



TENTATIVE LIST SUBMISSION FORMAT



STATE PARTY: Ireland

Submission prepared by:

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Name: Brian Lucas

E-mail: brian.lucas@environ.ie

Address: Built Heritage and Architectural
Policy Section,
Department of the Environment, Heritage &
Local Government,
Newtown Road, Wexford

Fax: 053 9117603

Telephone: 053 91 17500

NAME OF PROPERTY: The Burren

State, Province or Region: Mid-West Region, Co. Clare and Co. Galway

53° 03' 07.81" North, 9° 03' 42.97" West

DESCRIPTION:

The Burren is located along the west coast of Ireland, encompassing the North of County Clare and the south east of County Galway. The Burren – from the Gaelic Boireann meaning ‘place of stone’ - is defined by the presence of exposed limestone which extends over an area of approx. 72,000ha.

The Burren is an excellent example of a glaciated karst landscape displaying all the classic karst features such as bare pavements, cave systems, turloughs, dry valleys, sinkholes, dolines, poljes and micro-solutional features known as karren. Ecologically it is very rich, containing over 70% of Ireland’s native flora, including unusual combinations of Arctic, Alpine and Mediterranean species. The Burren contains over 2,700 recorded monuments and has been described as ‘one vast memorial to bygone cultures’. It also supports a very rich living tradition of music and folklore.

The Burren is very much a cultural landscape. The karst topography elicited a distinctive cultural response from its people, as seen in the extensive winter-based pastoral systems that prevail to this day and which contribute directly to the rich natural and cultural heritage of the region. It is therefore an excellent example of the ongoing creative utilization of natural resources by an agricultural society over six thousand years, and reflects the combined works of nature and of man.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value:

(Preliminary identification of the values of the property which merit inscription on the World Heritage List)

The Burren region is an outstanding example of the continuous settlement and use of a very challenging environment – this glaciated karst landscape of the Burren - for over 6,000 years. Over this time humans have interacted with this unique environment, primarily as pastoral farmers, to yield a rich legacy of natural and cultural heritage. The fruits of this relationship include an exceptionally diverse, representative and intact archaeological record, a celebrated flora with some intriguing floristic combinations, and a set of distinctive land-management traditions, particularly the reverse-transhumance winterage tradition.

The Burren is also an excellent example of a landscape which represents major stages of earth's history. It includes a rich record of life in its fossil-rich Carboniferous limestone beds, and demonstrates significant geological processes such as glaciation and solution in the development of landforms and significant geomorphic or physiographic features such as expansive lowland limestone pavements, turloughs and other karst and karren features. Furthermore, the Burren is a very dynamic, youthful landscape, still actively evolving. Six thousand years of human settlement and ongoing management have ensured that this geological record remains highly visible and accessible.

Criteria met [see Paragraph 77 of the *Operational Guidelines*]:

(Please tick the box corresponding to the proposed criteria and justify the use of each below)

Criterion (v): *The Site should be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;*

The Burren is very much a cultural landscape. The karst topography with its light, free-draining soils elicited a distinctive cultural response in terms of the extensive winter-based pastoral systems that prevail to this day. The value of the Burren as an out-wintering resource contributed to its attraction for ongoing human settlement, reflected in the huge diversity of monuments from all periods, while the low-impact pastoral farming practices have helped preserve the archaeological record. Low-input winter grazing has been shown to be key to the presence of the Burren's rich biological diversity, and is one of a number of distinct cultural traditions maintained in the area. Therefore the Burren can and should be viewed as an excellent example of the ongoing creative utilization of natural resources by an agricultural society over six thousand years, and represents the combined works of nature and of man.

Criterion (viii): *The site should be an outstanding example representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant ongoing geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.*

A very significant attribute of the physical landscape of the Burren is the limestone geology, which has been shaped by a range of tectonic, glacial, solutional and cultural forces, resulting in what is an internationally important example of a glaciokarst landscape. The Burren (from the Gaelic word Boireann, meaning rocky place) contains an exemplary array of 'karst' features, including bare pavements, subterranean water systems, turloughs, dry valleys, sinkholes, dolines, poljes and micro-solutional features such as karren. The Burren is thought to have the most extensive cave systems in Ireland, with over 90 km of navigable caves. Probably the most widely celebrated aspect of the Burren's diverse heritage is its ecology. Over 70% of Ireland's native flora occur within the Burren, including 24 of 28 native orchid species and unusual combinations of Arctic, Alpine and Mediterranean species. Of the 23 habitats from the Habitats Directive found in the Burren, eight are listed as 'priority habitats'. The Burren contains Ireland's most significant expanses of limestone pavements, turloughs and orchid-rich calcareous grasslands. The fauna of the Burren is also very rich, including 28 of Ireland's 30 native butterfly species, over 70 species of land snail and a number

of rare species such as the Burren green moth (*Calamia trideus*).

Statements of authenticity and/or integrity [see Paragraphs 78-95 of the *Operational Guidelines*]:

Authenticity:

The Burren has had continuous human settlement for over 6,000 years, thus form and design having evolved in response to various cultural and environmental influences. While the area maintains a strong continuity with the past through the ongoing presence of many historical monuments, it is also the home of a living farming system of great antiquity, supported by cultural traditions that have deep roots.

Integrity:

The Burren as defined represents an intact, contiguous cultural landscape unit of major significance, displaying nearly all the region's main attributes, natural and cultural, and of the processes which sustain it. This area represents a very intact and distinct cultural landscape. It contains all the significant geological features and processes, which are synonymous with a karstic environment (caves, enclosed depressions, dry valleys, turloughs, swallow holes, karst springs, pavements, epikarst). The physical integrity of the built heritage of the nominated Site is safeguarded through a broad range of existing protective measures under central and local government legislation and planning policies. The integrity of the natural heritage is protected by the highest national and international nature conservation designations, including the presence of three large Special Areas of Conservation established under EU legislation. Additional measures to protect the area will be considered if the detailed working up of the nomination document and management plan suggest that this is necessary.

Comparison with other similar properties:

(The comparison should outline similarities with other properties on the World Heritage List or not, and the reasons that make the property stand out)

The significant karstic sites that are present in the Burren are concentrated in a much smaller area than is commonly found in karst sites on the WH List.

Tasmanian Wilderness, Australia:

Remains found in limestone caves attest to 20,000 years of human occupation. Cool temperate to alpine rainforest. Much of the area was glaciated in the Pleistocene. High geodiversity and biodiversity.

The principal Differences to Burren:

- The Tasmanian site is mainly forest
- The Burren exists in a cool temperate oceanic climate
- The strong past and present human interaction with the geology of the Burren.
- The Burren has extensive areas of highly developed lowland karst.

Pirin National Park, Bulgaria:

A limestone Balkan landscape, with lakes, waterfalls, caves and pine forests. Humid continental Mediterranean climate becoming alpine in the highlands.

Principal Differences to Burren:

- The Burren exists in a cool temperate oceanic climate

- The Burren is not afforested

Nahanni National Park, Canada:

Contains deep canyons and huge waterfalls as well as unique cave system. Cold continental climate.

Principal Differences to Burren:

- The Burren exists in a cool temperate oceanic climate
- The significant karstic sites that are present in the Burren are concentrated in a much smaller area than is commonly found in karst sites on the WH List.

Southern Oland, Sweden:

Principal Differences to Burren:

- Oland is a medieval landscape with its distinction between in-fields and outlying land, which is very clearly defined. Together with the in-fields and outlying land, the linear villages of Oland provide a unique testimony regarding medieval land division.
- Oland is a very flat landscape with Cambrian Sandstone and Ordovician limestone bedrock, while the Burren reaches to 300m and is of carboniferous limestone with species rich alvar type grassland vegetation.
- Oland experiences a dry climate and has been subjected to traditional grazing practices unique to Sweden and does not have winter grazing traditions as does the Burren.
- Oland does not have the extensive cave systems or the variety of arctic and alpine plants found in the Burren.

- The Tentative List submission format is available from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- Further guidance on the preparation of Tentative Lists can be found in Paragraphs 62-67 of the *Operational Guidelines*.
- An example of a completed Tentative List submission format can be found at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- All Tentative Lists submitted by States Parties are available at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>
- The original signed version of the completed Tentative List submission format should be sent in English or French to: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France
- States Parties are encouraged to also submit this information in electronic format (diskette or CD-Rom) or by e-mail to wh-tentativelists@unesco.org