



**Uimhir Thagarta Uathúil:** WFD-C2-58

**Údar:** Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark

**Stádas:** Submitted

**Submission:** Copper Coast Geopark

**Comhairliúchán:**

Draft Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022 - 2028

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## Chapter 10: Landscape, Coast/ Marine and Blue Green Infrastructure

**Caibidil:** Volume 1 » Part 3: City and County Policy Objectives » Chapter 10: Landscape, Coast/ Marine and Blue Gre...

The Copper Coast is a UNESCO Global Geopark. There are 169 Global Geoparks in the world in 44 countries. The Copper Coast is one of the longest standing Geoparks. It gives Co Waterford a UNESCO site of the same standing as a UNESCO World Heritage site; The Geopark designated having been established more recently but much more proactive with ongoing community engagement, multi-heritage involvement and tourism facilitation.

Every year, the value of the Geopark designation, whether measured in terms of organic press mentions, increased visitor numbers, sense of place, number of events run directly, educational and awareness raising activities, or simply through enhanced status delivers a several fold return for any public money invested.

While the Copper Coast Geopark welcomes continued recognition from the Council, to maintain this internationally recognised status and leverage further benefit from the designation, the level of financial support provided, which has been unchanged since at least 2011, needs to increase.

Ultimately, as more countries and areas attempt to gain it, the status of UNESCO Global Geopark is becoming harder to maintain and, if lost, almost impossible to regain. As the Geopark is run by a private, non-profit (registered charity), company with increasing responsibilities and a mostly fixed income, this status may soon be endangered due to lack of funding. While our visibility and role within the community, in Waterford and nationally, increases, our organisation has only one year round, mostly part time, member of staff (funded by the GSI). Otherwise, we have relied thus far on sourcing funding from EU funding on a project by project basis. However with human resources strained post COVID-19, our capacity to find and rely on project based funding has dramatically diminished.

These issues are compounded by the significantly increased costs of maintaining a visitor centre (the cost of insuring which alone has increased by 300% in recent years). As it stands, the Geopark will have difficulty covering the present cost of maintaining the designation, running a visitor and preserving mining heritage sites in the medium term.

If the Council wishes to maintain the UNESCO status of the Copper Coast and leverage the vast potential for a sustainable tourism destination held within it, further financial support is required. The Copper Coast is the only Geopark that we know (internationally) that exists entirely independently of its local authority from an organisational point of view.

We request that the Council at least consider matching the contribution made by the Geological Survey of Ireland and make this a policy objective. The return on investment for doing so would be immense compared to the cost of attempting to either restore the Copper Coast designation where it was lost or to fund an alternative project in the area.

We attach to this submission a number of recent reports which recommend increased support for the Geopark.

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**Attachments:**

WFD-C2-58-1141 - An Opportunity Study for the Copper Coast 2020-2024.pdf

WFD-C2-58-1142 - VEDP ONLINE FINAL\_compressed PDF.PDF

WFD-C2-58-1143 - Bunmahon Village Health Check.pdf