

UNESCO Global Geopark

Harnessing Geotourism

Contrary to what might be thought, 'geopark' is not short for 'geological park'.

'Geo' comes from the Greek word for earth. A UNESCO Global Geopark is about all the aspects of an area's heritage – landscape, wildlife, history, archaeology, the built environment, myth and culture and so on.

UNESCO Global Geoparks promote sites of international geological value and are the basis of local sustainable development. These international treasures rely on the dedication of their local champions who work hard to maintain and promote them and make the most of the educational and economic opportunities they offer. The district of Newry, Mourne and Down and its hinterland is getting ready to harness its untapped tourism potential and apply for UNESCO Global Geopark status.

Within Newry, Mourne and Down, the boundary will take in the scenic beauty of Strangford Lough and Lecale, Ring of Gullion and the Mourne Mountains. There is also potential to expand the designated area in the future. All the proposed sites have public access already in place.

Is a UNESCO Global Geopark only about geology?

While a UNESCO Global Geopark must demonstrate geological heritage of international significance, the purpose of a UNESCO Global Geopark is to explore, develop and celebrate the links between that geological heritage and all other aspects of the area's natural, cultural and intangible heritage.



At present there are

127

UNESCO Global Geoparks in

35
countries



Is there any legal status attached to the label UNESCO Global Geopark?

“UNESCO Global Geopark” is not a legislative designation – though the defining geological heritage sites within a UNESCO Global Geopark must be protected under existing indigenous, local, regional or national legislation as appropriate.

UNESCO Global Geopark status does not imply restrictions on any economic activity including planning, development and farming practices.

Is it a case of once a UNESCO Global Geopark, always a UNESCO Global Geopark?

A UNESCO Global Geopark is given this accreditation for a period of four years after which the functioning and quality of each UNESCO Global Geopark is thoroughly re-examined during a revalidation process.

Why set up a UNESCO Global Geopark here?

The area has an outstanding geological heritage as well as a number of organisations, communities and individuals who wish to make the most of this asset.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

‘Geotourism’ – what does this mean?

Geotourism is landscape-based tourism that sustains or enhances the natural character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.

Geotourism builds on a destination’s ‘sense of place’, to emphasise the distinctiveness of its locale and benefit visitors and residents alike.

How will the UNESCO Global Geopark benefit the local area?

- Fosters community involvement as local businesses and individuals join forces to provide a distinctive, authentic visitor experience.
- Enhances local pride as residents celebrate the things about their locale and share this with visitors.
- Improves the local economy since businesses in the tourism industry hire local workers, and use local services, products, and supplies.
- Creates respect for local culture and tradition.

What next?

The programme of work towards developing a functioning UNESCO Global Geopark has been initiated with a plan to submit a successful bid to UNESCO by November 2019.

If you have any questions please contact the project team via email geopark@nmandd.org

