

# Global Geoparks in Ireland

*Global Geoparks are listed in order of acceptance into the Global Geoparks Network*

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# Copper Coast Global Geopark, Ireland

**Geology:** The Global Geopark is underlain by a mid-Ordovician (c. 460-455 Ma) generally submarine volcanic arc sequence which extended along the south-eastern flank of the Iapetus Ocean. A fossil rich siltstone/limestone (c. 462-457Ma) marks a hiatus above which the sequence is dominated by felsic volcanic rocks, with intrusive equivalents interspersed with shales, some graptolitic. Spectacular columnar jointed rhyolite is well exposed at one locality. Semi-arid fluvial sediments (c. 370-360Ma), now reddish brown coloured conglomerates, sandstones, siltstones and shales, rest with marked unconformity on the Ordovician. An enormous gap in geological time separates these sequences from those next exposed, unconsolidated tills, boulder clays and outwash sands and gravels of the Quaternary period (Pleistocene epoch) all deposited with very profound unconformity on the Ordovician and Devonian sequences. Veins containing silver were mined in the 1750's and in the 1800's the area was home to one of the largest copper mines in the world.

**Geography:** The Global Geopark consists of an E-W coastal area (91.4 km<sup>2</sup>) of County Waterford southern Ireland. It comprises six villages (Dunhill, Annestown, Boatstrand, Kill, Bunmahon and Stradbally) which largely define its boundaries. To the north lie the Comeragh Mountains which reach a height of 750 m. The area is a relatively flat lying glacial outwash plain, much covered by glacial till and bog, with occasional spectacular erratics. Three roughly N-S rivers dissect the Global Geopark and display excellent examples of glacial erosion and deposition (an excellent walk follows the Ann river starting at Annestown). The coast is spectacular with numerous sandy and rocky coves displaying sea stacks, arches and blow holes. The population within the Geopark is approximately 5000 (2011).

**Education and Sustainable Development:** At Primary level we focus on a fun, interactive, discovery learning style while activities at Secondary school level utilise the Global Geopark as an outdoor laboratory and are closely tied to the curriculum, but also fun! For local schools we aim to build pride in our community. We work with universities (undergraduate and postgraduate) and with adult education centres covering a wide range of subjects including local geology, archaeology and architecture. Our Geological garden (a walk through time) serves to explain key events in the earth's history (flora and fauna evolution, climate change, plate tectonics etc.), and is a popular picnic spot. We use kite aerial photography, geophysical surveys and seismometers to make learning exciting. Our new Geopark Centre allows for hands-on learning as well as specialist talks and demonstrations. Trained guides offer a variety of tours and courses making use of outreach centres such as Tankardstown mine complex, Fenor Bog and Dunhill Castle.

## Dates

Year of EGN membership entry: 2001

Year of GGN membership entry: 2004

Subsequent revalidation: 2019

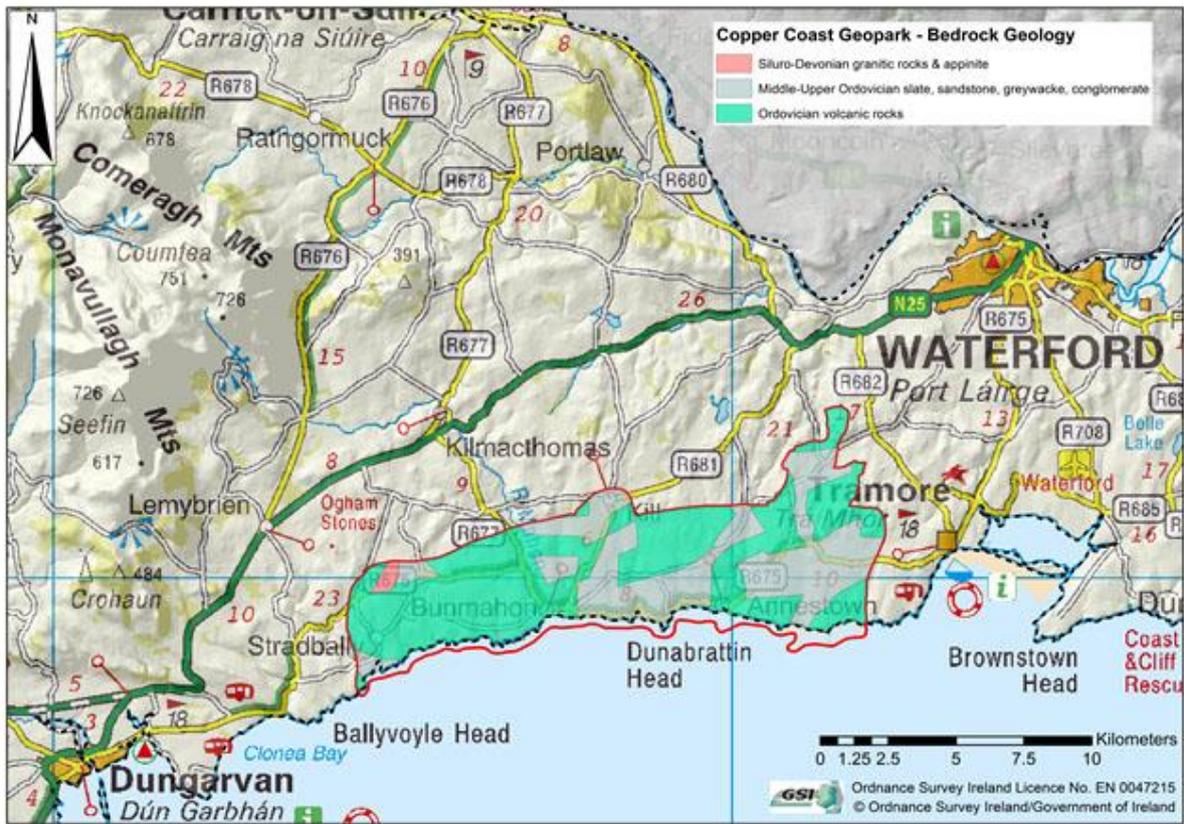
## Official Website

[www.Coppercoastgeopark.com](http://www.Coppercoastgeopark.com)

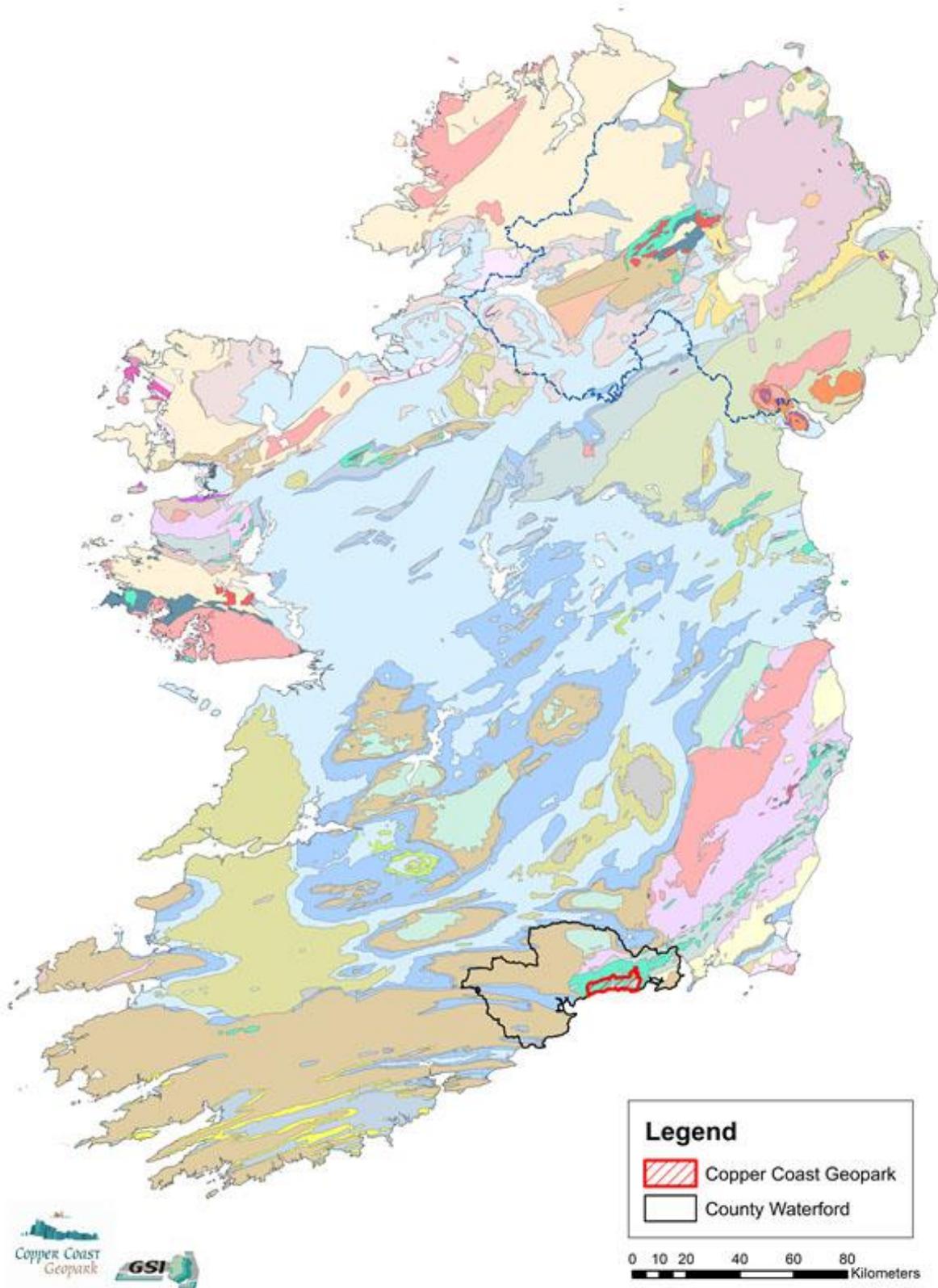
## Contact

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Map of Copper Coast Global Geopark



Map of Ireland and Northern Ireland showing location and size of Copper Coast Global Geopark



# Burren & Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark, Ireland

**Geology:** The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark is formed of Carboniferous limestones sandstones and shale. They form a near continuous sequence from the lower Carboniferous (Holkieran) Tubber Formation to the upper Carboniferous (Bashkirian) Central Clare Group. The limestones were formed in warm shallow water conditions on a carbonate shelf close to the equator. Fossil brachiopods, corals and crinoids are abundant. The limestones contain abundant caves including one of the longest free hanging stalactites in the world open to the public and are extensively karstified. The extensive limestone pavement is considered to be one of the best of its kind globally. The limestone is overlain by deep water shales and prograding cyclical deltaic deposits. Slumped units with sand volcanoes, turbidites and channel deposits are common. Typical fossils are goniatites, bivalves, and plant material. The sequence is part of some of the finest coastal exposures of ancient deltaic sedimentation in the world.

**Geography:** Located on the west coast of Ireland, the Global Geopark has an area of 530 km<sup>2</sup>, it is bounded by Atlantic coastal cliffs (10-200 m high) to the west, the Gort lowlands to the East and by low hilly terrain to the south. Much of the land is at an elevation of 100 m-200 m above sea-level; the highest point is Slieve Elva at 344 m. Average rainfall is 1200 mm per year. The Global Geopark is only one hour drive from Shannon International airport and the cities of Limerick and Galway. The area of limestone which comprises most of the Global Geopark has few rivers and only one (Caher River) which flows its entire length over ground. Farming (beef and dairy) and tourism are the main industries with the Cliffs of Moher Experience attracting over 1 million people in 2014. Population density is low and dispersed through villages and towns such as Doolin, Corrofin, Ballyvaughan, Lisdoonvarna and Kilfenora.

**Education and Sustainable Development:** The Global Geopark runs collaborative education programs with local businesses including an annual 'Introduction to the geology of the Burren' course, an international field geology school, and Young Scientist and Eco Environmentalism projects. We also support geology, groundwater and litter educational programs in national schools. The Global Geopark has supported the development of a network of over 60 tourism business in the area (the Burren Ecotourism Network) which is dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism. Members sign up to the Global Geopark Code of Practice in Sustainable Tourism and in return the Global Geopark provides training and marketing and co-ordinates group products such as Food and Activity trails. The Global Geopark is currently managing an EU LIFE project (GeoparkLIFE) on balancing tourism and conservation in the Burren. This project involves working with national tourism and conservation agencies, local farmers and tourism businesses to minimize environmental impacts and maximize the social and economic benefits of tourism in the Burren.

## Dates

Year of GGN membership entry: 2011

Subsequent Revalidation: 2019

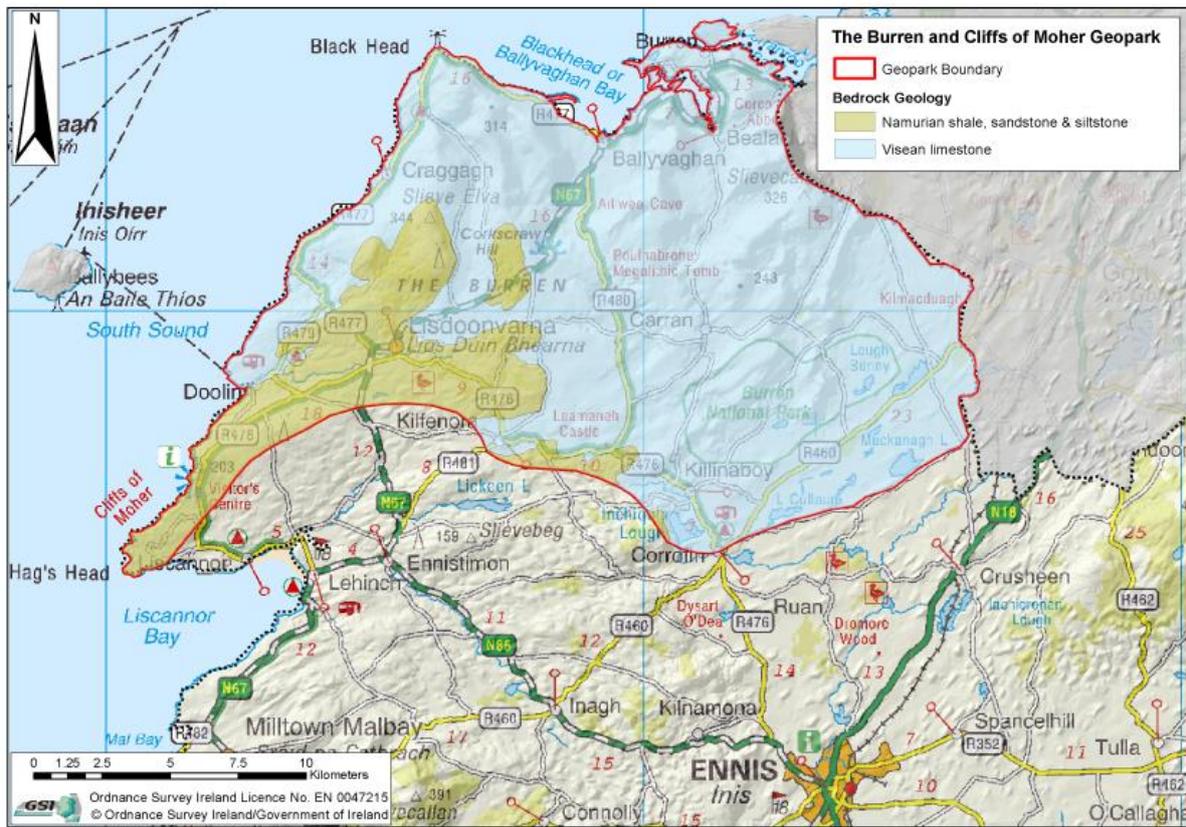
## Official Website

[www.burrengeopark.ie](http://www.burrengeopark.ie)

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### Map of Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark



Map of Ireland and Northern Ireland showing location and size of Burren and Cliffs of Moher Global Geopark

