

Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark Summer Newsletter

**EXPERIENCES,
IT'S IN OUR
NATURE** 



Copyright: Darren Tapp
(@daz_the_cyclist)

 **The Scarplands Cycle Trail, Co Fermanagh**



**CUILCAGH
LAKELANDS
GEOPARK**



**Comhairle Contae
an Chabháin**
Cavan
County Council



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

Shannon Pot & Cavan Burren Park Official Sod Turning

Cathaoirleach of Cavan County Council, Councillor TP O'Reilly welcomes Minister of State Thomas Byrne TD to turn the sod



We are delighted to share that we recently held the official sod turning event for the Shannon Pot Discovery Centre and Cavan Burren Park Project.

The project has received funding of €7.4m from Fáilte Ireland as well as €2.6m in match funding by Cavan County Council.

The attraction will incorporate an exhibition, along with reception, café, retail shop, public amenities,

and a new 500-metre walking trail.

The project will also see development of new facilities at nearby Cavan Burren Park, i.e. a sky walk through the trees, which will showcase the spectacular views around Ireland's largest neolithic relict landscape, provision of an outdoor performance space, and increased parking facilities.

Once complete, the project is expected to drive over €30m visitor spend and attract over 600,000 visitors by 2036, while creating 10 new jobs in the region as well as supporting many ancillary jobs and businesses in the region.

It is expected that both attractions will open to the public in early 2026.

Geopark Businesses leading the way in sustainable tourism practices

In our Spring Newsletter, we mentioned that we rolled out our third Business Sustainability Training Programme for local tourism businesses. The programme was delivered by The Tourism Space and covered topics such as energy and water conservation, Leave No Trace, and accessibility. Participants also had the opportunity to undertake a learning journey to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark, Co Clare to consolidate their continued learning.

As the 14-week programme recently came to an end, we were delighted to hold a Certificate Ceremony in the Slieve Russell Hotel to celebrate the hard work and commitment shown. Businesses reflected on their learnings with a presentation on the key takeaways from the programme, the challenges they are facing and their planned next steps.

We were pleased to be joined by Councillor Anthony Feely (Chair of the Geopark Committee), Councillor John Paul Feeley (Vice Chair of the Geopark Committee), Senior Management of the Geopark, as well as Gráinne Cornally (Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Fáilte Ireland), and Jessica Hoyle (Tourism NI).

Belmore Court & Motel, Dowra Courthouse, Drummany Spirit, Drumrush B&B, Farnham Estate, Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism, Keenaghan Cottage, Killinagh House, Lough Erne Resort, National Trust Fermanagh, Slieve Russell Hotel, Trinity Island Yoga Retreat, and Trivia House Accommodation will now join other members of the Geopark's Business Sustainability Network.

This programme was funded by Cavan County Council and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council with support from Fáilte Ireland and Tourism NI.



Geopark Visits

We are always delighted to welcome visitors to Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark to share our ongoing work in conservation, education and community engagement as well as showcase new and emerging tourism activities.

In May we welcomed Landscapes NI for their regional meeting. Representatives from organisations across NI with a responsibility for protecting landscape management, alongside colleagues from DAERA, Tourism NI and National Lottery Heritage Fund were in attendance. A knowledge sharing session was held in the Larganess Centre, followed by visits to Cavan Burren Park and Lough Navar Forest.

We also welcomed an international media group to the Geopark. The media group of top travel and outdoor publications were here as guests of Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to experience the outdoor activities on offer. The group enjoyed a Geopark Safari of the Cuilcagh Boardwalk Trail, a candlelight tour of the Marble Arch Caves, exploration of Lough Erne on board the Island Discovery as well as land and water-based activities with Blue Green Yonder.

Most recently, we welcomed Julia and David from Nannup Aspiring Geopark located in Australia. As an aspiring Geopark, they were interested to gain insights to the Geopark from governance structures, staffing and funding mechanisms to Geosites, Geopark Guides, community and business engagement programmes. It was a pleasure to showcase the Marble Arch Caves and Cavan Burren Park and to learn about their area.

We look forward to welcoming them back again as well as new visitors to the area.



Scarplands Cycle Trail



Copyright: Corralea Activity Centre

Did you know that we launched the longest coarse gravel cycle trail on the island of Ireland?

The Scarplands Cycle Trail, Co Fermanagh which starts in the village of Belcoo and ends at Lough Navar Forest with the reward of unrivalled panoramic views of Lough Erne, leads you on a 60km linear route. There are a further two shorter looped cycles to enjoy giving 100km

of trail in total! The trail is a must for biking enthusiasts!

To enjoy the trail, check out [Corralea Activity Centre](#) who offer E-bike hire and guided E-Bike tours. Why not try something different this summer that's right on your door step!

For more information on the Scarplands Cycle Trail, please visit our website: [here](#).

International Bog Day

Peatlands have been in our landscape since the end of the last glaciation, approx. 15,000 years ago, forming one of our oldest surviving ecosystems. Our peatlands hover between land and water, providing unusual habitats for unique flora and fauna, and provide us with a range of benefits, i.e. water quality, carbon storage, protect our archaeological heritage and inspire our culture.

In 1998, Fermanagh District Council, in partnership with landowners and the RSPB established Cuilcagh Mountain Park, with the aim to protect areas of blanket bog, restore damaged areas and make more people aware of the value of bogs. Over 8km of open drains were blocked, using materials to help raise the water levels and encourage peat growth.

Conservation is still at our core, having being involved in the Ulster Wildlife led, CANN Project, which aimed to improve the condition of protected habitats, support priority species and raise awareness of the importance of peatlands within Cuilcagh Mountain and Cuilcagh - Anierin SAC.

The Geopark is now one of 10 partners in a £20m, PEACE Plus application, with a proposed budget of £1.3m, aiming to undertake peatland restoration within Lough Navar Forest, Cuilcagh Mountain and Cuilcagh - Anierin SAC, monitoring, evaluating, and wider stakeholder engagement.

As we celebrate International Bog Day we reminisce on what Dr David Bellamy (1986) once said “What can you do with 1.2 million hectares of land which is covered in some 2 million tonnes of organic matter which holds within its fibrous matrix the

history of a nation. You can either regard it as an insurmountable problem and leave well alone while grumbling about your misfortune or look upon it as a vast natural resource and lay plans for its conservation and development”.



What's On?

Heritage Week

These events are delivered with the financial support of Geological Survey Ireland

Children's Bushcraft

Saturday 17 August
10am-12 noon

Join Geopark Ambassador, Stephen at Cavan Burren Park to sample life in the great outdoors and connect with your inner Bear Grylls. Learn all about shelter-building, and cooking outside during our two-hour Introduction to Bushcraft session.

St Mogue's Island Guided Tour

Sunday 18 August
12pm-3pm

Join Geopark Ambassador and local history expert, Aidan for a boat trip to the historic St Mogue's Island. Learn about the fascinating history of the area, the story of St Mogue and take in some stunning views.

Cursing's And Blessings – St Brigid's Stones

Sunday 18 August
2pm-3.30pm

Join Geopark Ambassadors, Bee and Dani who will give a talk on the St Brigid connection to this region and escort the group to view the St Brigid Cursing and Blessing Stones.

Summer Scheme

Monday 19 - Friday 23 August

9.30am-2pm

Join Geopark staff and ambassadors for 5 days of activities including biking, caving, bug hunts, fossil making, archery and a visit to Cavan Adventure Centre's water park.

From Fleece to Fabric - The Story of Wool

Friday 23 August
1pm-4pm

Come along to Dowra Courthouse to see the story of wool from fleece to fabric with Geopark Ambassadors, Bee, Morag, and Dani. See demonstrations of carding, dyeing, spinning and weaving and why not have a go yourself! Hear stories of St Brigid, Patron Saint of sheep and cattle farmers, weavers and makers. See how you can elevate the value of this natural resource by transforming it into a thing of beauty.

For more information, booking, and a full list of our events please visit our website: [here](#).