

# Mourne – Cooley - Gullion

## Releasing the Potential



# Partners – Development

- Mourne Heritage Trust
- Louth County Council
- Newry and Mourne DC
- Regeneration of South Armagh
- Geological Survey of Ireland
- Geological Survey of Northern Ireland



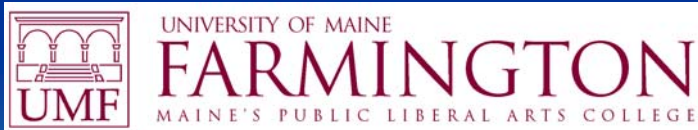
# Consultees

- Northern Ireland Tourist Board
- Dundalk Town Council
- Down District Council
- Banbridge District Council
- Loughs Agency
- Newry-Dundalk Joint Chambers of Commerce
- Heritage Council
- Armagh Down Tourism
- East Border Region
- ICLRD



# Acknowledgement

As well as those partners already mentioned Martin Carey would like to thank David Hood and colleagues in the Mourne Geology and Archaeology Group who contributed much of the material for this presentation



Trinity College  
Dublin



# Cooley-Mourne-Gullion – A Shared Heritage

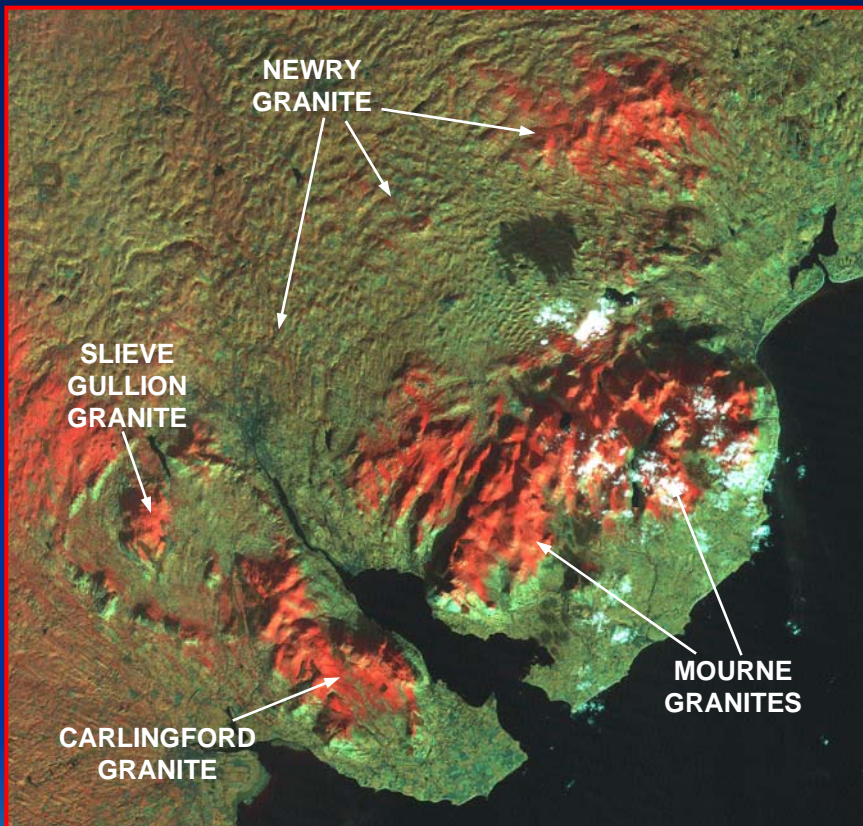
- Shared - and very significant – landscape, geology, biodiversity
- Ways of life and cultural heritage shaped by landscape
- Physical boundary presented by uplands has represented a border between north and south for centuries
- While physical barriers have long been overcome....  
...social, cultural, psychological, economic, borders remain

*Meanwhile our wonderful landscape and heritage is perhaps under-appreciated and not exploited as well as it might be*

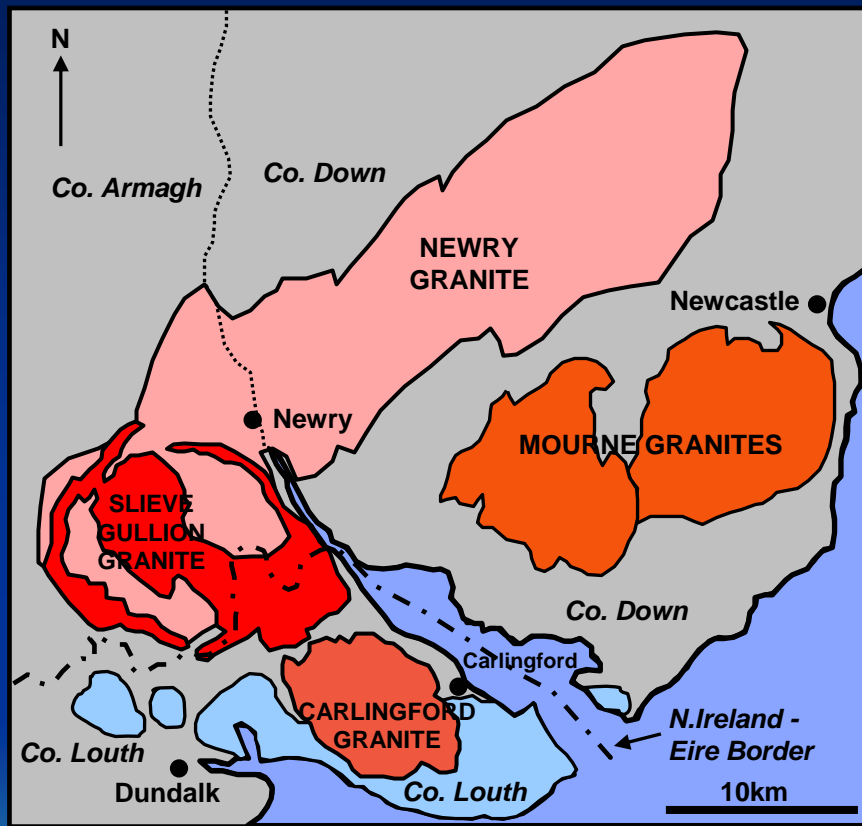


# A 'Rock Solid' Heritage

LANDSAT TM5 IMAGE



GRANITE MASSES



# Granites in North East Ireland

Newry – Slieve Croob



The Newry granite mass crystallised approx 425 million yrs ago in association with closure of an ancient ocean which separated Scotland and the north of Ireland from England, Wales and southern Ireland



Mournes

Long after the Newry granites, the five granites of the Mourne Mountains crystallised - a mere 56 million years ago!

# Granites in North East Ireland



**The granites in both these areas are finer-grained than those of Mourne and Newry.**

**They are of similar age to the Mournes, all these being closely associated in time with the opening of the NE Atlantic Ocean and the separation of Greenland and Europe.**

# Granite uses: Neolithic to recent

Newgrange - Co. Meath

3200 BC



Nendrum tidal mill, Co. Down

early 7<sup>th</sup>  
century AD



126 AD



Pantheon, Rome



1876 AD

Albert Memorial - London

# Potential - Environment and Society

- Central location - between Dublin and Belfast, hinterland of Newry/ Dundalk
- Population growth, right along the east coast of Ireland
- More & more people want to escape growing cities

Therefore Cooley-Gullion-Mourne (including Carlingford Lough)

- is extremely attractive for recreation, short-breaks.
- can be shared environmental, recreational, educational resource for the major urban conurbations



Kilnasaggart Stone

Slieve Gullion

# Potential - Environment and Economy

- Area also has the necessary attributes to re-direct tourists away from current honeypots
- .....and is ideally positioned as a focus for a flagship collaborative tourism project(s) between the respective authorities.
- **potential to attract visitors from overseas more effectively *than Cooley, Mourne or Gullion can do separately.***





E. Mourne – view towards the W. Mourne & Slieve Gullion

Simon Stewart

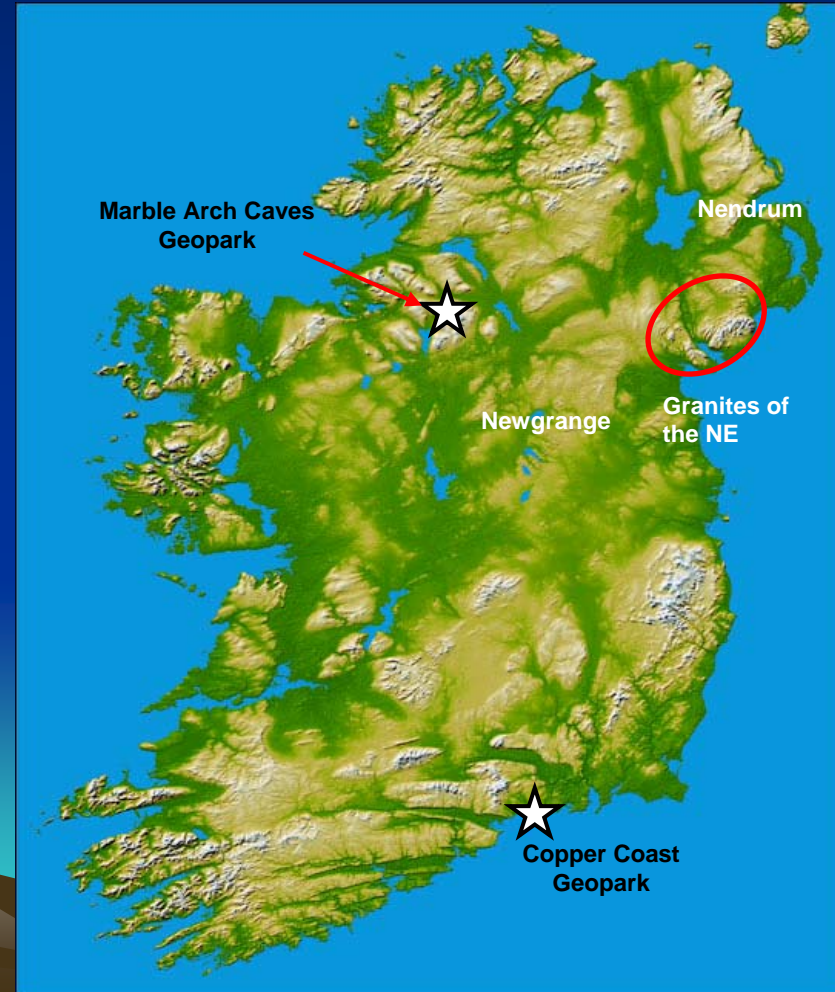
Mourne-Cooley-Gullion can be

- both a cross-border economic asset
- and contribute to peace building and enhancing co-operation on the island.

# What project, what designation, what brand might cover all three areas?

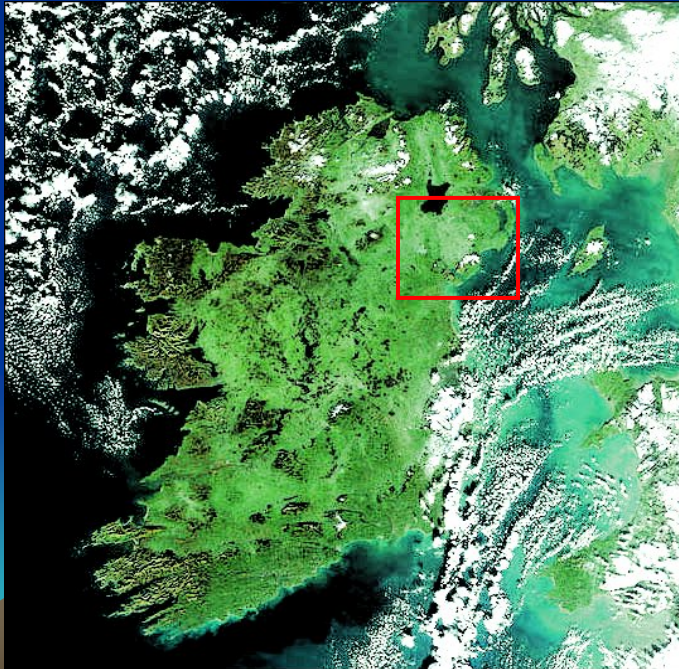
.....bearing in mind their location in different jurisdictions and with different designations and management regimes?

## A GEOPARK



# What is a European Geopark?

- A European Geopark is a region
  - with a geological heritage of European significance
  - with a sustainable development strategy
  - with a strong management structure to aid further development.



# EUROPEAN GEO PARKS NETWORK



# Why a Geopark?

- A GEOPARK is non-statutory
  - would not have any effect on planning etc.
- Would focus on fairly small, limited geological sites e.g. quarries, hillsides, dolmens
- Would allow us to develop a cross-border identity (“branding”) for the whole area
- We could promote the outstanding igneous geology of the area to students worldwide
- We could promote the wider, related qualities to tourists worldwide
- Would not affect, and could complement and enhance, other designations
  - E.g. AONB, National Park



# Practicalities (1)

Work under the project would include

- public education and consultation meetings
- development of a strategy,
- site identification, audit and management plan
- access infrastructure
  - access routes, parking, information, signage.
- interpretive strategy and materials
- market research, marketing strategy and targeted actions
  - branding, website, fairs, mailshots etc.



Newry



Mourne G2



Microgranite (Slieve Gullion or Carlingford)

# Practicalities (2)

- Costs – estimated at upwards of €2 million over 5 yrs
  - salaries and overheads,
  - production of website, interpretive and promotional materials
  - conferences/ workshops
  - investment in infrastructure
  - practical site management and conservation
- Application to Interreg IV planned
- Local Authority involvement essential
  - UNESCO will look for ongoing commitment
- Can build upon, and improve, existing services
  - E.g. Mourne Heritage Trust access and conservation work



# The South East Ulster Uplands

## – Celebrating an Ancient Border



# Ulster's Changing Borders

- 'The Border' and associated political situation has led to difficulties for Dundalk, Newry & hinterland (El Paso, Gundalk etc)
- Physical and political borders have left many traces:
  - Archaeological, sociological, economic
  - an important part of our heritage.



***Let's face up to and take advantage of this border situation and wealth of related heritage***

# 'Flagship' Border Gateway Centre

## Primary functions:

- Accessible stopping off/ services point on new section of Dublin - Belfast road
- Focal point, interpretation and orientation hub for landscape area of Cooley-Gullion-Mourne
- Significant visitor attraction in its own right

## Possible Secondary Functions:

- Signature, gateway piece of public art
- Cross Border Field Education Centre
- Sustainable transport hub for wider landscape area
- Innovative design showcasing latest environmental technologies

**Unifying factor for range of functions is the natural heritage of the region and all it represents.**



# Border Gateway Centre - Why?

- **Prime location**
  - on busiest intercity route on the Island
- **Gateway in physical and metaphorical sense**
  - celebrate progress
  - new era for area as prime cultural highway for the island
- **Capitalise on fascination with borders & transition**
- **Brand area as a shared 'outdoor' resource**
  - Dublin and Belfast conurbations, Newry and Dundalk.
- **Clear manifestation of North-South co-operation for economic, social and educational benefit**
  - particularly for all-Island tourism.



# *'The Gateway to Ulster'*

but now a place of welcome and information

- Having attracted people in to avail of services
  - 'sell' wider region to those who otherwise pass through
  - disperse visitors - information hub for immediate area
  - Encourage further exploration
    - Showcase NITB Signature Projects and Failte Ireland themes
- Currently no significant man-made 'visitor attractions'
  - Cooley-Gullion-Mourne Uplands a dispersed asset
    - lacking single focal point and/ or interpretive centre.
    - Proposal provides strategically placed, highly visible showcase.



# Making it Happen & Sustainability

- Detailed feasibility study
  - ongoing, continuing income for the centre from commercial activities
  - Jobs created
- Secure funding
- Acquire land
- Secure private sector investment
  - Shops & restaurants, possibly a hotel and conference centre

Carlingford Lough & Cooley Mountains



Slieve Gullion South Cairn





***Both projects have a genuine cross border focus, basing sustainable economic development on the shared and outstanding characteristics of a coherent landscape area that straddles the two jurisdictions***