed over 300,000 employees to up skill and meet their work related training needs.

Under Theme 4, enhancing the General Competency Skills of the Life Long Learner, there is a requirement for sectoral or regional networks to provide particular competency training for the employed and unemployed who may have been at an educational disadvantage. This presents an opportunity to create a new skillnet either focused on developing learning networks within communities or providing training in ecotourism and wider tourism activities.

Typically, a Skillnet will apply annually for funding based on the identified training needs for the year. The Skillnet will then be given a budget, which will be used to pay for an administrator of the scheme and provide subsidised grants to local organisations to deliver training programs. Typical Skillnet Funding can range from €50K - €200K, depending on the network and training delivered.

## 2. Private Philanthropy

We have identified a number of private philanthropic organisations that may be interested in providing finance for parts of the plan, but have made no approach to them. These organisations include;

1. **The Ireland Funds:** The Ireland Funds are one of the more active philanthropic organisations in Ireland and has raised almost \$450m since it was established in 1976 and provided support to over 1,200 Irish Charities. The fund runs an annual competition every year known as the Small Grants Round, where organisations can apply for grant funding of up to €20,000. The fund also try to match donors to specific projects and in many of these cases, the grants awarded are significantly greater than €20,000.
2. **Clann Credo:** supports the development of social enterprise, community business, social impact investment (SII) and other innovative solutions to social problems. They offer a range of loan products to community, voluntary and charitable groups as well as social enterprises and community businesses.
3. **The Irish Youth Foundation:** The mission of IYF is to provide opportunities for children and young people facing adverse and extreme conditions to experience success in their lives. The IYF are focused on supporting young people at risk of dropping out of school, facilitating the transition from primary to secondary school and empowering teenagers to become engaged in local communities.
4. **Katharine Howard Foundation : Since the early 90's the Foundation has operated** as an independent all - Ireland grant-making foundation with a particular emphasis on supporting community projects and initiatives in areas that are socially disadvantaged with a particular focus on children and families.
5. **Social Entrepreneurs Ireland :** They offer 2 programmes which focus on building both personal and organisational capacity in organisations to deliver increased social impact. The impact program offers €130,000 in growth capital and mentoring and support to the value of €70,000. Previous winners of the impact program include Coderdojo and Soar. Coderdojo is an Irish led global movement that provides free coding clubs for young children, while Soar provide positive life skills to young people to help them achieve their potential. The Elevator Programmes offer €22,000 in growth capital and mentoring and support to the value of €10,000. Previous winners include Hire Ireland and City of a thousand welcomes.
6. **Arthur Guinness Fund:** This is an innovative investment vehicle that supports the big ideas and the passion for community of social entrepreneurs, furthering the philanthropic legacy of Arthur Guinness. It helps social entrepreneurs deliver measurable, transformational change to communities in Ireland and worldwide. Last year, the fund awarded €1m and a package of practical support and mentoring to 10 Irish social entrepreneurs. Some of the Projects funded included H2 Maths Project to help adults learn maths and the Men's Shed Projects across the country.
7. **CISCO** Cisco believes that a strong and quality education system is fundamental to the economic success and quality of life in knowledge-based communities. Cisco builds capacity for improving education in local communities by investing in organizations, programs and strategic initiatives that improve literacy and science, and increase graduates in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

### 3. EU Funding Programmes

#### 1. Rural Development - Leader

There will be one programme or a set of regional programmes (possibly with national framework) per member state, with the possibility of sub programmes for specific needs, in particular young farmers (under 40); small farms; mountain areas; short supply chains;

The 'LEADER' approach continues;

There will be three key objectives: the competitiveness of agriculture; the sustainable management of natural resources, and climate action; a balanced territorial development of rural areas. The Axes used in the current programme (2007-13) are not continuing forward - there are to six priorities proposed as the basis of programming, i.e. measures need to contribute to these. Of these priorities five of the six deal with agriculture/forestry and only one with the wider rural community. These priorities are shown below:

1. Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry and rural areas;
2. Enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability;
3. Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture;
4. Restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry;
5. Promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in the agriculture, food and forestry sectors; and
6. Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas.

#### 2. Erasmus for All

This is a new EU programme for education, training, youth and sport proposed by the European Commission on 23 November 2011. Erasmus for All will bring together the different parts of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the international aspects of Higher Education, including Erasmus, Mundus, and Youth in Action.

Two completely new elements will be part of Erasmus for All:

- A loan guarantee scheme to help Master's degree students to finance their studies abroad and to acquire the skills needed for knowledge intensive jobs
- The creation of 400 knowledge alliances and sector skills alliances. Knowledge alliances are large-scale partnerships between higher education institutions and businesses to promote creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship by offering new learning opportunities and qualifications. Sector skills alliances are partnerships between education and training providers and businesses to promote employability by forming new sector-specific curricula and innovative forms of vocational teaching and training.

### 3 Life Programme (Life +)

The key area of the environment will be addressed in the next programming period through mainstreaming and the continuation of the LIFE programme (as LIFE+). Further key aspects of these two main areas are shown below:

- Environment to be mainstreamed into major EU funding instruments including cohesion; agriculture; maritime and fisheries; and research and innovation: Agriculture: greening of direct payments to farmers; rural development under the CAP will be further re-focused on delivering public goods, Including through agri-environment measures;
- Maritime and Fisheries Policy: Reducing overfishing and overcapacity and reducing direct impacts (such as by-catch or impact on the sea bottom), as well as supporting marine-protected areas;
- Cohesion Policy: Conditionality on implementing EU environment policy; and
- Research and Innovation: Resource efficient economy; eco-innovation.
- LIFE+ Programme will be more closely aligned to Europe 2020. Main changes to be implemented when compared with the current programme are as follows:

A new specific sub-programme for Climate Action;

- Multi-annual work programmes;
- A new type of project, called Integrated Projects. The main purpose of this project is to foster the implementation of environment and climate policy, and the integration of their specific objectives into other policies; and

There will also be the Creation of two sub-programmes:

#### 1. LIFE sub-programme for Environment

- Environment & Resource Efficiency
- Focus shifted towards implementation through Integrated Projects (waste, water, air);
- A specific objective in relation to Resource efficiency;
- Includes policy approaches, best practices and solutions to environmental problems through development, test and demonstration; and
- Private sector oriented market-replication excluded (to be covered under Horizon 2020).
- Biodiversity and Nature
- Focused on Natura2000 and the implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020;
- Best practice and demonstration for nature and biodiversity; and 50% of resources allocated to projects under the sub-programme for Environment;
- Environmental Governance & Information
- Information and awareness raising projects and activities, and facilitating knowledge sharing will be supported;
- Co-Operation Networks, and best practices for enforcement and compliance will be supported; and
- Better governance and support for environmental NGOs will be promoted.

## 2. LIFE sub-programme for Climate Action

- Climate Change Mitigation – to contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Climate Change Adaptation – to support efforts to increased resilience to climate change.

Specific objectives of this sub-programme will ensure financing of:

- Policy studies for development of Union policy and legislation and support for local implementation.
- Improving local and regional capacity to develop and implement climate actions in practice.
- Facilitate development and implementation of integrated strategies and action plans at regional level around climate objectives and mainstreaming across policy areas.
- Development and demonstration of innovative technologies, systems, methods and instruments for replication, transfer or mainstreaming.
- LIFE Climate Governance and Information contributes to awareness, communication, cooperation and dissemination on climate mitigation and adaptation actions. Specific objectives include:
  - Promotion of raising awareness;
  - Support for communication and dissemination of information, knowledge sharing, including networks and cooperation platforms;
  - Contributing to more effective compliance and enforcement of climate legislation; and
  - Promotion of better climate governance by stakeholder involvement in policy consultation and implementation.

A summary presentation can be found at the following link:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/about/documents/life\\_presentation\\_env\\_en-web.ppt](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/about/documents/life_presentation_env_en-web.ppt)

## 4. European Social Fund (ESF)

Social Inclusion; Long Term (and Youth) Unemployment; Targeted Initiatives - human resource development

### Art. 3 Scope of support

1. Under the thematic objectives listed below, and in accordance with Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No [...], the ESF shall support the following investment priorities:

(a) Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility through:

- i. Access to employment for job-seekers and inactive people, including local employment initiatives and support for labour mobility;
- ii. Sustainable integration of young people not in employment, education or training into the labour market;
- iii. Self-employment, entrepreneurship and business creation;
- iv. Equality between men and women and reconciliation between work and private life;
- v. Adaptation of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs to change;
- vi. Active and healthy ageing;
- vii. Modernisation and strengthening of labour market institutions, including actions to enhance transnational labour mobility;

(b) Investing in education, skills and life-long learning through:

- i. Reducing early school-leaving and promoting equal access to good quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education;
- ii. Improving the quality, efficiency and openness of tertiary and equivalent education with a view to increasing participation and attainment levels;
- iii. Enhancing access to lifelong learning, upgrading the skills and competences of the workforce and increasing the labour market relevance of education and training systems;

(c) Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty through:

- i. Active inclusion;
- ii. Integration of marginalised communities such as the Roma;
- iii. Combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
- iv. Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest;
- v. Promoting the social economy and social enterprises;
- vi. Community-led local development strategies;

(d) Enhancing institutional capacity and efficient public administration through:

- i. Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance; This investment priority is only applicable throughout the territory of the Member States which have at least one NUTS level 2 region as defined in Article 82(2)(a) of Regulation (EU) No [...] or in Member States eligible for Cohesion Fund support.
- ii. Capacity building for stakeholders delivering employment, education and social policies and sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at national, regional and local level.

2. Through the investment priorities listed in paragraph 1, the ESF shall also contribute to the other Thematic objectives listed in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No [...], primarily by:

- a) Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient, resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable economy, through reform of education and training systems, adaptation of skills and qualifications, up-skilling of the labour force, and the creation of new jobs in sectors related to the environment and energy;
- b) Enhancing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies

**ESF Art. 21 Basic services and village renewal in rural areas**

1. Support under this measure shall cover in particular:

- a) the drawing up and updating of plans for the development of municipalities in rural areas and their basic services and of protection and management plans relating to NATURA 2000 sites and other areas of high nature value;
- b) investments in the creation, improvement or expansion of all types of small scale infrastructure, including investments in renewable energy;
- c) broadband infrastructure, including its creation, improvement and expansion, passive broadband infrastructure and provision of access to broadband and public e-government solutions;

- d) investments in the setting-up, improvement or expansion of local basic services for the rural population, including leisure and culture, and the related infrastructure;
- e) investments by public bodies in recreational infrastructure, tourist information and signposting of touristy sites; studies and investments associated with the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of villages and rural landscapes, including related socioeconomic aspects;
- f) Investments targeting the relocation of activities and conversion of buildings or other facilities located close to rural settlements, with a view to improving the quality of life or increasing the environmental performance of the settlement.

2. Support under this measure shall only concern small-scale infrastructure, as defined by each Member State in the programme. However, rural development programmes may provide for specific derogations from this rule for investments in broadband and renewable energy. In this case, clear criteria ensuring complementarity with support under other Union instruments shall be provided

## 5. European Regional Development Fund

Focused on Social Inclusion; Innovation; Energy; Enterprise (and Employment) - primarily Capital Investment

### Art. 5 Investment priorities

The ERDF shall support the following investment priorities within the thematic objectives set out in Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No [...] /2012 [CPR]:

#### 1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation:

- a) enhancing research and innovation infrastructure (R&I) and capacities to develop R&I excellence and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest;
- b) promoting business R&I investment, product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation and public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation;
- c) supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production in Key Enabling Technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;

#### 2. Enhancing access to and use and quality of ICT:

- a) extending broadband deployment and the roll-out of high-speed networks;
- b) developing ICT products and services, e-commerce and enhancing demand for ICT;
- c) strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion and ehealth;

#### 3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs:

- a) promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms;
- b) developing new business models for SMEs, in particular for internationalisation;

4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors:

- a) promoting the production and distribution of renewable energy sources;
- b) promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in SMEs;
- c) supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in public infrastructures and in the housing sector;
- d) developing smart distribution systems at low voltage levels;
- e) promoting low-carbon strategies for urban areas;

5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management:

- a) supporting dedicated investment for adaptation to climate change;
- b) promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and
- c) developing disaster management systems;

6. protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency:

- a) addressing the significant needs for investment in the waste sector to meet the requirements of the environmental
- b) addressing the significant needs for investment in the water sector to meet the requirements of the environmental acquis
- c) protecting, promoting and developing cultural heritage;
- d) protecting biodiversity, soil protection and promoting ecosystem services including NATURA 2015 and green infrastructures;
- e) action to improve the urban environment, including regeneration of brownfield sites and reduction of air pollution;

7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures:

- a) supporting a multimodal Single European Transport Area by investing in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) network;
- b) enhancing regional mobility through connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure;
- c) developing environment-friendly and low-carbon transport systems and promoting sustainable urban mobility;
- d) developing comprehensive, high quality and interoperable railway system;

8. Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility:

- a) development of business incubators and investment support for selfemployment and business creation;
- b) local development initiatives and aid for structures providing neighbourhood services to create new jobs, where such actions are outside the scope of Regulation (EU) No [...] /2012 [ESF];
- c) investing in infrastructure for public employment services;

9. Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty:

- a) investing in health and social infrastructure which contribute to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, and transition from institutional to community-based services;

- b) support for physical and economic regeneration of deprived urban and rural communities;
- c) support for social enterprises;

**10. Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning by developing education and training infrastructure;**

11. Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration by strengthening of institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administration supported by the ESF.

**Art. 7 Sustainable urban developments**

1. The ERDF shall support, within operational programmes, sustainable urban development through strategies setting out integrated actions to tackle the economic, environmental, climate and social challenges affecting urban areas.
2. Each Member State shall establish in its Partnership Contract a list of cities where integrated actions for sustainable urban development are to be implemented and an indicative annual allocation for these actions at national level. At least 5% of the ERDF resources allocated at national level shall be allocated to integrated actions for sustainable urban development delegated to cities for management through Integrated Territorial Investments referred to in Article 99 of Regulation (EU) No [...] /2012 [CPR].

**6. European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development**

Focused on Rural Economy and Quality of Life

The most important articles of the draft regulation are:

**Art. 5 Union priorities for rural development**

The achievement of the objectives of rural development, which contribute to the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, shall be pursued through the following six Union priorities for rural development, which translate the relevant Thematic Objectives of the CSF:

1. Fostering knowledge transfer and innovation in agriculture, forestry, and rural areas with a focus on the following areas:
  - a) fostering innovation and the knowledge base in rural areas;
  - b) strengthening the links between agriculture and forestry and research and innovation;
  - c) fostering lifelong learning and vocational training in the agricultural and forestry sectors.
2. Enhancing competitiveness of all types of agriculture and enhancing farm viability, with focus on the following areas:
  - a) facilitating restructuring of farms facing major structural problems, notably farms with a low degree of market participation, market-oriented farms in particular sectors and farms in need of agricultural diversification;
  - b) facilitating generational renewal in the agricultural sector.
3. Promoting food chain organisation and risk management in agriculture, with a focus on the following areas:

- a) better integrating primary producers into the food chain through quality schemes, promotion in local markets and short supply circuits, producer groups and inter-branch organisations;
  - b) supporting farm risk management:
4. restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry, with a focus on the following areas:
- a) restoring and preserving biodiversity, including in Natura 2000 areas and high nature value farming, and the state of European landscapes;
  - b) improving water management;
  - c) improving soil management.
5. promoting resource efficiency and supporting the shift towards a low carbon and climate resilient economy in agriculture, food and forestry sectors, with a focus on the following areas:
- a) increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture;
  - b) increasing efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing;
  - c) facilitating the supply and use of renewable sources of energy, of by-products, wastes, residues and other non food raw material for purposes of the bio-economy;
  - d) reducing nitrous oxide and methane emissions from agriculture;
  - e) fostering carbon sequestration in agriculture and forestry;
6. promoting social inclusion poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas, with a focus on the following areas:
- a) facilitating diversification, creation of new small enterprises and job creation;
  - b) fostering local development in rural areas in rural areas.

All of the priorities shall contribute to the cross-cutting objectives of innovation, environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

#### **Art. 8 Thematic sub-programmes**

1. Member States may include within their rural development programmes thematic sub-programmes, contributing to the Union priorities for rural development, aimed to address specific needs identified, in particular in relation to:
- a) young farmers;
  - b) small farms as referred to in the third subparagraph of Article 20(2);
  - c) mountain areas as referred to in Article 33(2);
  - d) short supply chains.

An indicative list of measures and types of operations of particular relevance to each thematic sub-programme is set out in Annex III.

2. Thematic sub-programmes may also address specific needs relating to the restructuring of agricultural sectors with a significant impact on the development of a specific rural area.

3. The support rates laid down in Annex I may be increased by 10 percentage points for operations supported in the framework of thematic sub-programmes concerning small farms and short supply chains. In the case of young farmers and mountain areas, the maximum support rates may be

#### **Art. 20 Farm and business development**

1. Support under this measure shall cover:

##### **a) business start-up aid for:**

- i. young farmers;
- ii. Non-agricultural activities in rural areas;
- iii. The development of small farms;

b) Investments in non-agricultural activities;

c) Annual payments for farmers participating in the small farmers scheme established by Title V of Regulation (EU) No DP/2012 (hereafter "the small farmers scheme") who permanently transfer their holding to another farmer.

#### **Art. 21 Basic services and village renewal in rural areas**

1. Support under this measure shall cover in particular:

- a) the drawing up and updating of plans for the development of municipalities in rural areas and their basic services and of protection and management plans relating to NATURA 2000 sites and other areas of high nature value;
- b) investments in the creation, improvement or expansion of all types of small scale infrastructure, including investments in renewable energy;
- c) broadband infrastructure, including its creation, improvement and expansion, passive broadband infrastructure and provision of access to broadband and public e-government solutions;
- d) investments in the setting-up, improvement or expansion of local basic services for the rural population, including leisure and culture, and the related infrastructure;
- e) investments by public bodies in recreational infrastructure, tourist information and signposting of touristic sites
- f) studies and investments associated with the maintenance, restoration and upgrading of the cultural and natural heritage of villages and rural landscapes, including related socioeconomic aspects;
- g) investments targeting the relocation of activities and conversion of buildings or other facilities located close to rural settlements, with a view to improving the quality of life or increasing the environmental performance of the settlement.

2. Support under this measure shall only concern small-scale infrastructure, as defined by each Member State in the programme. However, rural development programmes may provide for specific derogations from this rule for investments in broadband and renewable energy. In this case, clear criteria ensuring complementarity with support under other Union instruments shall be provided.

## **7. Education and Training (ET2020)**

The Europe 2020 strategy aims to enhance the quality and performance of education systems to provide young people with the skills and competencies required by the labour market, making the transition from school to work easier. The strategy has identified four priorities for funding and they include, life-long learning and mobility, quality and efficiency, social cohesion and active citizenship, creativity and innovation.

The strategy presents a number of opportunities on how education can be modernised by the use of new technologies and through the development of new and innovative pedagogies. One such opportunity is the development of “Creative Classrooms”, that are innovative learning environments in education, enhancing creativity and innovation in contemporary learning and teaching with the support of new technologies.

This is a collaborative project and will involve partnerships with other learning organisations/ agencies across the EU to apply and secure funding under this scheme.

## Appendix 3 Benefits and Costs

### 1. The Economic Benefits of the Framework Plan

#### STRATEGY 1 – ENABLE LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LEARNING NETWORK

This indispensable role of adult education as an agent of social inclusion is well recognised. Adult learning offered in a variety of environments, involving multiple stakeholders (including public and private sectors, higher education institutions, local communities and NGOs) and covering learning for personal, civic, social and employment-related purposes, is central to reaching disadvantaged and at risk groups. Participation in adult learning helps combat social exclusion including rural isolation; enables seniors to remain socially and mentally active, helps migrants integrate into communities and allows individuals with a disability to participate more fully in society.

The creation of a network of learning communities will help up skill and train 30/40 unemployed local people to find new jobs and provide the necessary skills and conditions to allow 5 new businesses to set up in the community. Place Based Learning Programs will teach people about their place and will encourage more people to participate and volunteer in the local community, helping to increase social cohesion and improving quality of life.

	Number of Jobs	Unit Value	Total Value
Full Time Jobs	20	€21,000	€420,000
Part Time Jobs	10	€10,000	€200,000
New Business	5	€50,000	€250,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>€870,000</b>

#### STRATEGY 2 - DEVELOPMENT OF PLACE-BASED EDUCATION (PBE)

By implementing this strategy, there is the potential to create 1 full time job in the community developing and co-ordinating training programs. These training programs will probably (though not necessarily) be available through the Clare and Galway Education Centres and about 300 teachers will be participating in these programs by Year 5. In addition to these, a one Week Long Summer Course will bring teachers into the Burren, increasing the demand for accommodation and services. The economic benefits of this strategy will result in an additional €147K for the local economy.

	Number	Unit Value	Total Value
Full Time Jobs	1	€21,000	€21,000
3 x 1 Week Summer Course	60	€500	€30,000
In Service Training	300	€250	€75,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>€126,000</b>

**STRATEGY 3 – DEVELOPMENT OF NEW LEARNING PARADIGMS**

For years, the Burren has provided field study experiences for generations of geography, geology, botany and archaeology from schools and colleges from Ireland and beyond. While it is difficult to quantify the economic benefits of these activities, we would expect the popularity of the Burren to increase among research students as new learning paradigms are developed. We expect this strategy to provide seasonal part time employment for up to 3 field trip guides and bring about 120 students/ researchers into the area.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Unit Value</b>	<b>Total Value</b>
<b>Part Time Jobs</b>	3	€5,000	€15,000
<b>University Students</b>	100	€100	€10,000
<b>Researchers</b>	20	€200	€40,000
<b>Total Value</b>			€55,000

**STRATEGY 4 - PBL Entrepreneurs**

The increasing provision of PBL experiences for visitors will bring significant benefits to local communities. We believe that these experiences have the potential to bring 3,500 visitors to the area. This will add €645K to the local economy and lead to the creation of a number of part time jobs for tour guides/ interpreters and local people. The growth in employment numbers will see more money being spent in the local economy and help improve quality of life in the community. The increase in volunteer numbers will help lower the costs of conserving and maintaining the natural landscape while educating people and promoting awareness on the importance of conservation.

	<b>Number</b>	<b>Unit Value</b>	<b>Total Value</b>
<b>Cultural Tourists</b>	2,300	€250	€575,00
<b>EFL Tourists</b>	1,000	€50	€50,000
<b>Volunteer Tourists</b>	200	€100	€20,000
<b>Total</b>	3,500		€645,000

A Burren Summer Camp, would bring immense benefits to the area and has the potential to create 12 jobs in the local economy (2 Full Time/ 10 Part Time) while also increasing the demand for local services and accommodation. The camp would also provide opportunities for local children to learn new skills and partake in adventure activities, promoting health, wellness and fitness. Because the Summer Camps operate only during the school holidays, the economic benefits are limited to 2 months of the year.

	Number	Unit Value	Total Value
Full Time Jobs	2	€21,000	€42,000
Part Time Jobs	10	€10,000	€100,000
<b>Residential (3 Week Course)</b>			
No of Students (Fees/ Accom)	200	€600	€120,000
No of Students (Spending Money)	200	€150	€30,000
Parents Visiting	200	€100	€20,000
<b>Local (1 Week Course)</b>			
No of Students	150	€75	€11,250
<b>Total Spend</b>			<b>€323,250</b>

## 2. Plan Costs

Costs marked with an asterisk are associated with plan elements that are not considered to be essential. The lower overall projected cost figure is the total cost minus those plan elements

Strategies (1 & 4)

Network of Learning Communities/ PBL Enterprise	Annual Costs	Phase 1 2013 -2014	Phase 2 2015 -2018
Project Manager (NOLC)	1 x €50K PA		€150,000
New Business Mentors	1 x €10K PA		€30,000*
Overheads	1 x €10K PA		€30,000
PBL Award/ Bursaries	1 x €20K PA		€60,000*
LL Symposium	1 x €15K PA		€45,000
Website/ Promotion	1 x €5K PA		€15,000
Total			€330,000

Strategy 2

Development of Place Based Education (PBE)	Annual Costs	Phase 1 2013 -2014	Phase 2 2015 -2018
Project Leader (P/T)	1 x €20K PA		€60,000
Overheads	1 x €5K PA		€15,000
Total			€75,000

Strategy 3

New Learning Paradigms	Annual Costs	Phase 1 2013 -2014	Phase 2 2015 -2018
Researchers (P/T)	1 x €10K PA		€30,000
Bursary for inter-disciplinary research	1 x €5K PA		€15,000*
Overheads	1 x €5K PA		€15,000
Total			€60,000