

**Geoparks Forum Ireland, 19th February 2008, GSI
Open Forum Discussion chaired by Garth Earls (GSNI)**

Questions arising during the discussion:

Brendan McSherry: How to use Geopark name if aspiring?

Patrick McKeever: Make clear that you are an aspiring Geopark, not part of the European Geoparks Network (EGN) yet. For example, the Magma Geopark in Norway are promoting themselves in that context, as an aspiring Geopark. The name “Geopark” is not registered as it couldn’t but the European Geoparks (EG) logo is. So to avoid confusion, all in communication, please indicate that you are working towards becoming EG.

Niall Cussen: Geoparks involve communities into sustainable tourism. Aspiring Geoparks are coming from different background. Is there any existing assistance available, any tool kit to help aspiring to become EG?

Patrick McKeever: The EGN is a young initiative, compared to World Heritage Site (WHS) process. There is no real tool kit, but it is greatly recommended instead to come to the EGN annual conference and visit existing EG.

Catherine Evans: It is very much a personal approach.

Helen Noble: How do you register an interest in becoming in EG?

Patrick McKeever: There is no need to “register” like for WHS designation. Simply contact myself or Nickolas Zouros, and come to the EGN annual conference and give presentation about your aspiring Geopark to let yourself become known to the rest of the network.

Garth Earls: Ireland has a reputation in the topic, with GSI/GSNI collaboration to facilitate collaborative cross-border initiatives with scientific merit. GSI/GSNI would guide and support Groups seeking EGN status and is providing a framework through this Forum. Please see related document “Geoparks Ireland Committee” for further details.

Siobhan Ryan: Regarding the definition of a Geopark, how do you validate the international significance of the geological heritage?

Patrick McKeever: A report from the national Geological Survey can validate the value of the geological heritage along with reports from university collaborators and/or national/international designations (e.g. NHAs...).

Matthew Parkes: Could the position of EGN on the issue of selling geological materials in Geoparks be more in line with reality, rock shops contents (crushed material for phosphate, resources for Morocco...). Where do you draw the line, providing guidance for ethically-sourced material?

Garth Earls: This is long ongoing discussion.

Patrick McKeever with IUCN are proposing a paper at the moment. The EGN and the Global Geoparks Network are fundamentally against selling of ornamental

geological material (e.g. from Morocco, Brazil) as it is the philosophy and code of ethics of both networks.

Martin Carey: What about quarries within the Geopark territory boundaries?

Patrick McKeever: Quarries are ok because they are regulated.

Carol Gleeson: Aillwee caves in the Burren are one case of selling geological material, which could undermine the application but it is a significant tourism centre at the same time.

Richard Watson: The discussion has to be held in the Burren as most of the people in the area are in favour of the application.

Comments:

Richard Watson: There are 5 Geoparks in Germany, which all together reflect the geology of West Germany. It becomes necessary to focus on a strategic number of Geoparks in Ireland, which would reflect the national geology or any given theme. Ireland can't support 20 Geoparks on the island.

Garth Earls: The forum is here to provide a mechanism. See "Geoparks Ireland Committee" document. Once we have more than 6 designated Geoparks in Ireland, only 1 will go to the EGN coordination meetings on behalf and to represent the Irish network. The Irish Forum is facilitated by GSI and GSNI, acting independently. The 1st meeting of the committee took place in the morning. What about future Forum meetings? Location? Frequency? Rotation between Belfast and Dublin, other in existing/aspiring Geoparks?

Richard Watson: There isn't any similar initiative anywhere in Europe, except maybe in Germany.

Robert Gibson: The meeting was interesting and it will facilitate exchange in the future to see what's done in other Geoparks.

Garth Earls, asking for general feeling to organise next year's meeting in one of the Geopark with fieldtrips.

Richard Watson offered, on behalf of Marble Arch Caves European Geopark to organise the next meeting, either close to European Geoparks Week (end May-beginning June), or closer could be Autumn/October 2008. Participants will be kept posted.

The discussion ended at 6pm.

Further information:

European Geoparks Network: www.europeangeoparks.org

Nickolas Zouros

Applied Geomorphology and Environmental Geology Lab.

Department of Geography

University of the Aegean

GR-81100 Mytilene, Greece

Tel. +30-2251036431

E-mail: nzour@aegean.gr

Patrick McKeever

Geological Survey of Northern Ireland

Colby House,

Stranmillis Court,

Belfast, BT9 5BF

E-mail: patrick.mckeever@detini.gov.uk