

The Burren Connect Project

County Clare, 10th December 2007

The Burren Connect Project and Burrenbeo have launched an education programme aimed at opening up the Burren Region's vast and varied heritage to primary school students.

The Eco-Beo education programme will be delivered between January and June 2008 to eight national schools in North Clare and South Galway, offering over 200 primary school students and their teachers a unique insight into the Burren's world famous karst landscape.

The primary schools participating in the 2008 programme are Kinvara N.S., Kilnaboy N.S., New Quay N.S., Corofin N.S., Kilfenora N.S., Doorus N.S., Kilshanny N.S. and Tubber N.S. The Burren Connect Project is presently seeking additional funding to extend the course to other Burren schools in 2008 and 2009.

The launch of the Programme took place last evening at The Michael Cusack Centre in Carron, where course tutors, sponsors and participating teachers came together to finalise details. It was announced that over the 10-week duration of the course, participants would learn about various aspects of the Burren – its animals, plants, monuments, landscape and culture - through a series of colourful classroom presentations. This will be followed by weekly quizzes, e-newsletters and assignments.

Professional course tutors, all of whom are experts in their individual areas, will deliver each module. Students will be taken on a Burren field trip, where they will have the opportunity to put their newfound knowledge to the test.

Eimer McCarthy of the Burren Connect Project said that the theme of the Eco-Beo education programme would be 'My Burren Heritage'.

"The aim of the Eco-Beo education programme is to increase awareness and appreciation of the heritage of the Burren among the children who live in this special place. We aim to achieve this by delivering a hands-on, fun learning experience for all involved. We would like to be able to run the programme in more schools next year and the year after, with a view to making this an annual programme for all primary schools in the Burren. This education model could even be rolled out to the entire county and beyond, if funding and resources were made available," stated Eimer McCarthy.

The Eco-Beo concept was originally developed by Burrenbeo, which rolled out the Programme to six Burren schools in 2004.

According to Ann O'Connor of Burrenbeo, *"Through educating the young people, the future custodians of the Burren, the programme aims to instil among the children a sense of informed pride, ownership and responsibility for their heritage, as well as producing a fresh and fascinating insight into the region. We want this course to be the best Heritage Education Programme of its kind ever rolled out in Ireland, as befits a place as special as the Burren."*

The Burren Connect Project, formerly known as the *'Environmental Protection of the Burren through Visitor Management Initiative'*, is funded by the Fáilte Ireland Development Fund, Clare County Council, Shannon Development, National Parks and Wildlife Service and Burrenbeo (a Not for Profit Organisation), and is working to link communities, environment and tourism to conserve the Burren.

Carol Gleeson, Project Manager, explained, *"The key aim of the project is to ensure the sustainable use of the Burren as a tourism destination, through a co-ordinated approach to visitor management and environmental protection."*

"One way to achieve this aim is to provide information on the Burren environment in a variety of ways, including the development of education and training programmes. We are working closely with Burrenbeo, one of our project partners, on the provision of high quality information for children, service providers and visitors to the area", she continued.

The Burren Connect Project is presently progressing a number of other initiatives, including a series of traffic management plans, and driving, cycling and walking routes. The Project is implementing conservation programmes at Poul nabrone Dolmen and Fanore beach, as well as exploring the potential for the development of eco-tourism in the Burren. Meanwhile, a dedicated website reflecting the ongoing progress of the Project will be launched in early 2008.

For further information or comments on the Burren Connect Project or the Eco-Beo Primary Schools Burren Education Programme please contact

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