



Ireland Scotland Bilateral Grant

Recipient name:	Dr Sophie Price
Amount and year awarded:	£12,466 in 2022
Title of project:	Exploring a regenerative tourism approach to rural community development in Scotland and Ireland

Summary of project:

Tourism has a considerable economic, social, cultural and environmental role in both Scotland and Ireland, contributing between 7-12% of employment, with a greater significance in rural areas. Yet these contributions have been overshadowed in recent years by negative environmental and social impacts. Regenerative tourism is an advanced circular economy model for the sector which symbolises a transition from a paradigm centred around economic value to one that recognises and strengthens relationships based on diverse values such as environmental ethics, social responsibility and engagement with nature (Becken and Kaur, 2021). A regenerative approach enables:

- A greater engagement and passion to be experienced by both guest and host.
- A commitment to stewarding the natural resources on which tourism depends.
- A closer match between what the community wants to share and what the visitor values.
- Greater involvement from across the community which leads to greater creativity, collaboration and resilience.

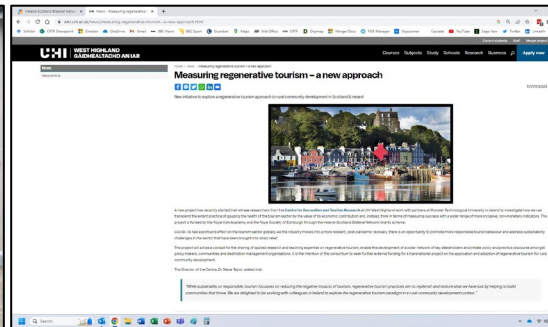
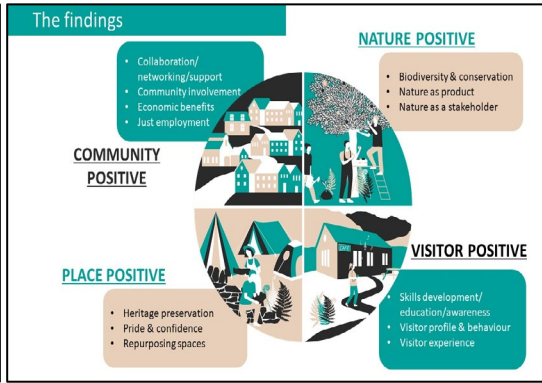
This model requires a fresh understanding that tourism is about more than money and that the visitor economy in general, and the destination, is not an industrial production line but a living network embedded in and dependent on an organic system called 'nature'. The two academic partners (Munster Technological University and University of the Highlands and Islands) used complementary research approaches, employing regenerative tourism constructs as a structure to collect qualitative data to inform the development of a framework by which to measure and align regenerative tourism practices, thus identifying gaps and opportunities for further regenerative rural development.

The aim of this project was to investigate how we can transcend the extant practice of gauging the health of the tourism sector by the value of its economic contribution and, instead, measuring success with a wider range of more inclusive, non-monetary indicators. It is proposed that a greater number of indicators need to be employed which are relevant to specific destinations or regions and include community perspectives. The research involved a series of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in five destinations (three in Scotland, two in Ireland). The findings revealed a number of key themes which will contribute to the development of new qualitative and quantitative indicators that can be used to gain a better understanding of the



Ireland Scotland Bilateral Grant

nuances of the symbiotic relationship between tourism and the communities in which it takes place.



Methodology used in conducting the research:

1. Secondary Research

We undertook a short review of appropriate regenerative tourism literature, policies and good practice examples, to enable a wider and deeper understanding of regenerative tourism in community development and inform the subsequent work.

2. Primary Research

We identified five examples of community-based tourism initiatives which we felt have intentionally implemented regenerative practices: two in Ireland and three in Scotland. In



Ireland Scotland Bilateral Grant

alignment with MTU and UHI ethics requirements, we interviewed 12 key stakeholders: six in Ireland and six in Scotland. The focus was on understanding community tourism and how a range of tourism initiatives can drive regenerative community development. Transcriptions of these interviews were thematically analysed using Nvivo software.

3. Action Learning

Two community based regenerative tourism workshops were held in person (participation was also facilitated online for those unable to join), one in each country. Workshop 1 was held on 27 February in Kilfinane, Co. Limerick. We presented existing scenarios for exploratory research and educated participants on regenerative tourism. Workshop 2, held on 13 June at Comrie Croft, Scotland, presented the findings of the case study for participants to further explore the emergent themes.

4. Development of Case Studies

Case studies are currently being developed as a resource for SMEs, policymakers and community groups. They will focus on:

- a) the roles of community events and festivals as regenerative drivers
- b) understanding how regenerative tourism at the local level can make things better within a community and
- c) developing an understanding of how the success of the tourism industry can be measured by more than its monetary value.

5. Engagement, Communication and Dissemination

Engagement, communication and dissemination has been and will continue to be undertaken with key audiences. This includes:

- a) development of a peer-reviewed paper for submission in a suitable journal, i.e., 'Journal of Sustainable Tourism'
- b) local and national tourism bodies including Fáilte Ireland and The Scottish Tourism Alliance were represented at our workshops
- c) an ongoing series of posts through social media and institutional websites
- d) creation of a project video
- e) engagement with businesses and communities through the two workshops.

Findings of research and milestones achieved:

The stated milestones of the project have been achieved:

1. Academic Network – Meetings x 6

This project provided the basis for an academic network to develop in the area of community development through regenerative tourism which has assisted in driving the education and research agenda. The team across MTU and UHI had approximately 10 online meetings over the duration of this project in addition to the two in-person workshops in Ireland and Scotland.



Ireland Scotland Bilateral Grant

2. Project Grant Applications – Minimum 1

To date, two collaborative grant applications have been submitted as a result of this project, one for Horizon funding and the other for Erasmus+ funding. Both are larger scale project proposals with other international partners involved. As other opportunities arise, we will pursue them in order to further advance the community development through the regenerative tourism agenda.

A joint new Masters by Research proposal is currently under development and will be advertised in the next academic year, 2023-24.

3. Community Network – Events x 2

Two workshops events were held: one in Ballyhoura Development, Kilfinane, Co. Limerick, Ireland and the other at Comrie Croft, Perthshire, Scotland. These were facilitated by the funding provided through this project which allowed academic and community tourism practitioners to travel to experience other community projects, to learn from the academics and other practitioners involved in the project and benefit from the networking which resulted from these in-person events. Other local tourism stakeholders were invited to join (either virtually or in person) on both occasions, adding to the richness of the discussions and the impact of the wider tourism community. Through the project, representatives of rural community tourism initiatives not only contributed to the development of a piece of academic research, but the applied nature of the project facilitated the shared learning from peers to challenge each other and to contribute, with specific reference to Sustainable Development Goals #4 Quality Education, #8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, and #12 Responsible consumption and production.

4. Academic Papers x 1

An academic paper is currently being drafted for submission to the Journal of Sustainable Tourism. This will both add to the impact of this project and contribute to the emerging pool of knowledge of rural community development through regenerative tourism.

5. Other Milestones

This written report and attached video provide evidence of the success of this grant and compliance with the funding guidelines.

Dissemination of the project outcomes:

An academic paper is currently being drafted for submission to the Journal of Sustainable Tourism. This will both add to the impact of this project and contribute to the emerging pool of knowledge of rural community development through regenerative tourism.

Linkedin posts to date:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/dr-sophie-price-b2724589_ria-mtuballyhoura-activity-7036320692543324160-8i-6?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop



Ireland Scotland Bilateral Grant

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/dr-sophie-priceb2724589_congratulations-riagrants-activity-7022676365535535104-j523?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/scoto-network_community-shareddevelopment-activity-7075044556378918914-5kor/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/crtrUHI/status/1618290997439655938>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/CentreforRecreationandTourismResearchUHI>

Invites for the workshops in Ireland and Scotland were sent to not only the chosen participant case studies, but also local community groups, local enterprises, DMOs and national bodies.

Published work/plans:

We will be publishing our findings in an academic journal (currently targeting the Journal of Sustainable Tourism) and presenting at an international conference over the next year.

A social media friendly case study of each of the participating community tourism initiatives will be developed from the findings. This will allow participants to share and celebrate what that are doing and allow other stakeholders to learn from examples of community based regenerative tourism.

Our summary video will be circulated via the channels of the two universities and participating community tourism initiatives.

Plans for furthering the project:

We have submitted two applications for further funding in this area. We hope to work on further submissions together over the coming year. We are currently writing an academic journal article based on the findings of this study with a plan to achieve publication within the next year. We are also currently compiling a series of case studies for participants' use/publication on social media.

How the bursary enhanced professional development:

This grant has given the teams at MTU and UHI the opportunity to work together, leading to the submission of two further joint applications with a wider international team.

It has given us the opportunity to investigate this specific emerging topic which has informed both our current and future research and teaching and has contributed to our profiles as academics/researchers in this area.

It has allowed us to broaden our network of academic and industry contacts both in Ireland and Scotland.