

GEOPARKS IRELAND COMMITTEE

Strategic objective

Geoparks are areas of significant geological heritage that represents the basis for sustainable tourism. Both European and Global Geoparks designations are supported by UNESCO.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) and the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI) wish to contribute to the future development of Geoparks as a major tourism resource in Ireland and Northern Ireland. To this end, they have jointly established the 'Geoparks Ireland Committee' as an all-island committee which will apply the highest standards of geoscience in assisting stakeholders to build the Geoparks brand throughout the island of Ireland.

Objectives

The purpose of Geoparks Ireland Committee is to:

- facilitate the development of Geoparks throughout the island of Ireland, including collaborative Cross-Border ventures;
- provide impartial validation of the scientific merit of landscape-based geoheritage;
- guide and support applicants for European/Global Geoparks status;
- provide a framework for promoting and advertising Geoparks in Ireland;
- convene an annual 'Geoparks Ireland Forum' to inform and guide stakeholders and provide networking opportunities;

Benefits

- Geoparks will be promoted by the Committee to the general public as a brand of quality and interest ;
- Applicants will receive guidance and advice, thereby saving them time and money in their application process;
- The annual Geoparks Ireland Forum will facilitate the sharing of experience and knowledge;
- UNESCO will benefit from promotion of Geoparks throughout the island of Ireland, based on the scientific integrity and professionalism of the two geological surveys;
- The European Geoparks Network (EGN) will benefit because the Committee's guidance will ensure the quality of applications;
- The quality of geological heritage in applicant areas will be evaluated impartially and this will reassure stakeholders.

Terms of Reference

The Committee will:

- operate as an all-island body;
- meet regularly to advance its objectives;
- be chaired by nominees of the geological surveys on an alternating annual basis;
- organise the Geoparks Ireland Forum;
- maintain contact with the national UNESCO Commissions in the respective jurisdictions and facilitate endorsement for those Geoparks wishing to submit membership applications;
- provide a mechanism for the selection of voting representatives at regular EGN meetings, in the event that the total number of European Geoparks on the island of Ireland exceeds six.

Geoparks Ireland Forum

- Membership is open to any body or group, including both community based and local authority organizations, seeking to develop or already operating a Geopark, and whether or not it is already designated as a European and/or Global Geopark.
- Stakeholders are likely to include existing and prospective Geoparks, local authorities, the Heritage Council, the Environment and Heritage Service, Tourism Ireland Ltd., universities and regional and local tourism bodies.

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