

## IT Tralee Masters by Research Programme Details

**Title of Project:** 'Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development in Gaeltacht communities – managing the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way'

**Name of Principle Supervisor:** Dr Sophie Price

**Department/School:** Dept Hotel, Culinary Arts & Tourism/School of Business, Computing & Humanities

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### **Brief Biography of Principle Supervisor:**

Dr Sophie Price has worked in various roles in the tourism industry internationally before completing a PhD on the challenges facing tourism enterprises in the west of Ireland. She is a lecturer in Tourism at the Institute of Technology Tralee and coordinated the International Adventure Conference there last year. Her research interests include adventure tourism, tourism entrepreneurship, sustainable tourism and event management. She is a Member of Leave No Trace Ireland's Education and Advisory Board and Research Group. She has supervised 4 research masters to completion and currently supervising 3 additional research students in a range of research areas.

### **Recent Research Publications:**

- "Worries in the Wild West: The Realities of Tourism Entrepreneurship in Rural Ireland" paper delivered at the International Adventure Tourism Conference, Sheffield Hallam University, 2015
- "Innovation in Adventure Tourism" paper delivered at the Outdoor Education conference, GMIT, 2016
- "Applying 'Leave No Trace' in the Tourism Industry: A Wild Atlantic Adventure" paper delivered at THRIC conference, Limerick IT, 2016
- "Leaving No Trace in the Irish Countryside: Attitudes and Behaviours of Recreationists" paper delivered at International Adventure Conference, IT Tralee, 2016

## Research Project Abstract

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The authority endeavours to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community based activities. Tourism is ideally placed to address all three of Údarás's mission areas. Tourism in the west of Ireland has seen an upturn in recent years, largely attributable to the development of the Wild Atlantic Way initiative. It is opportune that this route passes through most of Ireland's Gaeltacht regions. These regions feature an innate resource of culture and landscape which are desirable ingredients for tourism development. However, little has been done to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the Wild Atlantic Way with a specific focus on Gaeltacht areas. The proposed research will examine how communities in these areas and relevant supporting bodies can together respond to these opportunities through establishing a model of tourism development which is sustainable in economic, cultural and environmental terms. The research will be carried out using a mixed methodology consisting of a series of semi-structured interviews combined with an on-line survey. The research sample will include those stakeholders supporting tourism development at government and agency level and also community-based enterprises and private enterprises who are developing tourism services and facilities at a local level. The proposed project represents an important partnership between I.T. Tralee and Údarás na Gaeltachta, with Dr Éamonn Ó Neachtain, Manager for

Research and Sectoral Development, as co-supervisor. The researcher will be working closely with the Údarás na Gaeltachta team and the results will make a significant contribution to the delivery of their new tourism development strategy.

## **Research Context (Technical Merit & Impact)**

Údarás na Gaeltachta is the regional authority responsible for the economic, social and cultural development of the Gaeltacht. The authority endeavours to achieve that objective by funding and fostering a wide range of enterprise development and job creation initiatives and by supporting strategic language, cultural and community-based activities. Tourism is ideally placed to address all three of Údarás's mission areas. Tourism in the west of Ireland has seen an upturn in recent years, largely attributable to the development of the Wild Atlantic Way initiative. It is opportune that this route passes through most of Ireland's Gaeltacht regions. These regions feature an innate resource of culture and landscape which are desirable ingredients for tourism development. However, little has been done to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the Wild Atlantic Way with a specific focus on Gaeltacht areas. The proposed project represents an important partnership between I.T. Tralee and Údarás na Gaeltachta, with Dr Éamonn Ó Neachtain, Manager for Research and Sectoral Development taking on the role of co-supervisor on the project. The researcher will be working closely with the Údarás na Gaeltachta team and the results will make a significant contribution to the delivery of their new tourism development strategy.

The mechanisms planned to disseminate outcomes include presentation at the Tourism and Hospitality Research in Ireland Conference (THRIC) June 2018 (poster presentation) & June 2019 (paper presentation) and a paper presentation at the World Cultural Tourism Conference, May 2019. The outcomes of this research are also very much focussed on practical application and will assist public bodies who discharge statutory responsibilities in relation to local, rural and regional development. The research will provide evidence which will contribute to decision making with regard to investment in public resources, the development of new infrastructure, services and facilities which are critical to the further consolidation and development of the 'rural' and 'cultural' tourism development offering within the county and the broader region. The outcomes will assist in mobilising private and community-led investment in support of an integrated and co-ordinated approach to development. In so doing, it will enable the development of a differentiated and unique range of activities which will focus on the Gaeltacht as a particular development district and which will highlight the distinct features of the local community of language as a central component of the regional tourism offering.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Aim**

The proposed research will examine how communities in Gaeltacht areas and relevant supporting bodies can together respond to the opportunities presented by the Wild Atlantic Way through establishing a model of tourism development which is sustainable in economic, cultural and environmental terms.

### **Objectives**

- Evaluate the current cultural tourism product in Irish Gaeltacht areas
- Consider product development opportunities through an examination of international best practice
- Identify the barriers and facilitators affecting the development of tourism in the Gaeltacht
- Make recommendations regarding the most appropriate method of nurturing sustainable community-based tourism initiatives in the Gaeltacht

### **Methodology**

The research will be carried out using a mixed methodology consisting of a series of semi-structured interviews combined with an on-line survey. A mixed-method approach combines the collection, analysis and comparison of quantitative and qualitative data in order to increase the level of validity, theoretical relevance and confidence in the results. The interviews will achieve a more in-depth understanding of the factors influencing tourism development in the Gaeltacht. The subsequent online survey will be more inclusive, obtain a broader picture of experiences of tourism development and test the findings of the qualitative data. An examination of national and international best practice examples will also be used to make comparisons and recommendations.

The research sample will include those stakeholders supporting tourism development at government and agency level and also community-based enterprises and private enterprises who are developing tourism services and facilities at a local level. An emergent sampling technique will be used to select interviewees. A database will be developed containing all tourism related businesses in the Kerry Gaeltacht. Surveys will be sent to all businesses and those who wish to participate will self-select.

## PROJECT SCHEDULE

18 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2017	Project commences
9 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Diagram/map of the research area and position of thesis within this area presentation
23 <sup>rd</sup> Oct	2000 words defining/explaining the main terms
6 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2000 words - Subtopic of the lit review (coming from the map above)
20 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2000 words - Subtopic of the lit review
4 <sup>th</sup> Dec	2000 words - Subtopic of the lit review
Dec	Poster presentation at the ITT research colloquium
15 <sup>th</sup> January 2018	First complete draft of the literature review
5 <sup>th</sup> Feb	2000 words - Choice of methodology and justification
26 <sup>th</sup> Feb	2000 words - Detailed description of research techniques i.e. sampling, data collection & analysis
12 <sup>th</sup> March	First complete draft of Methodology
26 <sup>th</sup> March	Pilot study complete, research design reviewed, data collection begins
June	Present poster at THRIC (Tourism & Hospitality research in Ireland Conference)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	Data collected, analysis begins (Transcribing, collating, data entry, cross-referencing)
15 <sup>th</sup> Oct	3000 words – Findings & discussion – subtopic 1
5 <sup>th</sup> Nov	3000 words – Findings & discussion – subtopic 2
26 <sup>th</sup> Nov	3000 words – Findings & discussion – subtopic 3
14 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2019	Final draft methodology
28 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Final draft lit review
11 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Final draft findings and discussion 1
25 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Final draft findings and discussion 2
11 <sup>th</sup> March	Final draft Introduction
25 <sup>th</sup> March	Final draft Conclusion
8 <sup>th</sup> April	First draft entire thesis
15 <sup>th</sup> April	Final thesis submitted