

Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark

Autumn Newsletter

EXPERIENCES,
IT'S IN OUR
NATURE 🌿

Red Squirrel in Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark



CUILCAGH
LAKELANDS
GEOPARK



Comhairle Contae
an Chabháin
Cavan
County Council



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Tourism in Focus: Conference Season is here

AVEA 2025

We were delighted to join over 200 delegates in Waterford in October for the 2025 AVEA (Association of Visitor Experiences & Attractions) Conference.

There were a host of insightful and thought-provoking speakers ranging from resilience and the importance of purpose in tourism, the need to understand AI to stay ahead, how data management is providing insights to visitor movement and market opportunities around visitor experiences and the opportunities presented by putting the team first!

The Conference was supported by the national tourism bodies with Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland all contributing with exclusive research and insights in key overseas markets, understanding key segments and an insight to the impact of major events to the industry.

Attending the Association of Visitor Experiences & Attractions Conference



Karan McLernon (Development Officer - Tourism & Business), Anne O'Donoghue (Chair of AVEA Board), and Grainne O'Connor (Geopark Manager)

Geopark Manager Shares Insights at Tourism Conferences



Grainne O'Connor (Geopark Manager) at Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Tourism Conference

Geopark Manager, Grainne O'Connor, has been actively representing the region at key tourism events this season. Gráinne joined a panel discussion at the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA) Conference, contributing valuable insights on sustainable tourism practices. Additionally, she presented the Geopark's pioneering role in advancing sustainable and regenerative tourism at the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Tourism Conference. These contributions underscored the importance of place-based approaches and community engagement, positioning the Geopark as a leader in shaping the future of responsible tourism across the island of Ireland.

Congratulations Killeshandra Camino

Congratulations to the Killeshandra Camino Committee on winning the Anglo Celt Tourism Business Award 2025! This well-deserved honour highlights the passion, teamwork, and community pride that make the Camino such a memorable experience. We're proud to have supported this inspiring initiative and the dedicated people behind it.

Mark your calendar for next year's Killeshandra Camino, taking place on 20 June 2026. For updates and details, visit the Killeshandra Camino website [here](#).



Become a Geopark Ambassador – Expressions of Interest Open

Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, in partnership with Cavan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, is inviting heritage enthusiasts to express their interest in joining the long standing Geopark Ambassadors Programme.

We are expanding our existing Ambassador Network by recruiting 20 new participants for an 8-week training programme. This blended learning experience, delivered both online and in-person will include expert-led modules on UNESCO Global Geoparks, local heritage, accessibility and inclusion, event management, and tour guiding. Participants will also visit key Geopark sites and learn from other heritage-focused initiatives and social enterprises across the island of Ireland.

The programme fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing, including links with the Regenerative Tourism Business Network. On completion, Ambassadors will gain a deeper understanding of the Geopark's unique built, natural and cultural heritage, and the skills needed to communicate this effectively to those who live and visit the Geopark, to ensure it is cherished and preserved for future generations to enjoy.

As a Geopark Ambassador, you will:

- Receive a certificate of participation
- Join a Network of passionate heritage advocates
- Promote and protect local heritage
- Support education and outreach activities
- Help shape community engagement
- Learn from expert guest speakers
- Access practical resources including templates, checklists, and case studies



Geopark Ambassador, Bee Smith

This is a unique opportunity to contribute meaningfully to your community. Deadline for submitting your Expression of Interest is Thursday 23 October 2025. To complete your Expression of Interest for the programme click [here](#).

Irish UNESCO Global Geoparks Network Annual Public Forum

Join the Irish UNESCO Global Geoparks Network Annual Public Forum on 26–27 November 2025 at Hotel Doolin, Co. Clare.

Day one features expert talks on natural capital from Trinity College Dublin, University of Galway, and government departments. Day two includes a field excursion to key Geopark sites, highlighting geoheritage and sustainable business. Speakers include Dr. Catherine Farrell, Prof. Stephen Hynes, and Matthew Hornsby.

Book your place [here](#).



IUCN UK Peatland Programme Conference

Peatlands in Northern Ireland are entering an exciting new chapter with the launch of the region's first Peatland Strategy on 15 September 2025. This milestone brings fresh opportunities and a renewed commitment to protecting and restoring these vital ecosystems.

Recently, our Peatlands Engagement Officer, Roisin Black and Countryside Management and Geoscientific Officer, Martina O'Neill joined Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Climate Projects Officer at the International

Union for Conservation of Nature UK Peatland Programme Conference. This year's theme, "Water Connections: from Source to Sea," highlighted the integral role peatlands play in water management and climate resilience.

The conference was a valuable platform for learning and collaboration, bringing together land managers, contractors, and conservationists from across Northern Ireland, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England. It fostered the exchange of best practices and deepened collective understanding of peatland restoration and



Martina O'Neill (Countryside Management and Geoscientific Officer), Roisin Black (Peatlands Engagement Officer), and Amy Gallagher (Climate Projects Officer, FODC) conservation.

We were proud to present a poster showcasing our cross-border Peatland Project, which highlights the collaborative efforts underway to protect these unique landscapes. To view the poster and learn more about our work, click [here](#).



Fourth Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism Training Programme Launched

We were delighted to launch our fourth Regenerative and Sustainability Training Programme, welcoming a further 11 businesses from across Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark to participate in this engaging and informative programme.

The 14-week programme, facilitated by The Tourism Space, includes modules on energy and water management, Leave No Trace, biodiversity, accessibility and sustainability storytelling.

Participants include Belleek Pottery, Benmore Farm, Corleggy Cheese, Enniskillen Castle, Fermanagh Properties, Fika 33, Ice Cream Treats, Killyhevlin Lakeside Hotel, Lake Avenue House B&B, Share Discovery Village, and Wisteria Cottage. On successful

completion of the programme, participants will proceed to join our established Regenerative Tourism Business Network.

This programme is funded by Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark with support from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Cavan County Council, Failte Ireland, and Tourism Northern Ireland.



Geopark Attracts €343,073 ORIS Funding



Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark, in partnership with Cavan County Council, is delighted to have been awarded significant funding through the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) to enhance outdoor amenities across the region, with the Geopark playing a central role in improving trail infrastructure, promoting heritage, and expanding access to nature. The funding, announced by Minister for Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht, Dara Calleary TD, reflects the Geopark's commitment to accessible sustainable recreational infrastructure, community engagement, and environmental stewardship.

Geopark Strengthens Commitment to Accessibility & Inclusion

Accessibility and Inclusion is a key pillar of the Geopark Charter. Recently Officers along with partners, funders and participants, attended a Divergently Together Workshop in Dublin City University.

The event included engaging talks and practical sessions on:

- Accessibility as a Right, the Legal Context
- Neurodiversity, Climate Change and Language
- Sensing Climate; and
- Alt Text & Sensory Language

This was a fantastic opportunity to learn from many professionals working in the areas of accessibility and inclusion and importantly engage with the very users who rely on us to do our part to ensure our sites are accessible for all. Thank you to Alan James Burns and the Divergently Together team for having us.



Martina O'Neill (Countryside Management and Geoscientific Officer), and Karan McLernon (Development Officer - Tourism & Business) presenting at Workshop

Building a More Inclusive Geopark: Accessibility Training with Accessible Adventures Ireland



Earlier this month, the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark team took part in a dynamic and thought-provoking training session led by Paul Keelagher from Accessible Adventures Ireland. The session explored the Social Model of Disability, encouraging us to rethink barriers and embrace inclusive design in our work. We also got hands-on experience with adaptive equipment, gaining practical insights into how small changes can make a big difference for visitors of all abilities. This training marks an important step in our ongoing commitment to making the Geopark welcoming and accessible to everyone.

Lough Navar Scenic Drive Reopens

We are delighted to share that Lough Navar Scenic Drive has now reopened and can be accessed daily.

Works on site continue so it is important to adhere to safety signage and instructions in place.

A number of sites across the Geopark remain closed following the impacts of Storm Amy.

We ask for your continued cooperation in not attempting to access any sites which are currently closed or where works are taking place.

We thank our Geopark Ranger Team and various partner agencies for their ongoing commitment to make safe our outdoor sites.

We will continue to update through our digital channels.



Upgrade Works at Turbet Island

Turbet Island, located just across the bridge on the River Erne in Belturbet, is a peaceful spot ideal for walking, picnicking, and enjoying nature. Thanks to Geopark funding, recent upgrade works have enhanced the Turbet Island trail, as well as the path leading to Belturbet Heritage Railway Station and the Woolly Mammoth sculpture.

Improvements include upgraded fencing. Interpretation panels and signage have also been refreshed to enrich the visitor experience. These works are nearing completion and will further enhance access and enjoyment of this scenic and historic location.

Before Upgrade Works



After Upgrade Works



What's On - Ceramic Workshop with Artist, Jim Fee



Saturday 22 November 2025

10am-1pm noon

The Market House, Blacklion

FREE

This Ceramic Workshop takes inspiration from ancient techniques, Bronze Age artefacts, wetlands & aquatic plants.

To book, click [here](#).