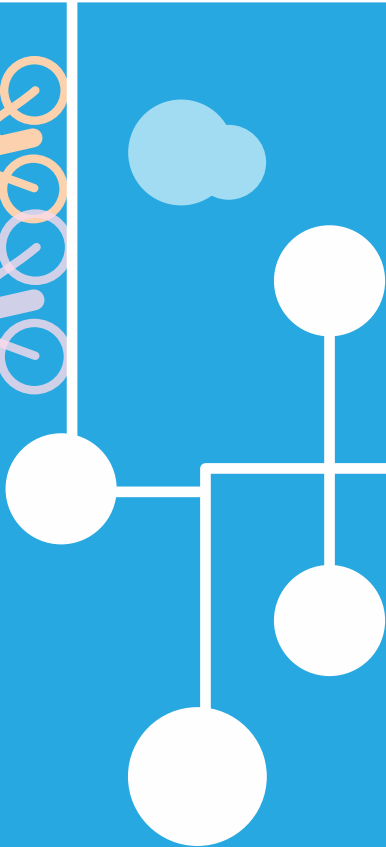


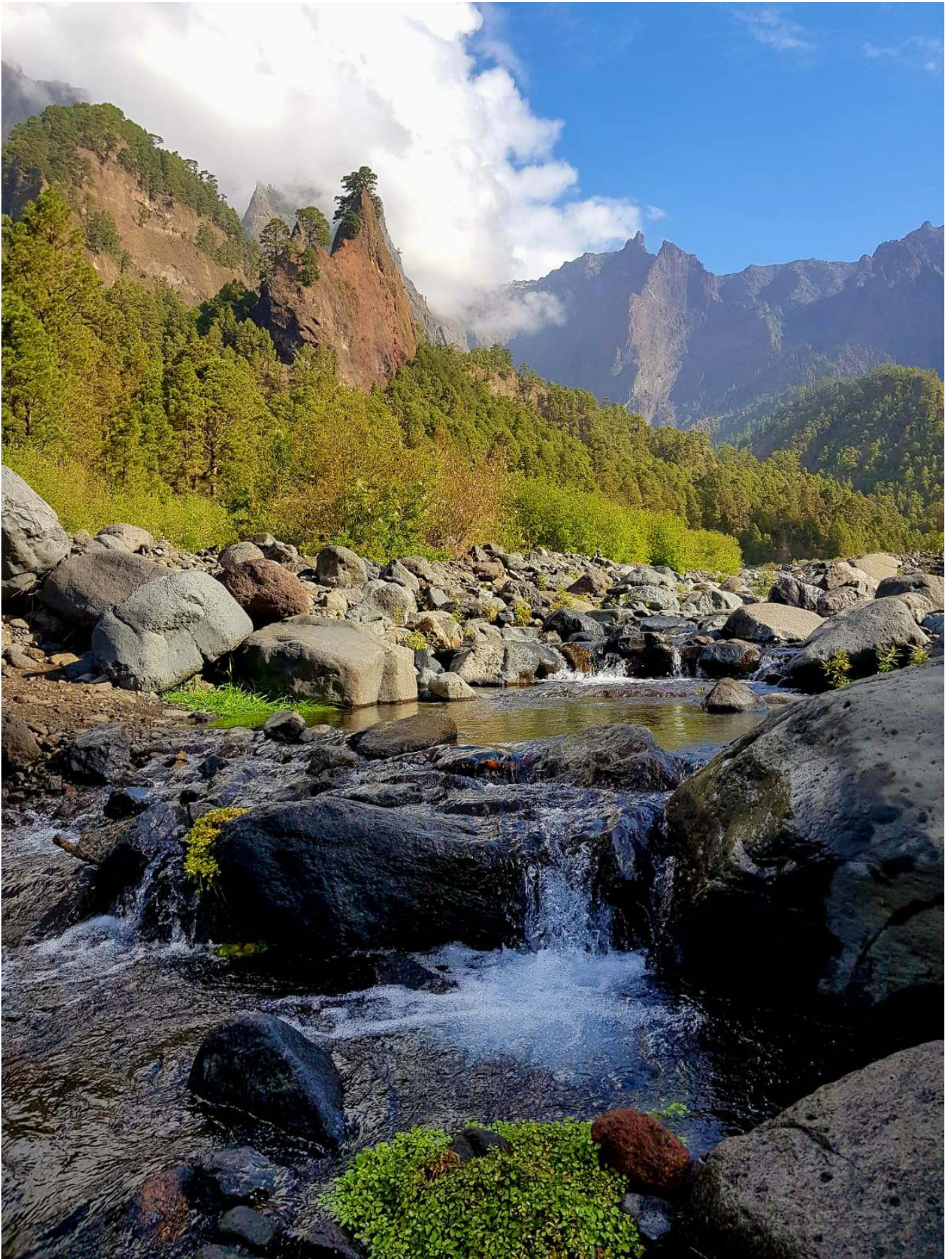
# TRAIL GAZERS<sup>BID</sup>

*Pathways to Rural Development*



## THE LEGACY

*Toolkit for Trail Development*



This toolkit was developed by the Trail Gazers Project, which is co-financed by the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme through the European Regional Development Fund.

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# INTRODUCTION

Trail Gazers is a €2.56 million project financed by the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme through the European Regional Development Fund.

Over the years significant investment has been made into developing walking and recreational trails across the Atlantic Area, showcasing the regions rich natural and cultural heritage and allowing visitors to safely navigate and enjoy the region's most precious assets. The Trail Gazers Project set out to determine the impact of this investment on sustaining rural communities and explored innovative ways that this impact can be enhanced. It nurtured community trail ambassadors, developed community trail plans and provided a model of best practice for how these assets can become catalysts for the long-term development of small rural communities in the Atlantic Area.

The Trail Gazers Project has developed this Toolkit as our legacy to demonstrate to others how innovative data capture technologies such as sensors, GIS mapping, bespoke surveys can be used to capture information on each trail site. The Trail Gazers Project estimated the multiplier impact or return to the rural community for every euro invested in walks or trail infrastructure and examined and tested ways that this return can be enhanced. This toolkit is suitable for all citizens, business owners, tourism providers, educational providers, health care providers, environmental protection groups, sports and recreational groups, policy makers and others who live or have a role in the small rural communities that surround each of these trail sites. This Toolkit contains evidence-based data, which will allow community stakeholders to understand what stage of development their trail is at, identify assets and constraints and determine potential options for the future development of each trail site.

Trail Gazers strived to revitalise, regenerate and re-imagine rural communities by developing a future vision which is community led, evidenced based and enshrined in the concept of slow tourism which these small communities can sustainably manage. Target walking and cycling visitors, who are interested in the 'unique experience' offered by small rural or often remote areas that are steeped in a rich array of natural, built and cultural heritage.

This Toolkit can be adapted to inform policy makers with a framework that identifies the required levels of investment, programming and management required to assist trails to become more economically and socially driven, thus increasing and attracting more visitors to the Atlantic regions.

This project was located at eight pilot sites:

- Ireland - 'Inch Levels' in Inishowen, Donegal and 'Knocknarea/Killaspugbrone loop' Sligo,
- Wales - the 'Taff Trail' in Merthyr Tydfil.
- France - 'Chemin De Mémoires', Bretagne
- Spain - in Navarra 'Via Verde del Plazola' and 'La Caldera de Taburiente' on the Canary Island of La Palma
- Portugal - the 'Seven Hanging Valleys' in the Algarve and the 'Sacred Mountain' in Viana do Castelo, Northern Portugal

Trail Gazers was made up of 10 project partners Municipio de Viana do Castelo (Portugal), Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (Wales), Dirección General de Protección de la Naturaleza-Gobierno de Canarias (La Palma), Glasgow Caledonian University (Scotland), Ulster University (Northern Ireland), Ville de Louvigné du Désert (France), Navarra De Suelo Y Vivienda, S.A.U. (Spain), Sligo County Council (Ireland), Universidade do Algarve (Portugal) and was led by the Economic Development Section of Donegal County Council (Ireland).

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Trail Gazers project was inspired firstly by a love of walking, a love of nature and a recognition that the Atlantic Area is home to some of the richest natural built and cultural heritage in the world. Over the years, there has been a growing realisation that these natural assets have the capacity to generate new opportunities and initiatives that can help to sustain declining rural communities by stimulating new businesses and creating employment. In response, policy makers have made substantial investment into developing various walks and recreational trails which will allow visitors to safely navigate through these rich biospheres, teeming with wildlife and dotted with hidden heritage and historical gems. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that this investment has resulted in increased footfall, however the direct and indirect economic impacts on the surrounding rural economies of every euro spent on trails in the Atlantic Area has never been fully assessed. Although some progress has been made in harnessing these assets, it is a central tenet of this project that the full potential of the Atlantic Areas natural build and cultural heritage in stimulating the development of small rural towns and villages remains untapped.

Changing visitor trends have also shaped the Trail Gazers project, in particular the type of holidays that visitors seek out has changed with a new appetite to searching out more meaningful personal experiences in locations which are often perceived as 'off the beaten track' rather than in popular holiday destinations. It seems that travel has become more about appreciating the way of life that these areas can offer, in immersing oneself in the local history, cultural and natural landscapes which, if appropriately developed, can often tell the story of a place or of bygone eras and help visitors form deep rooted connections to an area. These are they type of holidays where people embark on personal journeys of self-discovery and have experiences that remain with the person long after the holiday has finished. As a result, the project has focused on developing community trail plans that are place based, community centric and focused on the unique offering in each area.

From the onset the architects of this project recognised that increased footfall to these environmentally sensitive designations can bring new challenges to protecting and preserving the very assets that visitors come to see. When policy makers look towards harnessing the regions natural wealth, sustainability needs to remain at the fore and any interventions require extensive buy-in from a wider array of stakeholders, environmental bodies, communities who are seen by Trail Gazers as the long term custodians of these landscapes. While it is more generally accepted that the growth in walking and recreational activity has huge potential to generate income for rural areas, helping to create more jobs in the hospitality and leisure sectors; the focus now needs to shift towards developing these blueprints. For this to happen, the Trail Gazers project recognised the need for a greater mobilisation of all key stakeholders (businesses, communities, educational providers, local government, local development, tourism providers etc) across all of the regions to ensure that what emerges from the project is a 'shared vision' for the unique development of each trail site and the surrounding towns and villages.

At the heart of the project is the development of bespoke trail plans, and to achieve this Trail Gazers recognised the need for greater knowledge, insight and understanding across all the participating regions on several key areas especially:

- The interactions that takes place between the trail site and the surrounding towns and villages and what innovative initiatives could be explored to improve this symbiotic relationship
- Exploring new and innovative ways to capture footfall figures to each trail, projecting future patterns and estimating what the site can reasonably accommodate before safeguarding measures are required to protect these environmental sensitive landscapes
- Developing a greater understanding of what each trail has to offer, its stage of development, key demographics of trail visitors, their spending patterns, the return to the community and how the visitor experience can be enhanced in collaboration with local businesses
- Capturing the story or oral history of each trail site, bringing them to life and using new digitally techniques marketing to showcase them to new audiences and in turn assessing the impact of these initiatives in terms of spin off to rural communities
- Understanding the relationship between the community and the trail site and ways that it can be enhanced. Developing an understanding among key actors that these sites and amenities are first and



foremost being developed as community assets and secondly, to ensure the long-term sustainability the project seeks to develop a range of initiatives that will focus on developing slow tourism in the area and to create new employment opportunities.

The ambitions of this Trail Gazers Project are in tandem with objective 4.2 of Interreg's Atlantic Area Programme which is to 'enhance natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development' and given this strategic fit Donegal County Council's Research and Policy Unit, initiated an application in 2016 and began its search for partners through its EU Strategic Funding Unit. The focus of this search was on developing a partnership with a) the right mix of skills to develop the project and in particular expertise was sought in app development, augmented reality, SME innovation, digital marketing; socio-economic research, dashboards, GIS mapping services, multiplier models, trail plans etc; b) the right mix of partners from across of the 5 EU Member States in the Atlantic Area Programme and c) the right mix of trails or those at different stages of development so that partners could learn from best practise and in particular what worked and what didn't. This resulted in the establishment of a consortium consisting of 10 partners working across 8 transnational trails located in Spain, UK, Portugal, France, and Ireland. Through hard work, collaboration, and dedication of the partnership the Trail Gazers project was awarded funding in 2018.

In summary, Trail Gazers is a truly collaborative and innovative project that sets out to develop a toolkit that will a) identify accepted best practise in different trail technologies and methodologies that set out to capture footfall data; develop dashboards; administer visitors surveys; calculate trail multipliers; develop bespoke trail plans and to mobilise the communities etc b) select, implement and test a range of technologies and methodologies given the unique socio economic characteristics and stage of development of each of the 8 participating trail sites and finally c) will document key learning and ways forward so that other small rural communities can 'enhance their natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development' and increase the attractiveness of their area as places to live, work and thrive.

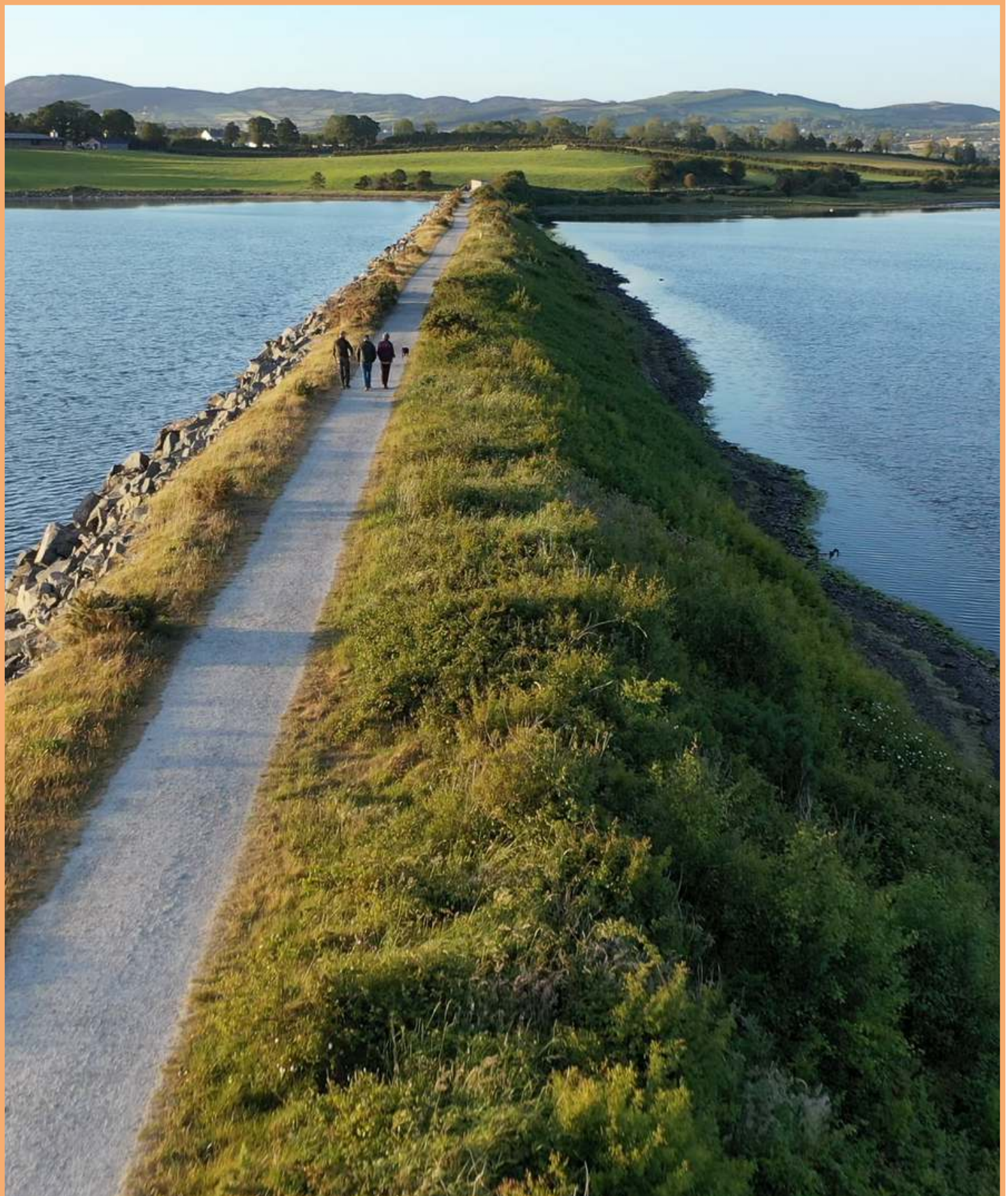




Chapter	Partner	Overview
Chapter 2	Navarra	Communication activities including the development of project website, social media channels, communication plan and best practice for the capture of trail imagery.
Chapter 3	LDD	Development of capitalisation and animation strategies for local and regional stakeholders.
Chapter 4	Merthyr	Knowledge transfer, learning and expertise on new technologies, marketing techniques and community trail planning.
Chapter 5	GCU 	Methodology for the data collection, including a Trail Profile Survey and a User Survey. In particular, the User Survey data collection at the different trail sites and primary data analysis of over 2,000 surveys. The results contributed to offering important insights for trail management and stakeholders as well as were used as input in the economic multiplier calculations.
Chapter 6	UU	Selection and deployment of technological solutions to capture footfall on sites and development of a trail dashboard to enhance trail management and maintenance.
Chapter 7	ULAG	Examines how the right type of trail investment can assist local communities, increase business profit and provide sustainable community trail management plans that protect the area's natural and cultural assets. Stages of development based on current investments and the relationship to the income multiplier value.
Chapter 8	DCC 	Community Trail Plans identify the key future actions which will enhance the user experience and/or trail environment and strengthen connectivity between the trail site and surrounding towns, villages and visitor attractions to increase revenues. for local communities and businesses.

# 1

## Donegal County Council (Lead Partner) Project Management/Implementation





# 1



## *Donegal County Council, Donegal, Ireland Lead Partner – Project Management/Implementation*

*Responsible for overall project management and development of community led plans, that will ensure the sustainable development of rural communities along selected international trail sites.*

The Trail Gazers Project set about to develop a transnationally tested framework which would enable the future management and promotion of trails across the 8 Atlantic Area pilot trail sites focusing on the use of digital technologies and indicators to develop trails in an environmentally friendly, sustainable, cost effective and highly innovative manner. The popularity of walking, hiking and cycling across the Atlantic Area continues to grow in momentum and popularity with the ever increasing need for the population to become more aware of the health benefits associated with these activities both mentally and physically on the human body. But in order to sustainably develop any trail and/or recreational areas there was an ever increasing need to capture detailed data in terms of; a. the physical, economic and environmental aspects of the trails which would enable the building of a trail model and b. capture an accurate account of the trail users and key stakeholders in terms of their perception and activity on the trail and the surrounding catchment area that will in turn inform the future trail development and management.

Donegal County Council (DCC) was selected as lead partner on this work package and as lead for the Trail Gazers Project based on the wealth of transnational experience which its dedicated European Unit has as lead partner in the development and implementation of Interreg A&B Programmes including; Sailwest Freshwater Pearl, Riverlinks, Malin Head, Gobbins Slieve Liag, Inch Levels etc. As lead partner on this project, DCC were responsible for Work Package 1 (WP1) Project Coordination. Donegal County Council played a critical role in driving the project forward, project governance, coordination, financial management, activity reporting, evaluation, communications, planning & organising Steering Committee meetings and staffing etc. DCC also played a key role in all other work packages and in overseeing the activity taking place on all of the 8 project pilot sites, ensuring that each individual partner and pilot site manager was performing and completing their required tasks in accordance with the particulars as set down in the Project Application Form (PAF).

The Donegal team also played an instrumental role in the development and preparation of the Community Trail Plans for a number of the pilot trails. These are examined and discussed within Work Package 7 (WP7) – Calculating the Trail Multiplier/Community Trail Plans.

The following 6 main actions were part of WP1 carried out by DCC:

Action 1	Establishment of a Partnership Agreement;
Action 2	Development and Management of Financial & Activity Reporting Systems;
Action 3	Development of Internal Communications Systems;
Action 4	Management of Transnational Steering Committee Meetings;
Action 5	Establishment and Management of Project Team;
Action 6	Development and Management of Financial & Activity Reporting Systems;

The main task of WP1 was to develop a clear methodology and set of best practices for the overall management, implementation and coordination of the project and its activities. This chapter mainly focuses on presenting best practices, lessons learned etc associated with Action 1 to Action 6 of WP1, so as to ensure the continued output and efficiency of the project in terms of meeting the overall aims and objectives in accordance with the Project Application Form (PAF). It was critical throughout the course of the project through the project coordination that as Lead Partner, Donegal were ensuring that there were always clear paths of communications among all Pilot Trail Leads and Work Package Leads. This process was facilitated through the monthly project Coordination Meetings, Steering Committee Meeting and Project Monitoring Committee Meetings etc. As the various elements of the individual work packages were developed the Lead Partner held one to one virtual meetings with the various leads to

ensure that they were completing the project tasks in accordance with the key outputs as identified in the PAF.

The onset of the global pandemic brought with it many challenges for the Trail Gazers project and in this chapter and all other chapters we will also explore the contingency plans that were developed by the project partners to ensure the continued delivery of the projects identified project achievements and outputs.

## **Best Practice developed**

### **Action 1 – Establishment of a Partnership Agreement**

Action 1 was a key element of the project as through the establishment of a Partnership Agreement it very clearly defined the overall governance arrangements for the project, partners mutual responsibilities and how the partnership interacts with third parties. This agreement aimed to bring about improved cooperation in the Atlantic Area through the project partners. This brought about the development of the Project Steering Committee, a committee which held a representative from each of the project partners. This was a critical element in ensuring the day to day management and coordination of the partnerships.

### **Action 2- Development and Management of Financial and Activity Reporting Systems**

The coordinated development of a clearly defined financial and activity reporting system was a crucial stage in management and structuring of the Trail Gazers project and team both at the onset of the project and throughout the duration of the project. The Donegal team had to ensure that through this well thought out and developed project implementation plan, all project activities were carried out in line with the letter of offer from the Atlantic Area in a coordinated and effective manner among all of the project leads. The onset of Covid-19 made this stage of development even more crucial as the Project Lead, in consultation with the other project leads develop a contingency plan. This plan had to identify alternatives means that would ensure the delivery of identified projects activities yet ensuring that there was always full cognisance of the restrictions in terms of health and safety of citizens across the entire Atlantic Area region in terms of in-person meetings and lockdowns imposed on project staff restricting them to travel and work within their office settings and between regions.

### **Action 3 – Development of Internal Communications Systems**

A two-way communication system to channel updates on project activity, proactively resolve issues, engage in online discussions, disseminate information, learn from partners experiences and hold online meetings was of extreme importance to the project. Similar to Action 2 this was heightened in importance given the impact of Covid-19 across the partnership. This Action resulted in the holding of monthly Project Co-ordination/Communications meetings online. This monthly meeting provided partners with the opportunity to share with the partners the activity which had taken place in that reporting period within their regions. They also had the capacity to discuss and seek resolution for any issues or problems they may have encountered. This type of communication system brought about a strong degree of enhanced transnational cooperation and communication. It embellished the benefits of shared learning among partners. Minutes were taken at each meeting and shared among the partnership to ensure that all partners were kept up to date on an on-going basis.

### **Action 4 – Management of Transnational Steering Committee Meetings**

Steering Committee Meetings were held biannually across the partner regions over the course of the project. The schedule of meetings was agreed with the project partners for the in-person meetings, together with the addition of two online project team meetings. The lead partner developed a defined procedure for these meetings to ensure that all partners were given equal opportunity to participate and to ensure equality between males and females, non-discriminatory and all contributions are were valued and respected. Partners were also offered the opportunity to invite tourism and Small Medium-Sized Entrprises (SMEs) to attend the meetings. This afforded the project partners the opportunity to engage and interact with these bodies, and open discussions were held which all contributed to the shared learning output of the project. Consequently this was an Action which was deeply impacted by the travel restrictions imposed within the various regions and resulted in a number of the planned meetings been held virtually.

### **Action 5 – Establishment and Management of Project Team**

The establishment of the Project Team for Donegal was a definitive action for the Trail Gazers Project as project lead. Having carefully considered the various elements of the project it was prudent that the Project Manager had the essential skills to manage and ensure that all aspects od the project were successfully delivered, managed and

implemented. Careful consideration was then given to other important elements of the project such as; fulfilling the financial, administrative, marketing and research activities and staff were appointed accordingly to these roles. Finally, given the key environmental and planning objectives to the project, planners were appointed to carry out these roles.

### **Action 6 – Establishment of Effective Monitoring & Evaluation Systems**

The on-going monitoring and evaluation of the projects outputs, results and progress was central to ensuring the project was being implemented and carried out in accordance with the Project Application Form (PAF). A risk register was developed to identify and categorise (low, medium and high) all potential strategic risks and development of mitigation strategies. A post project evaluation report will identify actions that works well, shortcomings in delivery, good practices and lessons learnt.

## **Best Practice Implementation**

### **Action 1-6**

An overarching objective of the Trail Gazers project in all the individual Work Packages 1-7, was to implement a series of systems developed on the basis of best practice being developed and implemented to ensure the optimum delivery of the projects key outputs. Actions 1-6 of WP1 were all interwoven and it was important to replicate and apply the keys elements of each action within each of the other action areas. The Partnership Agreement (Action 1) played a key role in setting out the key roles and responsibilities of the individual partners in terms of their individual and mutual responsibilities in delivering the key outputs of the project. It also facilitated the formation of the Project Steering Committee. Through the Internal Communications Systems (Action 3) the established Project Team (Action 5) were always in a proactive position to communicate with the project partners to channel updates, resolve issues and engage in online discussions. This system of communication became even more critical when the global pandemic initially impacted on the capability of project partners to meet in person and engaging with citizens and stakeholders/agencies within their respective communities/regions.

The Project Lead implemented monthly Communication/Coordination meetings online. This means of communication afforded the project partners the opportunity to update the partnership of the progress they had made in the previous month; share experiences of activities that had taken place; seek guidance if required; participate in practices of shared learning with the other project partners; and evaluate if through the activities they were carrying out they were meeting their overall work package aims and objectives. This system of communication became even more beneficial when field trips to the various regions/pilot trail sites was not permitted due to travel restrictions across Europe due to Covid-19.

Based on the specific areas of expertise of the Project Team established in Action 5 of this Work Package, the team were assigned key responsibilities for various elements of the project based on the those defined areas of expertise. For example; a. The Project Manager together with the appointed Financial Assistant ensured that at all stages of the project the projects partners were carrying out their day to day activities, financial reporting and project reporting activities in accordance with the Project Application Form and the Programme Manual (For Applicants & Beneficiaries, May 2021); b. the appointed Project Planners worked closely with Work Package Leads in areas such as; trail capitalization in the development of business to consumer initiatives, the development of Trail Care Packs & Community Ambassador Programme (WP3); KPI indicators, development of virtual reality material, Story Maps (WP4); data capture & analysis (WP5); sensor data & dashboard development (WP6); and identification of the Trail Multiplier & Community Trail Plans (WP7). The Project Planners had the capacity to bring their previous planning and environmental awareness skills into the foreground and use these skills to work with the project partners and inform the various outputs of the individual work packages; c. the Communications Officer played a prime role in working closely with the Communications Lead (WP2) in developing the Communications Plan for the project and played an active role in overseeing the communication of the project on all social media channels on a transnational level. The effectiveness of ongoing collaborations among the project partners and the Lead Partner were brought about through the communications systems developed in Action 3.

Steering Committee Meetings (SCM) were held biannually. These meetings afforded the project partners an opportunity to present their key achievements/outputs/material developed etc to the project partners. Partners also used these meetings to introduce key stakeholders/agencies to the partners and afforded them the opportunity to present their region and again draw on the examples of best practice that were being applied/implemented in their regions. As part of the SCM project partners visited the pilot trail sites, these site visits were to play an instrumental role in the development of the Community Trail Plans for each of the pilot trails. Initially, these meetings were held in-person, but when Covid-19 restrictions were imposed across the Atlantic Area regions they were held virtually.

As part of these SCM, the partners held a Project Monitoring Committee meeting. At these meetings each Work Package was presented by the Work Package Lead and they detailed the progress which they had made over the previous three month period. In response to the possible consequential impact of Covid-19, the partnership worked in collaboration to develop a contingency plan that factored in alternatives timeframes or methods for delivery of the project proposed outputs as detailed in the Project Application Form (PAF).

The on-going monitoring and evaluation of the project as developed in Action 6 was a key component of the project. It was important to share among the project partners when progress was being made or where amendments or alterations to particular activities/practices were required. This system also ensured that the Project Lead was on schedule with the project requirements/delivery in accordance with the outputs as developed within the PAF. This continued monitoring and evaluation facilitated a more informed analysis of the projects activities when each Work Package Lead had to complete the project reporting on the transnational reporting dashboard (Sigi System).

## **Best Practice Review**

Is it without doubt that the impact of the global pandemic did have a negative impact on the Trail Gazers project and in particular on the workability of WP1 and the other six work packages. It was paramount that the communications systems developed, together with the on-going monitoring and evaluation systems had to be carefully developed to ensure that at all stages of the project the project partners were kept well informed of the progress of the project. It also ensured that if project partners encountered any difficulties they were immediately recognised and addressed. The inability to meet with the project partners in-person made it more difficult to complete the proposed project activities eg: in Donegal an Environmental Workshop and Business Stakeholder Engagement were all held online due to local restrictions and lockdowns at that time which meant that face to face surveys/consultations could not be held. The online forum does not permit the ability for persons on a meeting to have off screen one to one engagements, or ideas shared etc.

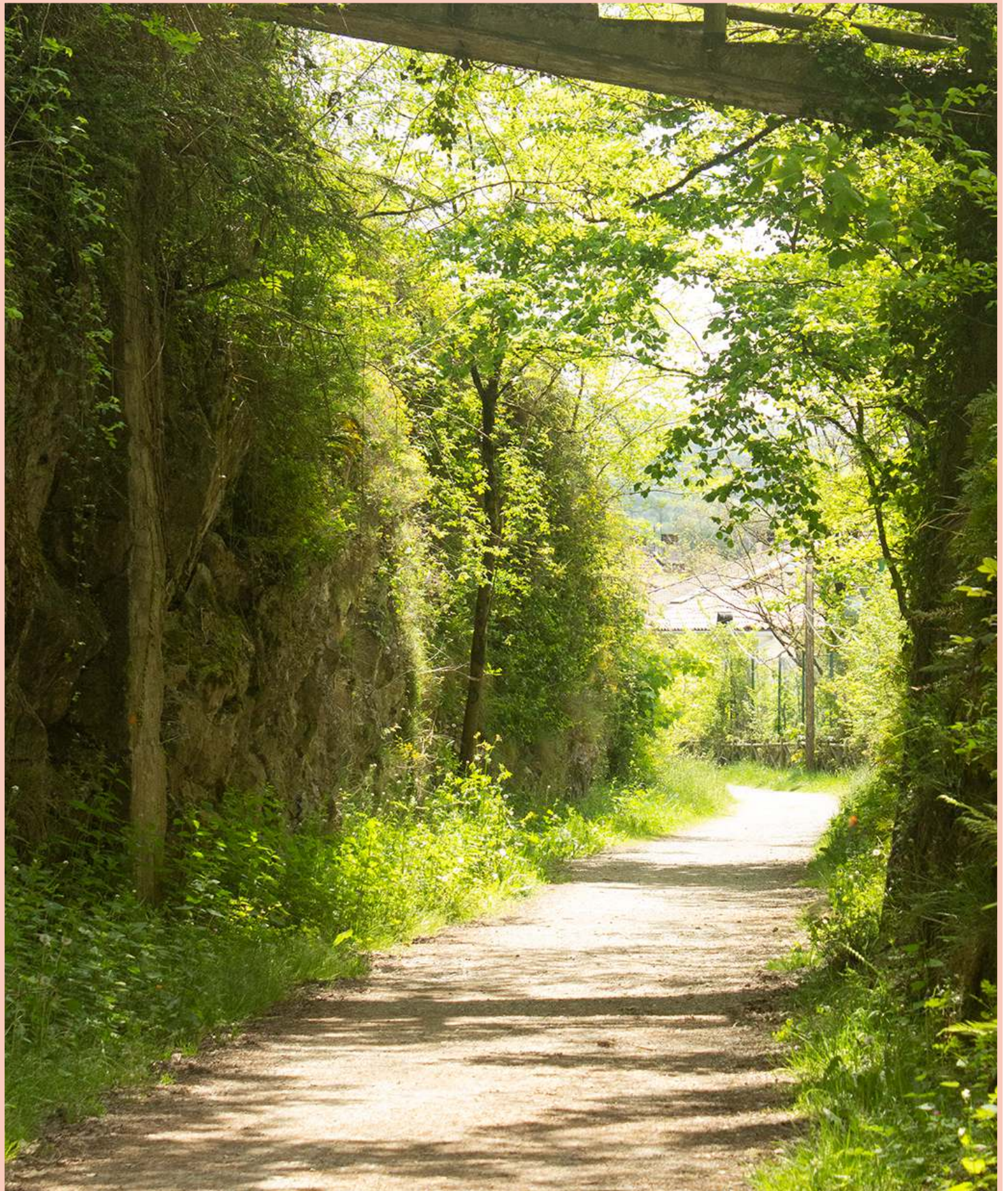
These restrictions delayed the progress of the project in meeting its targeted achievements within the initial project timeframe. It was for this reason that the Project Lead applied for a project extension which was approved by the Joint Secretariat. From a financing perspective, under the guidance of the Project Lead, the Project Partners had to modify and reallocate their initial budgets to take account for the project extension to ensure that all project costs were accounted for eg: increased staff costs for the increased project duration meant that the initial budget amount approved for staff costs had to increased. It should be noted that even though there was an extension in time permitted for the project, the initial budget allocation remained the same.

Travel among the Project Partners regions was greatly impacted upon and this had a negative impact on the ability of the partners to meet in person and engage with one another and learn from each other in a proactive manner. This had a particular impact when assessing the pilot trails for the development of the Community Trail Plans (CTP) in WP7, as the project planners who were developing these had to rely on the pilot trail lead to develop their own plan for their region.

However, the reallocated budgets from the monies saved on project travel meant that project partners could reallocate this money to other pieces of work within their respective regions and bring about additional outputs/activities through the project. An example of this was in Donegal, the reallocated budgets have been used to enhance and further development directional signage to the pilot trail site. This will encourage increased footfall onto the site and improve on the tourism offering in the area for tourists in locating the trail when visiting Donegal.

# 2

## NAVARRA DE SUELO Y VIVIENDA, S.A.U. Communications



# 2



## NAVARRA DE SUELO Y VIVIENDA, S.A.U., Navarre, Spain – Communications

Responsible for overall communication activities including the development of the project website, social media channels, communication plan and oversight for the capture of digital trail imagery.

ACTION	EXPECTED OUTCOME	RESULT
<p>A1. Implementation of a multi strand Communications and Dissemination Plan</p>	<p>Activities including development of Internal Communication plan (WP1), Trail Gazers logo/brand, virtual tourism clips, online communities, social media channels, e-zines, regular integrated press releases, digital marketing activities, online meetings etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communication Plan</li> <li>- Logo, roll ups, posters, brochure and folder.</li> <li>- Video of Plazaola, partners' videos, short videos, podcasts and documentaries.</li> <li>- 5 e-zines</li> <li>- 5 social media</li> <li>- Press releases</li> <li>- Online marketing campaigns</li> <li>- Online meetings/communities</li> </ul>
<p>A2. Establishment of Project Advisory Groups (PAGs) in each of the partner regions</p>	<p>Develop a database of niche target audiences for ongoing engagement &amp; two-way information flow. Organise and invite local regional and national stakeholders to 6 transnational awareness raising sessions. Develop online awareness building seminars.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting guidelines and templates.</li> <li>- Target audience database, "contact us" database and partners' database organised under tags.</li> <li>- PAG database, Ambassadors' Program contacts and SMEs database.</li> <li>- Online and in person meetings, Ambassadors' events and workshops</li> </ul>
<p>A3. Development of Tailored Virtual Reality Material</p>	<p>Lead partner of WP 2 to work in collaboration with trail leads of selected online marketing material along the 6 selected trail sites using GoPro Cameras and Drones. Material will be developed in response to identified needs of each trail site.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NASUVINSA' s own materials</li> <li>- Partners 'materials</li> <li>- Ongoing guidance for the development of the materials of the partners.</li> <li>- 2 Reports on Development of Tailored Virtual Reality Material:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Google digital</li> <li>2. Video of Plazaola</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

ACTION	EXPECTED OUTCOME	RESULT
A4. Distribution of Virtual Reality Tourism via Digital Marketing Tools	It will document learning from using different types of online marketing tools to share virtual trail experience. It will outline what worked, what did not and select the most appropriate marketing tool given identified trail needs.	- Report: Best practice using online marketing tools
A5. Organise Project Launch and Closure Events	A launch and closure event will be held along two of the 6 selected trails. Each event will be podcast and disseminated to online communities to generate awareness and capture further participants in the Trail Gazers online community.	- Launch event in Donegal - Closure event in Navarra (face to face and online).
A6. Creation of Social Media Channels & Tailored Digital Communications	Social media channels will be set and an online strategy relating to content developed i.e. how many tweets per day, how many video clips per month, establish ideal duration of clip be etc; regular project e-zines will be developed & disseminated.	- Social media strategy - Opening and dinamisation of accounts - Monthly impact reports and annual impact report in 2021 specific for the implementation of BPs - E-zines every 6 months.

**The overall aim of the communication of this project was:**

1. To engage with the local populations finding new and participative ways of coordinating and putting in value the economic activities of the rural areas along the trails and
2. To use new technologies and digital marketing tools to promote the selected pilot trails of Trailgazers, areas of rich natural and cultural value.



## Work Package 2 - Communications A Toolkit for Atlantic Area Walks & Trails

Meandering along the different walks and trails in the **Atlantic Area** will take visitors through a variety of **spectacular and sensitive landscapes**, immersing them in a rich array of natural built and cultural heritage, evoking memories of bygone eras, lost worlds whilst enjoying being at one with nature. These assets are often referred to as the 'jewel in the crown' of the Atlantic Area but are also one of its best-kept secrets. The Trail Gazers Project sets out to **explore innovative ways that these assets can be communicated to new audiences**, in a way that tells each region's unique story, is based on a sense of place and has at its heart the sustainable development of these assets.

### Best Practice Development Phase

In developing the communications package there were three key challenges in:

- 1- Striking a balance between increasing **the visibility of European Union and Interreg funding** whilst at the same time highlighting how **rural trails can be engines for sustainable development**.
- 2- Integrating **internal communication/coordination and external dissemination** together given the limitations of mobility associated with COVID-19.
- 3- Integrating **offline and face-to-face events together with online materials and digital marketing** channels giving the innovative character of the project.

The partnership focused on the development of a strong Communication Plan (link to organise and coordinate all the materials to be prepared, the events to take place, how and when everything was going to be disseminated through digital channels and, finally, how to evaluate the impact). All this required from a good communication strategy.

NASUVINSA has extensive experience in communication because the technical staff has been and is in charge of this task in several projects and, as such, was appointed as the Communication Lead for the TrailGazers. As the lead of this pivotal work package, NASUVINSA prepared the Communication Plan and in coordination with and under the revision of all the partners, the Joint Secretariat then approved this.

**Specific issues where addressed by specific reports (partners needed guidance in terms of virtual materials and online marketing). Some examples are:**

1. “Development of a Virtual Tourism Toolkit” by Merthyr (lead on WP 4 – knowledge exchange and dissemination) link
2. “How we did the video of Plazaola” link and “Plazaola Digital with Google” reports prepared and shared by Nasuvinsa as lead of WP2 - communication.

The **constant advice and feedback of the different partners** was also a good practice for the improvement of many of the tools and for nourishing the project's media channels.

- ◆ For instance, when the partners of the project would share their contacts to amplify TrailGazers network. The project partners developed an internal strategy to invite people to follow Trailgazers on LinkedIn, the less used social media of the project until that moment.
- ◆ The partners also shared their expertise when there was a need to do a promotional place-specific campaign for the promotion of the app Lost Stories.
- ◆ They also worked coordinately preparing content and giving ideas with the proposal of the #LOVETRAILS campaign, among others.





A Communication Plan was designed and packed with actions that would be developed by Nasuvinsa and by the partners. It included:

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### *Approach and objectives*

1. Ensure Trail Gazers brand and outcomes are recognised and understood
2. Engage with SMEs and entrepreneurs to highlight impact of trails on their business
3. Raise community awareness in sustainable trail development
4. Inform and publish role of EU Atlantic Area Programme in developing the brand
5. Inform local, regional and national policymakers of value of project in their work
5. Maximise niche audiences interests

### *Target groups*

For targeted engagement:

- PAG: Project Advisory Group members (e.g. tourism bodies, environmental agencies, SME organizations etc.)
- SME&RC: SMEs and rural communities.
- CUSTOMERS: Trail users & prospective consumers.
- R&TM: researchers and trail managers not a part of TGB that express their interest in replicating TGB results and their possible integration in TGB network.

### *Key messages*

And channels for each one of the target groups.

### *Communication tools*

(Below)

### *Key communication milestones*

Milestones list for the scheduling of events – to ensure that all partners advertised, ran and captured information on events activated through the project in a consistent manner.

### *Communication management*

Identification of stakeholders taking part of the internal communication of the project and their roles, and the periodicity of the meetings.

### *Evaluation*

A set of communication KPIs and Annex A (a survey for the monthly evaluation of the communication activities. Every partner must complete it every month. The results appear on a dashboard - not public link now. Needed?).

### *Time plan*

A time plan based on the project's overall milestones. It specifies when WP2 – Communication actions will be carried on by the partners and its delivery timing.

### *Budget*

Budget for the implementation of actions by each partner to ensure that sufficient funds were dedicated to achieving the overall aims and objectives of the Communication plan.

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*Video of Plazaola: This report aimed to assist to the partners in the Development of Tailored Virtual Reality Material. It was focused on NASUVINSA's experience creating its own promotional video, describing the steps taken and providing best practices and advice for the development of future videos to the rest of the partners.*

*Plazaola digital with Google: This report aimed to assist to the partners in the Development of Tailored Virtual Reality Material. It is hard work to contact with Google but being in their platforms gives a lot of visibility. Partners were very interested on this and since Nasuvinsa digitalised Plazaola's greenway, he shared his expertise on the topics with the partners through this report.*

## COMMUNICATION TOOLS

### Logo/brand



### Project brochure

Project brochure and folder to give in events and meeting informing about the project

### Roll up and poster

Project roll up for each partner (9) to visibilise the project, the EU and the trails at the meetings.

A common Project poster for the overall dissemination of the project and to add the activities to be organised (as a template to advertise them).

### Website

The project website to share project results, news and the value of the pilot trails to the broad audience <https://www.trailgazers.eu/>

### Social media channels

Social media channels to communicate activities and share videos and post to engage with other entities and the general public

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/trailgazers/>

Facebook: @TrailgazersB

Instagram: @trail.gazers

YouTube: TrailGazers [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4NCKjUfR2-O\\_0oeSaiPk8Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4NCKjUfR2-O_0oeSaiPk8Q)

Twitter: @TrailgazersB



### Virtual tourism materials

Some examples to be mentioned in point 2.1

### Newsletter (e-zine)

5 in total, Organised and structured by Nasuvinsa. Articles provided by partners.

### Press releases

One after each SCM prepared by Nasuvinsa and revised by the partners.

Partners prepare press releases for their regional press.

### Stakeholder meetings

Proposal to establish and develop the Project Advisory Group (PAGs) in each region and on the organization of meetings. This ensures a consistency of approach and communicate clearly to members of the PAG their role and functions.

Instructions for the Community Trail Ambassador Programme (CTAP) were developed to ensure outline to members of the community the importance of becoming a Trail Ambassador or Custodian of the site.

<sup>1</sup>Video of Plazaola: This report aimed to assist to the partners in the Development of Tailored Virtual Reality Material. It was focused on NASUVINSA's experience creating its own promotional video, describing the steps taken and providing best practices and advise for the development of future videos to the rest of the partners.

<sup>2</sup>Plazaola digital with Google: This report aimed to assist to the partners in the Development of Tailored Virtual Reality Material. It is hard work to contact with Google but being in their platforms gives a lot of visibility. Partners where very interested on this and since Nasuvinsa digitalised Plazaola's greenway, he shared his expertise on the topics with the partners through this report.

## BEST PRACTICES DISSEMINATION

### Info sheets

Nasuvinsa prepares a template. After each final version of the project deliverables, the project lead transfers its content in a summarised fashion to the template for consultation and dissemination (23).

### Best practices kits

### Technical papers

There have been 2 from the University of Algarve and one from Ulster University along the project:  
<https://www.mdpi.com/1424-8220/21/6/2038>  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jtr.2487>  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14724049.2022.2030745>

### Launch and Closure Events

Organisation, development, engagement and evaluation of events for dissemination.

### Cooperation with other Atlantic Area projects and EU initiatives

This has been answered by the partners and reflected on the Communication Report 2021.



## BEST PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION

Nasuvinsa subcontracted the aforementioned communication company who developed the project materials (roll ups for all the partners, project brochure and poster, Social Networks) and a video for Plazaola. Nasuvinsa also worked for the whole communication of the project through its own resources, and the participation and collaboration of all the partners for the web content, e-zines, press releases etc.).

### Key Project Communication Outputs produced in 2021

- ◆ 1 website
- ◆ 3 e-zines
- ◆ 231 posts on SN
- ◆ 70 press releases
- ◆ 5 TV and radio interventions
- ◆ 33 events
- ◆ 5 Campaigns
- ◆ PAG: 9
- ◆ CTAP: 12
- ◆ Environmental workshops: 3
- ◆ B2C: 8
- ◆ 27 videos and podcasts
- ◆ 9 Roll up designs and 12 more printed

Specific reports, such as the “Development of a Virtual Tourism Toolkit” by Merthyr or the Communication Plan, became the guidelines to follow. Each trail has analysed its specific needs and possibilities and, following TrailGazer’s guidelines and support, has developed its own adapted/context-specific communication tools.

There was constant feedback from the Trail Leads to the Communication Leads and the communication company to allow the dissemination of information through TrailGazers channels.

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*Central to this programme is the concept that 'One community ambassador can make a difference, and become the difference within that community'. It is envisaged as a compile of local people and events that generate cooperation and synergies and share knowledge in relation to the trails and their surrounding area.*

## MATERIALS DEVELOPED BY PARTNERS

® Inch levels - Donegal County Council produced thematic promotional video and vodcasts with the history of the area and developed a character called Inche  
[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPxaRefFMyOwUTPHZ8WjRx30\\_KQuo1hWr](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLPxaRefFMyOwUTPHZ8WjRx30_KQuo1hWr)



- Taff Trail – Merthyr prepared an interactive map to reflect the points of interest and services of the trail  
<https://www.visitmerthyr.co.uk/map-page/>
- Sete Vales Suspensos – The University of Algarve designed a new app to tell the “Lost Stories” of TrailGazers trails  
<https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/lost-stories>
- Trilo do Montana Sagrada – Viana do Castelo digitalised the trail (I think that it is not available yet)
- Chemin des Memoires – Louvigne du Desert prepared Trail Care Packs for all the partners of the project, along with their collaboration  
<https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/trail-care-packs>
- Knocknarea / Killspugbrone loop – Sligo celebrated a series of guided walks with local experts in the summer of 2021 and invited people to participate through this video  
<https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/news3>
- La Caldera de Taburiente – La Palma organised an itinerant exhibition along the island that has gathered all the partners into it. It is made out of roll ups and every trail appears on them  
<https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/event-exhibition-caldera-taburiente>
- Plazaola prepared online exhibitions for Google Arts & Culture  
<https://artsandculture.google.com/search?q=plazaola>

Each partner was in charge of informing to the communication lead about their various activities so they could be disseminated by TrailGazers channels. Nasuvinsa was always proactive in support for the dissemination of partners’ materials. Nevertheless, partners have developed their own materials and distributed them through their own media channels as well, which has allowed them to reach other audiences.

The communication was coordinated internally through weekly meetings and with the partners of the project through monthly meetings, the first Friday of every month. Structured monthly meetings ensured that time frames were adhered to and also that corrective actions where necessary. In the end, these communication meetings became also coordination meetings, since all the partners informed about the status of their activities, so all the partners were aware of what was going on.

The communication among partners had to be held online, as well as the Steering Committee Meetings, due to distance and Covid-19. The communication with the local communities and other stakeholders had to be online too,

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*Through a tender process, Heda comunicación was subcontracted to help with the communication of the Project. It was in charge of the creation of the communication materials and social media, and the dinamization of the social media. They prepared also the templates for the info sheets and e-zines and collaborated in the organization of the closure event. The web, newsletters, press releases and internal communication were held directly by NASUVINSA.*

which posed a bigger problem due to the lack of habit. Nevertheless, the project had to go ahead and the communication too. Several platforms were set up, different ones according to the needs and capacities of the partners and people invited to the meetings. For example, for the project communication it was GoToMeeting. For internal communication in Nasuvinsa was WebEx. For communication with local stakeholders in Plazaola, it was jitsimeet, because it was free and the connectivity seemed to work better. Instructions and training were sent and organised in Navarra to adapt to the new communicative situation. Other partners managed to celebrate PAG meeting online too.

### *Who helped with the implementation of it?*

All the partners, Nasuvinsa and HEDA Comunicación, with a very close follow-up by lead partner (DCC).

- Regional press of the area of the pilot trails and all kind of local stakeholders.



The Project Advisory Groups (PAGs) have been of crucial relevance in many of the trails.

The Communication Plan had a specific chapter of instructions on how to organise these meetings and engage with their participants. Nasuvinsa prepared templates to be filled for: previous organization of the PAG, to take the minutes, and signatures (links). DCC prepared Stakeholder engagement templates to promote the conversation and feedback.

Nasuvinsa has kept track of the celebration of the PAG meeting among the partners and has offered advise to organise them online since Covid-19 restrictions forbid face to face meetings and that made things more complicated, especially for remote areas or for PAG with elderly people.

In those technical meetings, the partners gathered with different profiles of stakeholders, what enabled the acknowledgment of their opinions and new ideas. They became the strategic group keeping track of the project and its results on each territory. They also helped with the dissemination of the project.

### *What role did key stakeholders play?*

There have been several profiles (Environmental authorities, Cultural authorities, Tourism authorities, mountain federations, schools, local action groups, local representatives, SMEs, neighbors, experts etc.) and each of them contributed in a different manner according to their experience. For example, local SMEs contributed organizing the B2C initiatives, the Tourism Department offered help for marketing, the Wildlife Trust ensured the protection of different areas and the Mountain Federation contributed to the organization of volunteering groups in some of the trails.

## Best Practice Review Phase

There has been dialog among partners. The continuous meetings (on weekly and monthly bases) where very much needed to be in track of the different activities of the project. Nevertheless, the face to face Steering Committee Meeting held in La Palma in May 2022 and the face to face events organised with the local communities on the frame of TrailGazers proves that nothing like to be with the people when talking about work and organizing activities.

Nasuvinsa, in 2022, evaluated the impact of the communication of 2021 on a report aimed to obtain best practices to inform the project and the rest of the partners and put the lessons learnt into practice for the rest of the project. It was made with the data provided by the partners and TrailGazers' analytics accounts. It was sent to the partners for revision and the main outcome presented at a Steering Committee Meeting.

## The evaluation carried out by Nasuvinsa highlights a number of areas for improvement in the communication and things that are working fine:

Website: It should be in project's partners' languages to reach further audience. It is complete and attractive due to the many contents and the pictures of the trails.

E-zines: to make them with less text. They are a good tool to attract people to the website when the news hang from there.

SM: very important for the engagement and the dissemination of activities. The posts must be continuous. When related to activities, they receive more engagement. Paid publicity helps on the dissemination.

Press releases: it is good that each region prepares articles for their local media because the grand public gets to know the project from there. However, it does not result that interesting to prepare a common new after each Steering Committee meeting. This information does not attract attention. The news have to talk about specific results or events at specific places known by the people.

TV and radio interventions: they find you when there is something interesting to tell, specific results or events. Nevertheless, it is important to have contact with the regional channels, purpose them communicative actions and offer them project materials such as videos, for retransmission.

CTAP and Events: they prove to work fantastic. The local populations are willing on participating and enriching their information about their territory. The tourists love guided activities.

Campaigns: as little differentiated communicative actions, they work fine, but a project's campaign is limited in terms of budget and target audience.

PAG: well organised and inviting to different stakeholders, they are a rich source of information for the Community Trail Plans and a good dissemination channel. They anchor the project to the territory in some way.

Environmental workshops: they must be focused on specific issues and avoid repeating the PAG questions and issues to the same people attending them. In NASUVINSA's experience, in Plazaola's surroundings there are many technical meetings and the people is sick of participating at ethereal discussions. We solved this offering a specific and simple management tool and training to the people on how to use it at our environmental workshop; as we engaged people to talk (for that we also prepared a little exposition) we took notes of what was said for the SWOT.

B2C: it is necessary to study previously what has been done, what worked and what not in the area. What is the ambition and problems of the local SMEs. And with all this, define the training and B2C initiative. It must be context specific to attract costumers but also to the SMEs to engage. Again, in Plazaola, the people are overwhelmed by trainings and activities and they do not participate unless you do something special. It is also difficult for them to leave their businesses to come to the training, so, the timing is important here too.

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<sup>5</sup> An app to inform about incidences on the trail by mobile phone.



In terms of marketing and digital tools, online platforms seem to be working better than paper.

◆ Were the methods/best practice that was used effective?

**Mentioned on previous paragraph action by action.** Overall, yes, the Communication Plan and the specific reports were useful guiding this. Nevertheless, the time/experience and testing the methods is what has given and overview on how to make things work better.

◆ On the basis of what best practice/method used on the trails, what would we now do differently from what was done on your trail for each of the methods/best practice forms?

When there is a needed deliverable for other actions to start, this should arrive on time. If not, partners start preparing things without guidance.

Calendar issues also related to the communication milestones. It is difficult to foresee when things will be ready for dissemination and is true that partners have done their work answering when information was demanded and sent content for the project; however, it was difficult to have an organised calendar with anticipation.

It is crucial to know what the other partners are doing and not always has been achieved, at least on time. The web is not the best place to disseminate events. Some works better for that since they are faster to nourish and update. They also reach more people.

Interreg Atlantic Area EUROPEAN UNION

Search for date

# TRAIL GAZERS

*An endless trail of possibilities for rural communities*

TRAIL GAZERS

Trail Gazers aims to revitalise, regenerate and re-imagine rural communities by developing a 'shared vision' for the future sustainable development of the trail site, its natural and cultural assets and surrounding towns, villages and countryside. This future vision is community led, evidence based and enshrined in the concept of slow tourism which these small communities can sustainably manage. It will target walking and cycling visitors, who are interested in the 'unique experience' offered by small rural or often remote areas that are steeped in a rich array of natural, built and cultural heritage.

Join the International Trail Gazers Team  
Click here

# 3

## Ville de Louvigné du Desert Capitalisation





# 3



## Louvigné du Desert, France – Capitalisation

Responsible for ensuring the legacy of Trail Gazers lives on, long after the project has finished by developing capitalisation and animation strategies for local and regional stakeholders.

### 3.0 - “A Capitalisation Tool for Walks and Trails”

The popularity of walking and cycling along the Atlantic Areas trails has seen an increase in the number of visitor both domestic and international on trails across all of Europe. Whilst this has brought much needed revenue to these predominantly rural areas, it has caused poor treatment of some of our most sensitive landscapes and biospheres. The Trail Gazers Project set out to identify these assets, attribute a value to them and to bring about sustainable development of these assets through increased education around the importance of preserving and respecting our local natural and built environment and heritage. Yet simultaneously bringing about economic development through enhanced and planned slow tourism.

Together, with building up a sense of ownership and connection with local communities so that they could become custodians of their natural and built environment for them and future generations to enjoy through the Community Trail Ambassador Programme. The project aimed to nurture and develop these assets and communities through the work of the various initiatives and toolkits/guidelines being developed by the various project partners.

The city of Louvigné du Désert was chosen as the main partner of this work package on the basis of its experience in the design of a trail development scheme gained from a former European Project of the Interreg ENO cross-border co-operation programme (SHARE). A capitalisation strategy was developed in collaboration with the partnership, which aimed to capitalise on existing investment in walking and cycling routes along the eight pilot trails, to understand its impact on stimulating employment and growth and how it could increase the multiplier by engaging Small Medium Enterprises (SME's), tourist providers & services, artisan companies, education providers etc along the trail to achieve these goals.

*Capitalisation Strategy – See Appendices*

### Best Practice Developed

The Trail Gazers Project sought to build up a sense of ownership and connection among the community to these assets through 5 interconnected key actions and a methodology was developed to enable the predefined actions to be implemented on each of the pilot trails.

The actions were set out as follows;

#### **Action 1 – Animation and engagement of SMEs and Tourism providers by workshops.**

The first step to engage SME and Tourism Providers in the Trail Gazers Bid was to identify and classify by order of importance the stakeholders at partnership level. The methodology “Animation and Engagement of SME and Tourism providers” leads the partners in the organisation and animations of an efficient workshops with businesses connected to the trail. The workshop pursues the following objectives:

1. Present and promote the Trail Gazers project to the tourism stakeholders
2. Collect recommendations from businesses to improve the hiking trail
3. Collectively reflect on the implementation of a strategy to encourage visitors to consume off the trail  
(Business to Consumer Initiative- Action3)

*Methodology – See Appendices*

#### **Action 2 – Identifying requirements to enhance trail experiences**

In addition to the recommendations collected from the businesses, trail users' surveys implemented on every trail determined the quality of the experience whilst on the trail and gave indications to enhance that experience.

### Action 3 – Trailing business to consumer supports along 6 transnational trails

Based on the propositions from the workshop (action 1) and the recommendations from users (action 2), a Business to Consumer (B2C) initiative was tested on every trail for 6 months and this has participated to encourage tourists to consume in local businesses in order to develop high economic return on SMEs.

### Action 4 – Establishing Networks of Community Trails Ambassadors

Through local events (Community Trail Ambassadors Programme), factsheets to protect the natural and cultural heritage (Trail Care Packs), awareness videos to promote the hiking and cycling routes (Thematic podcasts videos), these actions participated to attract new visitors on the trail and also in local businesses.

I. Community Trail Ambassador Programme - To set up a group of ambassadors from the local community of every trail had an importance to the promotion and the awareness of the fragile balance between of the economic development and the preservation of natural assets.



### Best Practice Implementation

This work package and the project set out to target a large number of stakeholders such as local businesses, tourism providers, public authorities. A stakeholder's analysis methodology was essential for choosing the main players to involve in the process, to analyse their level of interest, their concerns, and their ability to influence the outcomes of the project according to their level of commitment. This measure promotes strategic engagement by ensuring that the identification gathered the right participants and that no group was inadvertently excluded. The Project Advisory Group (PAG) played a role to maintain a connection with stakeholder's groups.

To ensure the successful completion the five key actions of the WP 3 - Capitalisation, a set of documents and guidelines had to be drawn up to harmonise the work done by the partners. The Coordination Meeting set up every month plays the role to ensure the continuity of the actions. It also afforded the partners within the project the

opportunity to exchange ideas and knowledge through the shared learning aspect of the project which played a key role in the over-arching aims of the project.

Measuring the economic return and capitalise on existing investment in walking and cycling routes have been strongly impacted by global Covid-19 pandemic. This did have an impact on the partners capacity to engage with key stakeholders on the various trails and the travel limitations in Europe has impacted the trail's footfall.



Initiatives developed to promote the capitalisation of the project included;

### **a. Community Trail Ambassador Programme**

Trail Gazers encouraged widespread participation in the 'Community Trail Ambassador Programme', this was done by organising Community Trail Ambassador events on each trail and animating local people to become 'community trail ambassadors' or custodians of these natural sites. Trail Gazers aim was to reignite ambition for the area and that one person can make a difference and become the difference in that community!



Community Trail Ambassador Events were very important as local people were key to the success of this project. Several different types of events were organised across the partnership to assist the setting up of ambassadors from the local community around each trail, these varied from walks and talks, cycle events, local markets exhibitions to fun events aimed at children.



### **Establishing Networks of Community Trails Ambassadors:**

Through local events (Community Trail Ambassadors Programme), factsheets to protect the natural and cultural heritage (Trail Care Packs), awareness videos to promote the hiking and cycling routes (Thematic podcasts videos), these actions participated to attract new visitors on the trail and also into local businesses.

### Community Trail Ambassadors Objective:

To set up a group of Community Trail Ambassadors comprising of figure heads in the community who will have dual functions to:

Promote the economic, environmental and health benefits of the selected trails locally to local businesses, citizens, schools, health providers, environmental protection agencies etc.

Promote the trails nationally and internationally using virtual trail material developed in WP2 via national or international networks or established tourism brands.



## 10 Reasons to encourage citizens to become a Community Trail Ambassador:



To become a certified 'Community Trail Ambassador' with a defined mission statement to champion your trail.



To receive your free set of Trail Care Packs that will further enhance your knowledge of the trail and hiking benefits.



To become a volunteer who is an 'influencer' within your trail community who can make a difference and be the difference within your community.



To be an 'educator' to trail users sharing your personal skills (e.g. history of the site, importance of environmental awareness etc.) within the wider trail community.



To learn new skills through the Community Trail Ambassador Programme of events offered by the Trail Gazers team.



To take new skills learned and further develop them and share them within the wider trail community.



To offer 'stewardship' in an effective and productive manner that can help inform future decisions by policy makers, agencies, trail community etc. on trail management and trail development that may have short, medium or long-term impact on the future of the trail and trail enhancement.



To have the opportunity to give back to nature by encouraging others to respect and nurture their environment.



To meet, engage and work with like minded trail users, to share your knowledge and experiences and to learn from them about their trails in other regions.



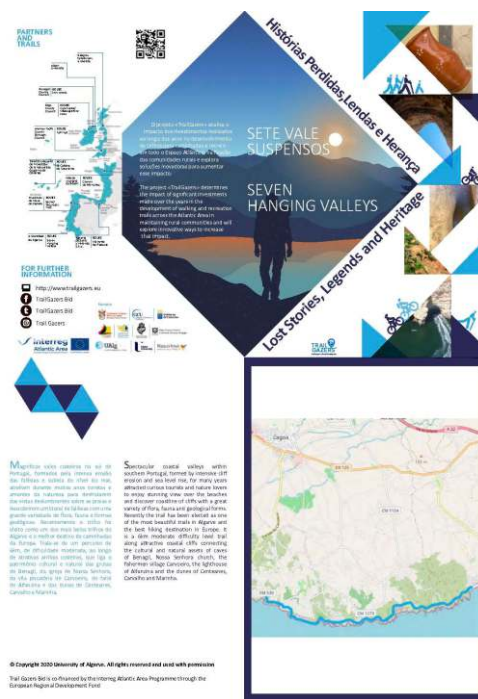
To obtain a personal sense of fulfillment for having become an active ambassador who strives to protect the trail that you cherish.

## a. Trail Care Packs (TCP's)

Six TCP's have been created. Three generic ones: Enjoy Nature Responsibly, Hiking Safely and Mental Wellness. Three individualised: Fauna and Flora, Lost Stories and Legend and Workout Trail. The methodology followed and the option to individualise the documents enabled the production of 58 original documents in 7 different languages.

The dissemination of the TCPs was mainly done through downloads from the partners' websites as well as by sending files by e-mail. To date, 940 TCPs have been downloaded from the partners' websites.

Trail Care Packs can be downloaded or viewed from <https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/trail-care-packs>



## b. Business to Consumer Initiatives (B2C's)

A methodology has been drafted to guide the work of all partners and to harmonise the outcomes of the workshops. Each stage of the workshop is detailed step by step from identification of the stakeholders to the facilitation process of the workshop.

### Best Practice Review

#### a. Business to Consumer Initiatives:

Three business to consumer initiatives were piloted on the 7 sites: promotion, signage on the trail and new products for visitors.

#### - Long process to engage stakeholders

Engaging local stakeholders for a new project is a long process. Targeting / listing/ convincing ...

#### - Flexibility

The Trail Gazers project has 10 partners and is focused on 8 trail routes in Atlantic Area which have all specificities. The tools created by the partnership have to be flexible.

- The local businesses have expectation from the local authority and are interested to work for their territory

At local level, the Trail Gazers project through the WP3, closely connected with external stakeholders, gave the opportunity to built new connections with local players. The common goal expressed in PAG meeting will maintain a network, specifically from public players with private players beyond the project life.

### 3. Appendices

1. TGB-WP3-ACT1\_Animation and engagement of SME and Tourism provider workshops.pdf -  
<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/5b6dd1b45c524109bf70e86496891093/data>
  
2. TGB-WP3-ACT1\_Methodology workshop businesses.pdf -  
<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/202a6ae70bac4fae9b2f8ff94b4eab9b/data>
  
3. REPORT ON LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE WORKSHOPS WITH BUSINESSES AND THE B2C INITIATIVES.pdf -  
<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/4936c2bbea414eac89d687444461befb/data>
  
4. WP3\_Terms of reference Podcasts.pdf -  
<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/2db4b625115146df9ffdefa91def1ba1/data>
  
5. WP3\_Terms of reference Podcasts Guideline speakers.pdf -  
<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/dea85905ed994d919924b400975c64cb/data>
  
6. WP3\_Terms of reference Trail Care Pack.pdf -  
<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/a0249330198b4834b8c5b1e9e6ae42e4/data>

All available on:

<https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/wp3>

# 4

## Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Knowledge Transfer





# 4



## Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Wales, United Kingdom Knowledge Transfer

*Responsible for coordinating the transfer of knowledge, learning and expertise on new technologies, marketing techniques and community trail planning between all partners.*

The Trail Gazers Project began with the call for partners across the Atlantic Area and a Trail Gazers Consortium was put together from a wide and varying range of disciplines; 3 Universities (Glasgow Caledonian University, Ulster University and Universidade do Algarve), 4 Local Authorities (Donegal County Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Sligo County Council and Municipio de Viana do Castelo) and three Regional Bodies (Dirección General de Protección de la Naturaleza – Gobierno de Canarias, Ville de Louvigné du Désert and Navarra de Suelo y Vivienda, S.A.U.).

The mix of partners was engineered due to the wide and varied disciplines required for the project and what was key to the project was how this knowledge could be transferred and disseminated across the consortium so that all partners could experience the true value of a shared learning approach throughout the entire project duration.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) was selected to lead on Work Package 4 “Knowledge Exchange & Dissemination”. The organisation was experienced in project managing and delivering EU Funded projects, being Lead partner on an Interreg IVB funded SHARE Project (2011-15) and project partner on the Interreg IVB COLLABOR8 Project (2008-14). MTCBC offered significant experience terms of business engagement, trails development/auditing and tourism destination management plan development and promotion.

### Best Practice Developed

Within the “Knowledge Exchange and Dissemination” Work Package for Trail Gazers, there were a number of key deliverables.

- Development of a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Development of Footfall Technology Best Practise Toolkit
- Development of a Virtual Tourism Toolkit
- Develop Technical Specification for Trails and Amenities Dashboards
- Informing Asset Maintenance and Destination Management Plans

When developing the KPI/footfall technology document and Virtual Tourism Toolkit, Best Practice was identified within the partnership, (e.g. Glasgow's “Data Capture Report” & Ulster University's “Video Imagery Equipment Recommendations and Advice” report). This expertise was complemented by Best Practice from external sources e.g. recommendations of indicators that have been successful in various trail settings and virtual tourism tools and methods implemented by organisations to attain the highest reach and engagement for their respective regions. Information gathered from partners in undertaking the footfall technology research report was shared with Ulster University to support their work in developing the specification for the Trails Dashboard and MTCBC shared their experiences from working with their external trails monitor provider, who was knowledgeable in relation to footfall datasets.

The final action, “Informing Asset Maintenance and Destination Management Plans” was amended to reflect the priority to deliver Trail Plans, rather than Destination Management Plans. Each partners respective Community Trail Plan will be one of the lasting legacies for the partnership project. MTCBC engaged with the consortium and alongside partners from Donegal and Nasuvinsa, developed the idea of using ArcGIS Story Maps to illustrate each partners plan. MTCBC developed a Community Trail Plan template and “how to” guide, which enabled partners to easily complete the requirement for Trail Plans for each of the Trail settings. Using in house expertise in MTCBC and Nasuvinsa, an approach was successfully agreed which would connect the use of existing data from The Trail Model Web Platform (Navarra), Data Capture Surveys (Glasgow), Multiplier Effects (Algarve) and Trails Dashboard

(Ulster) in one online plan. MTCBC worked with the Lead Partner (Donegal) to deliver an “Action Plan Toolkit” which complemented the methods developed by MTCBC to capture partner data within a structured framework. Nasuvinsa and MTCBC advised partners on the development and uploading of content to Story Maps which enabled learning across the partnership and the sharing of best practice ideas on innovative approaches to illustrating existing data and future key development option plans. The online presence of each partners plan will ensure not only a lasting legacy for the Trail Gazers project but will also provide an important and interesting resource for community groups who may be interested in developing plans for their local trails across Europe.

As lead partner for this Work Package, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) adopted a similar methodology for all the aforementioned deliverables:

- Consulted with partners to understand their knowledge (including gap analysis)
- Collated partnership responses and investigated related Best Practice examples (from within the partnership and from external entities)
- Developed the required document/tool based on in-house knowledge, identified best practice and partner responses
- Presented the information to the partnership for comment and amendment
- Finalised the document/tool for formal partnership approval
- Evaluated the use of the document/tool in line with an annual review, to ensure the reports, toolkits etc. remain relevant to the partnership.

## Best Practice Implementation

### Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Report

Once the appropriate KPIs had been adopted by the partnership, all partners implemented the indicators to enable testing. The priority metric, to record footfall, allowed synergy between the “Trail Technology Deployment” Work Package, led by Ulster University and enabled the report to be implemented even though the project had to adapt to account for the COVID-19 Global Pandemic.

All partners went through a process of attaining sign off with their respective Project Advisory Groups (PAG) and management bodies before implementing the KPIs and an evaluation of the report was then undertaken to assess the benefits and limitations of the selected indicators.

### Virtual Tourism Toolkit

MTCBC surveyed partners, not only on their perceived strengths and weaknesses in relation to Virtual Tourism methods, but also on their experiences of implementing Virtual Tourism Projects before the toolkit was formally approved. Once formally approved, partners began to use the toolkit as a reference point for any Virtual Tourism projects they were developing, and a further evaluation was undertaken, as a part of an annual review of the toolkit, with the intention of ensuring that the toolkit remains relevant for partners and any other Trail regions that may be considering developing a Virtual Tourism Project.

### Community Trail Plan

In implementing the Community Trail Plan, MTCBC worked with Nasuvinsa and Donegal partners to develop an approach to visualising the final plan (ArcGIS Story Maps). Once this was agreed, MTCBC and Donegal worked to develop a template, which enabled partners to collate the information required to represent their Community Trail Plan online.

The information required for the Community Trail Plans in each Trail setting utilised information from each Work Package (e.g. Footfall data, survey information and B2C action plans) and in addition, key stakeholders and PAGs in each region informed the content of each Plan. The PAGs in particular will be responsible in the longer term for ensuring the implementation of the plan (i.e. after the Trail Gazers project ends) and these plans are a significant legacy for the project overall.

Partner Feedback was invited in relation to the following reports: “Key Performance Indicators (KPI) & Data Capture” and “Virtual Tourism Toolkit”.

### KPI & Data Capture Report – Partner Feedback and Learning

## Best Practice Review

All trail leads have implemented the KPIs, although some partners could not monitor them all due to the unique features/constraints on their respective trails. Most partners reported monitoring the identified KPIs along with additional ones which allowed them to begin to establish a shared baseline, whilst considering the more specific requirements of their trails.

One of the key successes of this report was that the KPIs were able to be adopted across a number of differing trails settings successfully, which should also help any organisations external to the partnership when seeking appropriate indicators to implement on their local trails. This report therefore contributes towards the legacy of the project longer term.

Learning from the partnership surveys mentioned a number of potential amendments to the report (e.g. recording information by seasons rather than six monthly “high” and “low” periods) and suggested that to add value to the data, the User Survey information from Glasgow University could be appended to enable some interpretation of the data. Initial data capture research from partners revealed that some partners did not have many clear indicators to measure their trails. The implementation of the Trail Gazers KPIs, alongside the invaluable work done by Ulster University on the Trails Dashboard, ensured that trail settings were being monitored regularly and consistently, which should assist partners with a variety of future support mechanisms such as funding bids and environmental designations.

### Virtual Tourism Toolkit – Partner Feedback and Learning

All trail leads reported using the Virtual Tourism Toolkit to a greater or lesser degree, even those partners who had significant experience in implementing virtual tourism projects and utilising respective media tools and equipment.

The report was successful in that it illustrated in a clear, simple and easily understandable way, the themes and opportunities provided by various methods of virtual tourism and provided recommendations and considerations for a “beginner” in developing virtual tourism projects. This was the overall aim of the report which partners felt had been achieved.

Learning from the partnership feedback highlighted the need for a virtual tourism toolkit to be modified on a regular basis to ensure that it stays current and reflects the changing technology in virtual tourism, which is a fast developing creative industry. Although successful in its initial ambitions, some partners would have liked to have seen subsequent, further advice on the use of equipment and more detail on producing content in house, from pre-production through to filming and final editing. All trail settings have, throughout the course of the Trail Gazers project, successfully produced video content for their respective trails and all have naturally included an educational/interpretational approach.

From the respective virtual tourism case studies from partners, the key learning for any organisation wishing to undertake a virtual tourism project overall was to allow for delays due to weather/environmental restrictions and COVID-19, all of which can impact on budget and project delivery. Having a clearly defined project idea and subsequent consistent communication with any external contractors was also a key learning point which partners identified as a part of their virtual media development experience. From a longer term legacy perspective, the virtual tourism toolkit could be used by organisations external to the partnership to help inform their future development of media materials in relation to their trail settings and allow them to consider the use of marketing budgets more effectively.

In hindsight, it would have been beneficial for the deliverables/reports within this Work Package to have been achieved earlier in the project. Unforeseen issues such as staff changes and the COVID-19 Pandemic had a severe impact upon project delivery. Overall, the Work Package has been delivered successfully and within the parameters of the project requirements. The Best Practice reports and toolkits have been well received, and have provided partners with recommendations for their Trail settings. The reports could also be used by other interested parties, external to the Trail Gazers partnership, and therefore contribute to the legacy of the Trail Gazers project long term.



## 4. Appendices

See all documents listed: <https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/wp4>

# 5

## Glasgow Caledonian University Data Capture



# 5



## Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, United Kingdom – Data Capture

Responsible for the data capture element of the project including the design, testing and administration of a visitor survey along each of the selected international trail sites.

The popularity of walking, hiking and cycling across the Atlantic Area continues to grow in momentum and popularity with the ever increasing need for the population to become more aware of the health benefits associated with these activities both mentally and physically on the human body. But in order to sustainably develop any trail and/or recreational areas there was an ever increasing need to capture detailed data in terms of; a. the physical, economic and environmental aspects of the trails which would enable the building of a trail model and b. capture an accurate account of the trail users and key stakeholders in terms of their perception and activity on the trail and the surrounding catchment area that will in turn inform the future trail development and management.

The Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) was selected as lead partner on this work package on the basis of its expertise in national tourism/regional planning strategies; business training and destination management plans; integration of bench marking; best practice exercises to illustrate new trends and practices. They also had vast experience in collaborating with governments, the private sector both nationally and internationally. This report aims to set out a summary of the work that carried out by GCU for Work Package 5 – A Data Capture Toolkit, to develop and achieve the detailed actions.

**The following 4 main actions were part of WP5 carried out by GCU:**

Action 1	Profiling Trail Amenities & Services
Action 2	Trail Model Simulation and Service Levels
Action 3	Selecting Community Researchers / Advocates- Ambassadors-Champions
Action 4	Administration of Survey

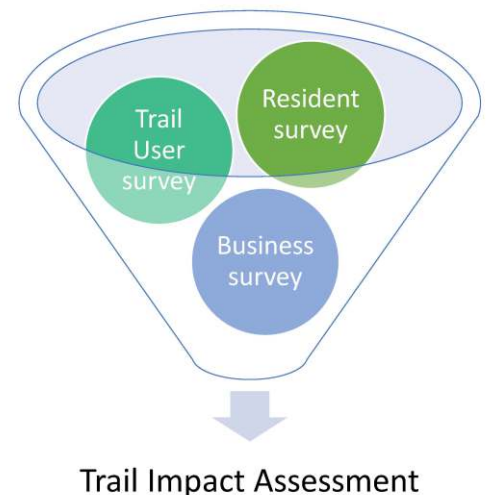
The main task of WP5 was to demarcate a clear methodology for the overall data capture activities. This document mainly focuses on presenting best practices associated with Action 1 and Action 4 of WP5, as they are both closely interlinked with the remainder of the actions under the same Work Package, namely 2 and 3. For this reason, Actions 1 and 2, and 4 and 3 will be presented under two separate sections as follows.

### Best Practice developed

#### Action 1 & 2 - Profiling Trail Amenities & Services/Trail Model Simulation

Trail Classification systems are typically a common practice with the intent of providing users with essential information on trails. For instance, classification systems describe the trail's difficulty level and other relevant features based on which users can compare the different trails and select the one that best suits them. Beyond that, it was established that other information and indicators, eg. ownership involvement and branding and publicity, would complement the trail profile benefitting management and stakeholders involved in the trail maintenance. With this in mind, action 1 was mainly planned to identify key challenges for development and lead to the formulation of pilot actions for stakeholders such as trail managers, interested parties and local authorities involved in the management, maintenance and promotion of the trail. For the purpose of this project, we aimed to develop a trail classification system that would enclose key information to be used for other actions such as the Trail Model Simulation.

Data capture project methodology



### Determining the trail development stage

Trail Attributes	Minimally developed	Moderately developed	Highly Developed	Fully developed
Tread & Traffic Flow				
Obstacles				
Constructed Features & Trail Elements				
Signs				
Typical Recreation Environments & Experience				

*Trail attributes: Level of development (1-5)*

Finally, an educational video was also created with animated infographics to instruct potential community researchers on the aim of the survey and the work to be carried out. In some cases, a few partners had to rely on third-parties to perform surveys given the lack of internal resources and the difficulty to recruit researchers locally, especially since the health emergency affected all project regions. However, a high number of surveys was achieved as of March 2022, with over 1,800 surveys in total being expected by the end of the project.

### Action 1 & 2 - Profiling Trail Amenities & Services/Trail Model Simulation

It can be stated that the information gathered for Action 1 via the Trail Profile Survey was instrumental not only to feed Action 2 for the development of the Trial Model Simulation exercise, but was also shared at local PAGs providing the basis for active discussions. A recommendation would be that such information was kept up-to-date for systematic review with suggested timeframe of 6 months to 1 year. In particular, the Trail Development Matrix is noteworthy as it provides a simple instrument that assists trail managements to keep track of the progress and changes occurring at the trail over a given period of time.

### Action 3 & 4 - Administration of Survey & Selecting Community Researchers / Advocates- Ambassadors-Champions

The information gathered through the user survey played a fundamental as enabler of the Multiplier effect calculations carried out by UALG. Without this data, such calculations would not be possible therefore making this activity pivotal. The feature of the software app that allowed collecting survey data offline was also a strategic feature as often expressed by partners. The preliminary results and analysis for some of trails were also shared with the local partners and presented at local PAGs to provide some useful ground for discussion. Further, the full set of data will also be analyzed more in depth in the accomplishment of four academic publications, of which two have been already published.

	Trail Development Stage (1-5)
Inch Levels	4
LDD	2
Seven Hanging Valleys	4
Taff Trail	3
La Caldera de Taburiente	3
Plazaola	4
Knockarea Sligo	3

Table 1. Trail development stage (1-5)

With the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 globally, the Project as the majority of all activities were heavily affected. With reference to this report and WP5 actions included, the User Survey action has been the one most affected by the health and safety regulations put in place across countries worldwide. However, data collection activities picked up again during times of reopening of public spaces and easing of restrictions at most locations. Partners must be acknowledged for their hard work and commitment showed during such difficult time as they managed to gather data in representation of most of the four seasons as originally planned.

Action (Action 2). We undertook a review of several sources comprising secondary data (reports, public data, consultancy publications); online resources (trail websites and official/public online sources); and academic literature such as topical publications, scientific articles and book chapters. Such exercise was undertaken with the specific objective of developing key performance indicators (KPIs) to develop the 'Trail Profile Survey'.

### Action 3 & 4 - Administration of Survey & Selecting Community Researchers / Advocates - Ambassadors-Champions

A key part of our Work Package was the development of a survey aimed at users of the trails. This instrument aimed to ensure that information was collected from the point of view of the trail's user to provide with the opportunity to express opinions regarding, for instance, the condition of the trail, expectations, preferences as well as to disclose key information to feed into other WPs, namely 3 and 7. Similarly to the previous actions, we undertook a review of reports, consultancy publications, online resources and academic literature on the topics of nature-based and leisure activities, and trail management. Based on such premises, in order to ensure that questions were answered thoroughly and to increase reliability of the data collected, a face-to-face approach when undertaking the questionnaire was therefore recommended. This is in line with Action 3 concerning the involvement of individuals from communities and local origins.

## Best Practice Implementation

### Action 1 & 2 - Profiling Trail Amenities & Services/Trail Model Simulation

In order to gather information homogenously for the different trails, a Trail Profile Survey concerning several aspects of the trail was developed. Several sections covering different aspects of the trail were included requesting both numerical and qualitative data. This included; number of visitors, amenities and facilities, coordinates and visuals (eg. logos). Each trail lead provided the information within a time frame of 1-4 months, depending on the availability of the information. The information was gathered by trail leads in collaboration with local stakeholders in a few cases, such as trail managers and volunteers who have access to data such as sensors data and other historical data. New information also had to be gathered by trial leads as for the case of the location coordinates of amenities and facilities. As part of this exercise, a Trail Development Matrix was also developed in order to provide a multi-layered indicator of the level of development of each trail based on measurable data.



### Action 3 & 4 - Administration of Survey & Selecting Community Researchers / Advocates- Ambassadors- Champions

A face-to-face approach for the data collection was recommended to increase control on the responses, while a guided interview through the sections and questions making up the questionnaire was deemed the best way to undertake the data collection. A total of some 20 questions were included in the questionnaire and grouped into 4 sections, namely: demographics; activity and motivation; economic impact and; satisfaction and preferences. A pilot study was conducted at two trail locations in March 2020 by using the draft version of the developed questionnaire to provide an indication of the validity of the instrument and allow modifications to the questionnaire before undertaking the survey at all Project's locations. After the review of some questions, the questionnaire was made available in four different languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese and French) and accessible via a mobile device via a specific application downloadable by all partners. This allowed the questionnaire to be completed also in the absence of an internet connection and

### User Survey Totals

TRAIL	RESIDENTS	OTHER VISITORS	TOTAL
Chemin De Mémoires	31	4	35
Taff Trail	19	5	24
Plazaola Green Pathway	211	272	483
La Caldera de Taburiente	168	619	787
Knocknarea /Killaspugbrone Loop	125	81	206
Inch Levels	82	132	214
Seven Hanging Valleys	0	340	340
<b><u>TOTAL</u></b>	<b><u>636</u></b>	<b><u>1,453</u></b>	<b><u>2,089</u></b>

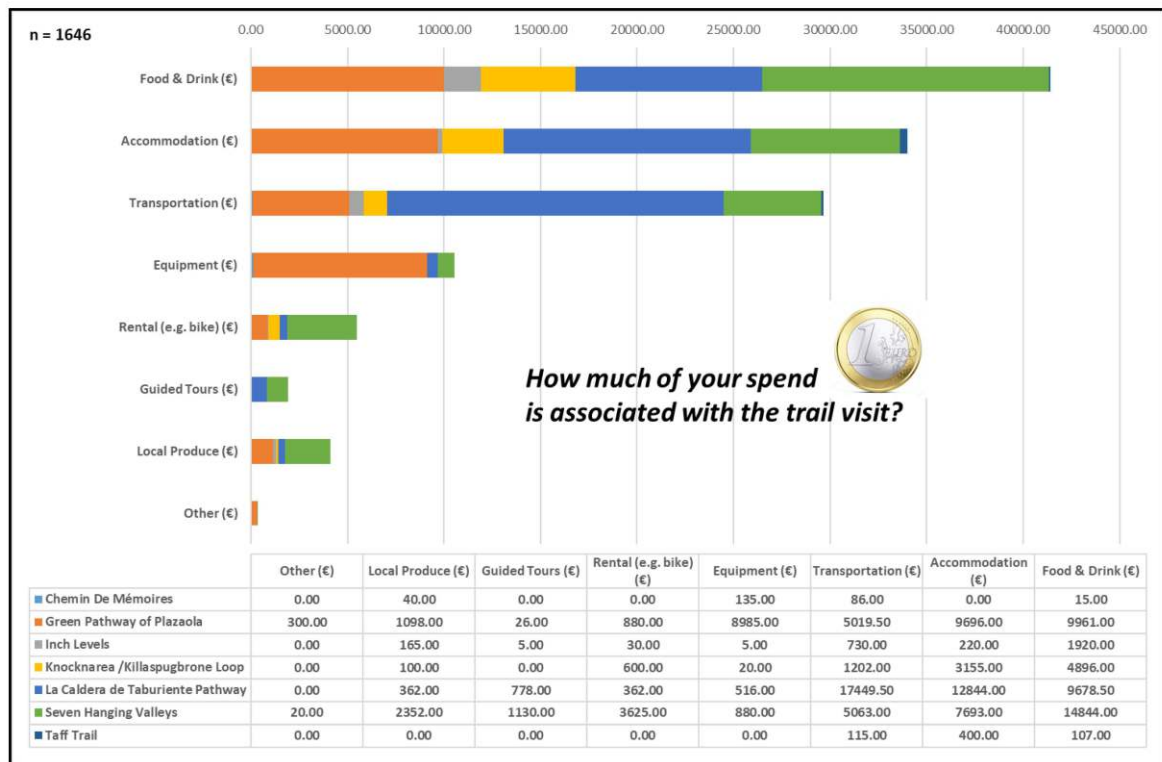
*Total surveys completed*



## Best Practice Review

proved extremely effective.

### Example of information obtained through the User Survey



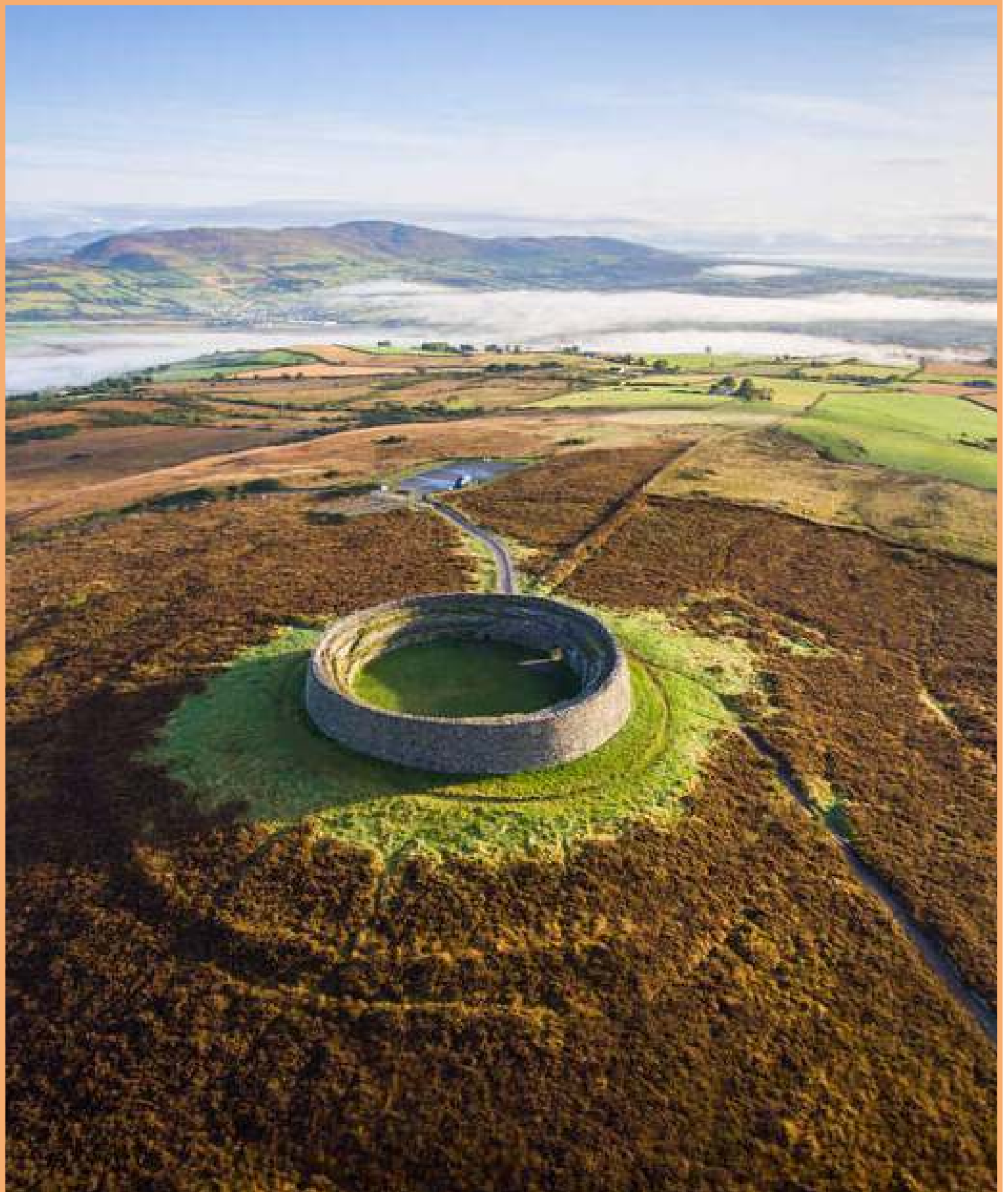
### Spend behaviour of trail visitors

## 5. Appendices

See all documents listed: <https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/wp5>

# 6

## University of Ulster Technological Solutions



# 6



## University of Ulster, Coleraine, Northern Ireland – Technological Solutions

*Responsible for overseeing the selection and deployment of technological solutions to capture footfall on selected sites and development of a trail dashboard to enhance trail management and maintenance.*

Within member states and across the wider Atlantic Area, trails tend to vary in terms of their stage of development. For the pilot trails within the TrailGazers Project area, each pilot site had different needs but similar objectives (i.e. require enhanced management techniques to improve footfall, revenue, sustainability etc.); therefore each trail requires tailored technological approaches to make the most of their location-based opportunities (i.e. majestic landscapes, historical buildings, local heritage). A key requirement was the development of a centralised platform that would host footfall count data from each pilot site and present complex data using effective visualisations. The data was collected from electronic people counting sensors installed during the project that met the key requirements of each trail, for display on an online 'dashboard'. This dashboard will inform data-driven strategies for trail management and future development plans on each of the pilot trails.

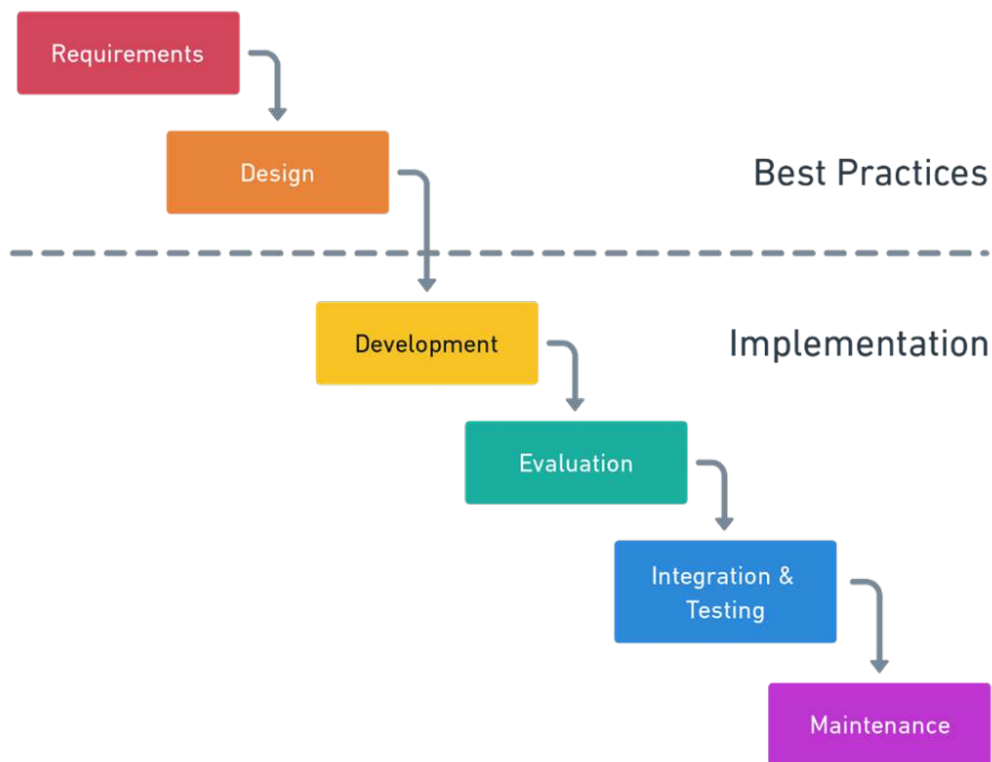
The Ulster University was the ideal partner to lead this work package based on their previous knowledge of teaching and research in the areas of computer science, games, electronics, robotics and multimedia. This knowledge coupled with the experience of coordinating 121 Horizon 2020/FP7 projects together with many other European projects such as INTERREG, NPP, TransTourism, FP7-ICT-2007 IM-CLeVer. Their expertise would further compliment, guide and inform other key areas of the project such as; the capitalisation of the project through the B2C initiatives, SME engagement and the Community Trail Plans development.

### Best Practice

The role of Work Package 6 (WP6) is “Trail Technology Deployment” and intends to guide the Trail partners in the selection and implementation of appropriate footfall technologies that support their monitoring objectives – for example, trail management may wish to differentiate their visitor figures between cyclists and pedestrians to identify areas on their trail where new signage or path markings could be required. Additionally, WP6 includes the development of a centralised footfall monitoring dashboard that combines the data from the newly deployed sensors across the TrailGazers pilot trails and provides forecasts of future trail visitor numbers. An effective dashboard should assist in analysing visitor behaviour and the identification of pressure points or areas which may require further maintenance attention. WP6 will also inform the development of Virtual Tourism Materials by providing recommendations around equipment and software that can assist in the development of digital media, which will be used to enhance awareness of the trails in the project.

The majority of WP6 actions relate to the development of a footfall monitoring dashboard, which is a software-based digital system. The chosen software development methodology is 'Waterfall Development' - illustrated below. Each stage of development must be completed in order and the previous stage must be completed before the next stage can begin. Each task flows into the next, akin to a waterfall. The process has been divided into best practices and implementation for this document.

## Waterfall Development Methodology



### System Requirements

To develop an effective system, we needed to establish available options for sensor technology and gather sensor and dashboard requirements from partners. The decisions made at this stage would affect the design and development of the dashboard. Ulster University hired a Sensors expert as their Research Associate, which greatly facilitated the initial stages of planning and system design. Firstly, desk-based research was performed to discover the current state of the art in footfall sensor technologies, and initial contact was made with commercial sensor suppliers to determine the suitability of their products for the project goals. The trail partners were asked to complete a scoping study (appendix 1) to discover their current trail technologies and invited to attend a one-to-one interview to determine an effective solution. It was proposed that the trails with existing sensors may be able to integrate the data from those sensors into the dashboard with the assistance of a third-party software developer, this option was explored through an existing supplier information form (appendix 2). It was later discovered that existing sensor integration was largely not possible due to the manual data collection method used by most existing sensors.

The desk-based research, scoping studies and partner interviews formed the Trail Partner Sensor Requirement Guidelines (appendix 3) report which presents a minimum viable sensor specification, to ensure maximal compatibility with the future dashboard system.

- ALL units must support database access or the ability to export data from the device/analytics platform.
- Any purchased units must have an appropriate outdoor Ingress Protection (IP) rating. IP65 or greater is suitable.
- Ensure that supply of power is appropriate for the area of installation.
- Ensure that there is appropriate data transmission coverage in your area. E.g. 2G/3G/LoRa/Sigfox

The document also guides the partners through the sensor decisions and acquisition process. The report sections are Sensor Types and Comparison, Sensor Type Decision Chart, Sensor Specification, Preferred Sensors and Suppliers, Trail Analysis and Sensor Recommendations and Communication with Equipment Suppliers. The guidelines were included in an academic paper (appendix 4) UU also identified a local trail that would be suitable as an 'Alpha' site – to test sensor technology and assist dashboard development – The Garvagh People's Forest in Coleraine, Northern Ireland.

### Design

UU arranged a “Collaborative Dashboard planning session” where the partners' requirements for a footfall dashboard were explored and discussed. The session revealed insights into the partners' requirements and generated new ideas for our footfall dashboard, such as the importance of forecasting and that sharing data from the dashboard could be important to the trail model, developed by WP2. The discussion also revealed several KPIs which could be included in WP4's KPI monitoring framework. The findings of that discussion are included in appendix 5. The dashboard

requirements were used to produce a system specification – as the dashboard would be centralised, and accessible via the internet, the footfall data and the dashboard software should be appropriately hosted. Several options for data infrastructure and proposed server requirements were produced for agreement within the consortium (included in appendix 6). The dashboard should also provide the ability to forecast future trail visitation levels. A proposed methodology using Machine Learning and software implementation was developed in association with UALG (WP7), which also became the subject of an academic paper, currently in review.

## **Best Practice Implementation**

At this stage, the sensor specification is finalised and the partners are preparing to procure the agreed technology specified in their new supplier report (appendix 7). The Dashboard technical requirements have also been produced and infrastructure arrangements have been agreed upon. Software system development could now begin.

### **Development**

Unfortunately, due to issues around the COVID-19 pandemic, the partners were unable to procure and install sensors by the initial deadline. The pandemic caused delays in the equipment supply chain, as well as the on-site installations. Additionally, a related work package was unable to deliver technical specification documents which were important for the software system's design and development stages. Contingency measures were required to deliver the Dashboard on time while allowing for an adequate evaluation period within the project lifetime. This included the provision of multiple phases of development, where each iteration expanded upon the previous iteration, instead of a single all-inclusive release. The contingency measures required that the sensor suppliers provide technical data on their Application Programming Interface (API) in advance so data integration could be tested before the sensors were installed, which was not possible for all partners. This resulted in some pilot trails being omitted from the initial release, as their sensors had not yet been installed.

A virtual private server lease was purchased, based on the specification provided in appendix 8 to deploy the dashboard software onto and allow for remote access via the internet from any of the partners. This approach is known as a 'self-managed' service and was the most flexible and budget-friendly, compared to 'managed' services which can vary in price and may have restrictions on their use. The dashboard has several independent algorithms, e.g. gathering data from multiple sources to store in a database, while another performs forecasting.

### **Evaluation, Integration, Testing and Maintenance**

Each dashboard phase had a clear technical specification, which included a list of sensors and features that would be included in that release. There are several different footfall sensors across the consortium with different manufacturers, which needed to be considered during integration.

These sensor integration and data analysis features were manually tested before being deployed on the main dashboard. After each release, the partners tested the platform through regular use and reported any problems accordingly. Minor issues were discovered through Releases 1 and 2, mainly related to sensor data and problems with the data connection to suppliers; overall, the system has proven to be reliable and any issues were easily resolved. The forecasting algorithm requires continuous evaluation as the accuracy of forecasts can decrease as time progresses from the initial system configuration, though this is an automated process.

The dashboard specification states that the system should always be active, and only require scheduled maintenance such as software and security updates. The system has met this condition but could require future modification in future if a supplier changes the equipment's API, which is used to gather the data from the sensors for presentation on the dashboard. This is unavoidable and not possible to predict.

### **Additional Tasks**

WP6 also informed the development of Virtual Tourism Materials by providing a brief overview of equipment and software that can assist in the development of digital media, as well as a collection of tourism and trail-focused videos with differing styles and content from various locations. WP6 also presented options to the partners for developing a Virtual Tour Guide. This report is included in appendix 9. The footfall data has been analysed to provide insights into the trail usage levels and identify visitation patterns based on the day of the week, the season, and the most popular areas of each trail site for WP6 Action 5 (see appendix 10). The data can also be exported from TrailVisor for use in other tools, such as the Environmental Sensitivity Monitoring tool developed by UU for DCC (appendix 11).

## 6. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Sensor Scoping Study.docx –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/3ee2d273230043c48ab10ecd30b08ab2/data>

Appendix 10 - DCC Environment Monitor Tool.xlsx –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/36e87035300a456696fcd751c0e03580/data>

Appendix 11 - WP6 A5 Footfall Data Analysis and Visitor Forecasting.pdf –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/2cc185bc42484777b7daa9a7d675be68/data>

Appendix 2 - EXISTING Footfall Sensor Supplier Report - Google Forms.pdf –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/19b60a6e707c49a7842072509125abac/data>

Appendix 3 - WP6 Trail Partner Sensor Requirement Guidelines.pdf –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/2435a57733cb43b7b659d6c949f0d582/data>

Appendix 4 - MDPI Trailgazers Sensor Scoping Study.pdf –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/eee3bfec211b4eeb9ff9a3882bbf440c/data>

Appendix 5 - WP6 Collaborative Dashboard Session Insights - 25.11.20.pdf –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/8bff15f4e81748508b9e38513445b299/data>

Appendix 6 - WP6 Data Infrastructure Diagrams.pdf –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/3e28c8b6c1c44289961e5f7f4b52c2aa/data>

Appendix 7 - NEW Footfall Sensor Supplier Report.pdf –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/f5e1ca03e59544fc8262411125bfa5f6/data>

Appendix 8 - Dashboard Server Requirements.pdf –

<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/fb35c4f84d6e4c41b887e6735acb5f35/data>

Appendix 9 - Video Imagery Equipment Recommendations and Advice.pdf –

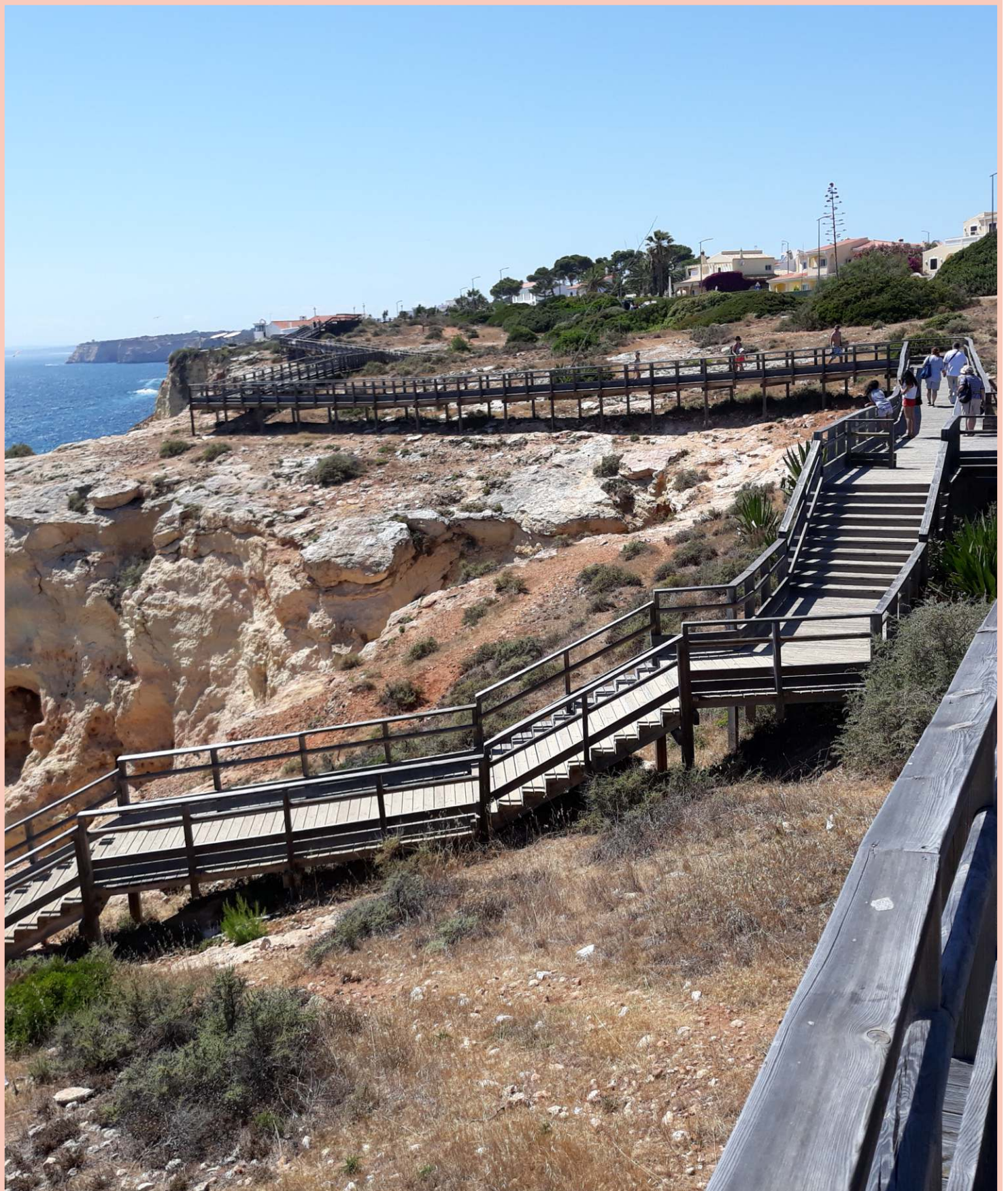
<https://nasuvinsa.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/1de68004bb30496f9b8c9c4a089e4d77/data>

All available on:

<https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/wp6>

# 7

## University of the Algarve Multiplier



# 7



## University of the Algarve, Portugal – Multiplier

*Responsible for calculating the multiplier or return from investing in walks and recreational infrastructure along the selected international trail sites.*

Investment in walks and recreational trails provides citizens and tourists with access to a region's natural and cultural heritage while stimulating local economies through employment creation, new products and services etc. The Trail Gazers Project set out to quantify the direct and indirect economic and social impacts on local economies of every euro invested in trail across the pilot sites of the project area. This was defined as the 'trail multiplier' and to establish the trail multiplier of the individual pilot sites a combination of research methods had to be used to quantify the spin off from investments in trail infrastructure. The University of the Algarve (UALG) was the led partner for WP7 in collaboration with Donegal County Council, Project Lead, who brought about the formulation and development of 6 Community Trail Plans that would ultimately enhance the trail multiplier and also safeguard and ensure the sustainable development of the trails cultural and natural assets for the future.

The UALG has an organisational structure that supports scientific research (UAIC) and has gained vast experience in projects of territorial cooperation from the management of 53 territorial cooperation projects across the Atlantic Area region and have particular expertise in sustainable development, which is an overarching aim of the project, hence proving to be a solid partner to led out on WP7.

### Best Practice Developed

Nature-based tourism has become a global trend, increasing interest in investment by local municipalities and private organizations. The main WP7 aim was to examine how the right type of investment in trails can assist local communities, increase businesses profit and provide sustainable community trail management plans that protect the area's natural and cultural assets. Therefore, several objectives/actions were set out: 1) to quantify levels of trail investments, 2) to identify the economic impact of trail development, 3) to develop a policy paper on EU designations and how environmental objectives for each site are aligned / should be aligned to future site management plans.

#### ◆ How did we go about it?

With regards to Action1 “Quantifying levels of trail investments”, a template to capture key elements of trail investment and development was developed and circulated for project partners to be filled. The table with the main investment results are presented in section 7.3 table 1.

With regards to Action 2 “Identify economic impact of trail development”, a universal methodology of multiplier effect computation was required since every partner trail represents a different location, nature, purpose, length, stage of development and management. Therefore, a literature review on the calculation of multipliers across different academic sectors was performed. Ad hoc model was the most suitable approach to study the economic impact of short-distance rural trails due to its easy application, and the use of primary source data. A white paper “Methodological guide for trail multiplier: quantifying the direct and indirect economic impacts on local economies of every euro spent in trails” provide information for multiplier calculation and can be found in appendixes. Following the proposed income multiplier assessment methodology, it was necessary to conduct three types of surveys throughout one full year capturing four seasons applied to the following populations: 1) trail visitors, 2) local businesses and 3) residents.

With regards to Action 3 “Strategic alignment with local, regional and national environmental protection agencies, plans and key strategic projects”, initially a workshop to explore how environmental objectives of each site can be met



as part of the Community Trail Planning Process was developed. The workshop format can be found in the appendixes, facilitates to develop tourism network of sustainable trail destinations based on the recommendations of the UNESCO sustainable tourism destination planning. Besides, it explores how each site's environmental objectives can be met as part of a community trail and create a sustainable multi-year action plan of recreational trail development, including perspectives of local/regional environmental authorities and project advisory groups (PAGs). A policy paper on EU designations and how environmental objectives for each site should be aligned to future site management plans will be prepared.

- What best Practice did we use?
- What was the methodology developed for Calculating Trail Income Multiplier?

The Ad hoc model was proposed as the most suitable approach for small and local scale recreational trails. The method calculates an income multiplier based on information obtained from surveys applied to the following populations: trail visitors, local tourism business operators and residents. The income multiplier is computed by formula (1) described below:

$$Im = 1 + \sum_{i=1}^n K_i V_i \times \left\{ \frac{1}{1 - L \sum_{i=1}^n X_i Z_i V_i} \right\} \quad (1)$$

$i$  = types of consumer outlet ( $i=1, \dots, n$ ).

$K_i$  = the proportion spent on each type of  $i$  consumer outlet.

$V_i$  = locally derived income of each  $i$  business type as a ratio of the total business turnover

$L$  = the average marginal propensity to consume.

$X_i$  = household consumption categories.

$Z_i$  = the proportion spent  $i$  category locally to total expenditures of the residents.

The total number of trail visitors per season is essential to compute the parameter  $K_i$ , obtained from the footfall technology installed at the trail site. Sampling size is determined as 5-8% of average/expected daily trail users collect representative data of visitor expenditures, which is each 120 surveys for summer and autumn seasons, 85 surveys for the winter season and 105 for the spring season. To determine the proportion of revenue left in the local area of each tourism business sector selected to be surveyed (and estimate the parameter  $V_i$ ), non-probabilistic sampling methods are recommended. To determine the targeted resident population's expenditure patterns and estimate induced effects (parameter  $Z_j$ ), the random route sampling method is recommended, broadly applied for sampling households for in-person surveys.

- **What was the methodology developed for Trail Sustainable Development Strategy?**

The methodology includes two main steps:

**1. Workshops pre-activities.** The first pre-activity involving PAGs and applying the SWOT analysis is to understand the present picture of the study case (recreational trail), extracting its main strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. This pre-activity can be done online or through a face-to-face meeting. The results were qualitatively analyzed using NVivo software and producing a word cloud. The second pre-activity is the identification of good trail management practices through online/face-to-face meeting with participants and applying the DART methodology, selecting the list of best practices of trail management.

**2. Workshops.** Two workshops (either online or face-to-face) were conducted in order to develop a multi-year trail development strategy based on the perspectives of local/regional environmental authorities, environmental NGOs and PAGs. The first workshop aims to bring together environmental stakeholders and experts to have a virtual study case visit, utilizing the app and a round-table discussion, which aims to integrate environmental stakeholders and develop a multi-year trail management strategy. The second workshop aims to gather together PAGs to ensure that, at a destination scale, the trail management strategy and trail-related experiences being offered to visitors are of the right quality and nature and secure the return they deserve.

## 7.1. Implementation stage

### • How was the best practice method rolled out across each of the trails?

Since most of the nature-based tourism destinations are open access and therefore it is difficult to monitor and collect statistical datasets of visitors and their expenditures related to trail-related services, data collection described in the methodology and required for the income multiplier assessment had to be collected only at the trail site. This is the most appropriate method in order to have non-biased data and accurate multiplier effect results.

### • How was it implemented?

Face-to-face surveys and online in some cases, were conducted to trail visitors at the trail site, residents at their houses and local business at their operating locations, throughout the year capturing four seasons. Workshop's pre-activities and some workshops were implemented online since they facilitated the participation of most stakeholders and ensured safe interconnection and discussion with participants during the pandemic.

### • Who helped with the implementation of it?

Key stakeholders also played an important role in data collection, workshop organization and participation.

### • What role did the PAGs play?

PAGs assisted in research design and income multiplier methodology. They also assisted in establishing a network of stakeholders, in particular, when conducting workshop's pre-activities and workshops. PAGs also participated in workshops and provided their experiences related to trail recreation development and very valuable information related to trail management strategy development.

### • What role did key stakeholders play?

Initially, key stakeholders assisted with information provision about trails' developments and investments. After preparation, validation and publication of the income multiplier methodology, key stakeholders helped with methodology application at the trail site. This has resulted in the facilitation of data collection for income multiplier and interviewing processes, in particular with businesses and residents.

## 7.2 The Review stage of the best practice.

Before starting developing and implementing a best practice it was conducted thorough research and systematic literature review was published in a prestigious journal per review procedure. Also, it was collected strategies and best practices applied in the Traigazers countries. For that, we believe that the procedure was the most adequate and the only negative aspect was the difficulties in communication between partners due to restrictions in face-to-face meetings.

### Results achieved

1) Results of Action1 "Quantifying levels of trail investments": the report of direct and indirect investments that goes into seven project pilot trails was prepared and can be found in the appendixes. The summary of partner trail investments is presented below:

*Table 1. Summary of partners' trail investments*

Trail	Country	Total investments, €	Is the trail is located or in some part cross national parks/nature reserves	Trail distance, km
"Plazaola Greenway"	Spain	10 500 000	No	45
"Inch Levels"	Ireland	1 471 936	Yes	8
"Chemin de Memoire(s)"	France	317 990	No	8.5
"Knocknarea and Killspurgbrone"	Ireland	300 000	Yes	14.4
"Seven Hanging Valleys"	Portugal	65 673	No	11.2
"Taff"	South Wales	-	No	88
"La Caldera de Taburiente"	Spain	30 000	Yes	13.8

2) Results of Action 2 "Identify economic impact of trail development": technical methodological paper of multiplier effect assessment was prepared and can be found in appendixes.

The literature review paper Lukoseviciute et al. (2022) "The economic impact of recreational trails: a systematic literature review", Journal of Ecotourism 1-28, doi.org/10.1080/14724049.2022.2030745 was published in a prestigious scientific peer-reviewed journal and can be found in appendixes. The summary of multiplier effect data collection presented by partners and assessment results are presented below:

**Table 2. Summary of multiplier effect data collection presented by partners and assessment results**

Trail name  Data required for multiplier	"La Caldera de Taburiente"	"Seven Hanging Valley"	"Sligo Knocknarea"	"Plazaola Greenway"	"Chemine de Mémoires"	"Taff trail"	"Inch trail"
Trail visitor surveys	395	454	211	461	35	25	192
Resident surveys	123	62	63	34	No data presented	No data presented	Incorrect data collected
Business surveys	31	7	23	14	No data presented	No data presented	No data presented
Total annual population	30579	45992	24597	42485	5911	143857	1070419
Sensor data period used for analysis	2020.03.01 - 2021.03.01	2020.03.01 - 2021.03.01	2021.03.01 - 2022.03.01	2020.09.23 - 2021.09.23	2020.09.01 - 2021.09.01	2021.05.01 - 2021.11.01	2021.02.01 - 2021.11.01
Data collected from all seasons?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>The income multiplier</b>	<b>0,774</b>	<b>0,714</b>	<b>0,386</b>	<b>0,526</b>	-	-	-

An empirical case study of southern Portugal coastal trail "Seven Hanging Valleys" applying the Ad hoc model to assess the income multiplier was published in a prestigious scientific journal and can be found in appendixes Lukoseviciute et al. (2022) "Assessing the income multiplier of trail-related tourism in a coastal area of Portugal", International Journal of Tourism Research 24(1):107:121, doi.org./10.1002/jtr.2487

3) Results of Action 3 "Strategic alignment with local, regional and national environmental protection agencies, plans and key strategic projects": a workshop format prepared can be found in appendixes. The policy paper based on the results of partners' workshop results is under preparation since presented in Navarra did include an Income Multiplier value for Inch.

**◆ What was the key learning of each practice?**

Every trail site is diverse in geographic conditions, development stage, number of visitors, residents and businesses, indicating that there is not one strategy that fits to all.

**◆ Were the methods/best practice that was used effective?**

In the context of pandemic restrictions, both methodologies of income multiplier and workshops were as much appropriate and effective as it was possible to design and apply. The workshop methodology was designed to be used either face-to-face or online. The results provided by partners indicate that the method was effective and applicable in practice.

**◆ On the basis of what best practice/method used on the trails, what would we now do differently from what was done on your trail for each of the methods/best practice forms?**

In terms of multiplier effect methodology, visiting the trail site to understand the reality was needed before training data collectors to properly conduct surveys.

## Lost stories application – University of the Algarve

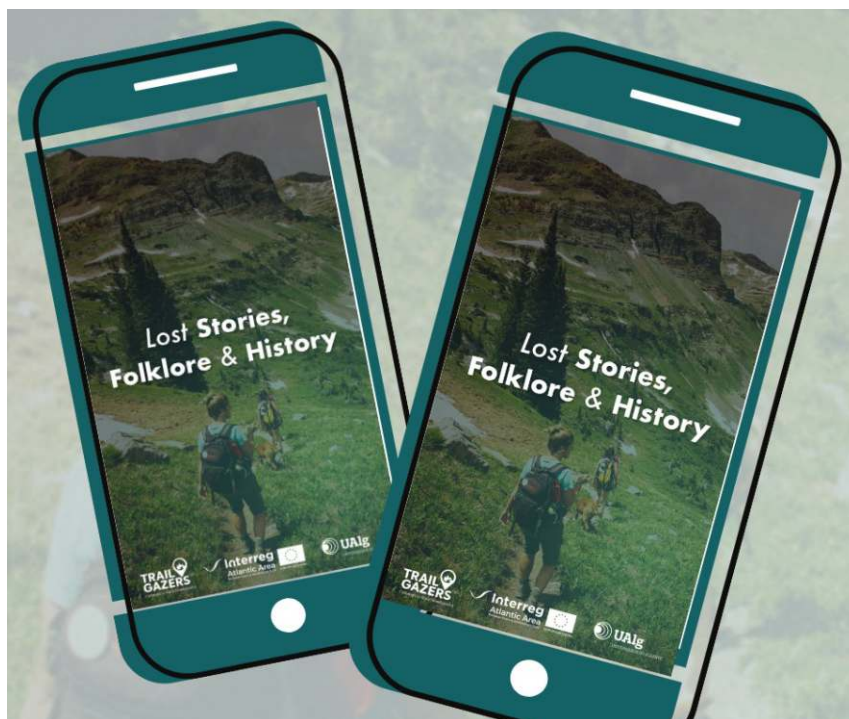
### Best Practice Developed

The Algarve University developed a digital ecosystem for the management and dissemination of the cultural heritage, tangible and non-tangible, for the trails. Two applications were implemented. It was developed the App “Lost Stories, Folklore & History”, available for mobile devices Android and iOS from Apple, and the “Lost Stories trail manager” for computers Windows and OSX from Apple. Both are available for free.

The app “Lost Stories, Folklore & History” uses augmented reality to activate tangible and intangible information about the stories, folklore and history about trails points of interest. QR-codes or the visitor geospatial location is used to unlock contents related to the points of interest. Visitors can use their smartphones or tablets while visiting the trails. When walking in the trails, they are able to listen and/or watch

information about the places they are traveling. Presented data can be related to history, folklore, heritage, ecology, nature, memories, experiences, stories and others. The “Lost Stories, Folklore & History” app also uses gamification to motivate participation. It is possible to assign multiple choice questions to a point of interest that can be used to test knowledge of the visitor and at the same time motivates the participant to win points to be in the ranking.

The application “Lost Stories trail manager” allows the trails manager entities to create and manage the information about the trails related to the cultural heritage, material and immaterial, which is made available for the visitors using the App “Lost Stories, Folklore & History”, available for mobile devices Android and iOS from Apple, and the “Lost Stories trail manager”.



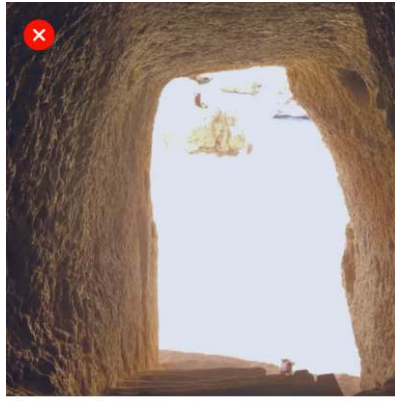
### Best Practice Implementation

Each partner used the application “Lost Stories trail manager” to upload the trail information, including text, images and video information about each point of interest of the trail managed by them.

All trails managed by partners are available to visitors using the App “Lost Stories, Folklore & History”.

### Best Practice Review

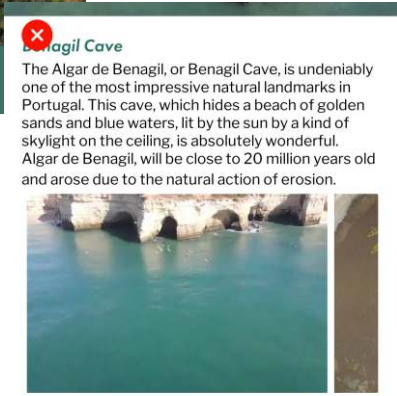
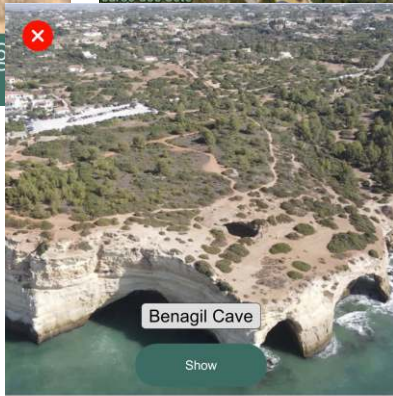
Disseminated to other entities outside the partnership and they uploaded more trails. In this way, there are more trails available to be explored by the visitor and it is not limited to the trails managed by the partners. Entities interested to participate can contact us: [lost@ualg.pt](mailto:lost@ualg.pt)



**Seven Hanging Valleys Trail**

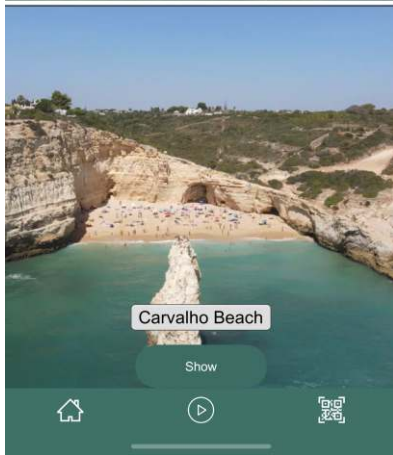
**Portugal**

The Seven Hanging Valleys is one of the most scenic hiking routes of the Algarve. This moderately challenging hike trail of 11.5km (round trip) follows the stunning coastline between Vale de Centianes (Carvoeiro) in the west and the Praia da Marinha to the east. This is a dramatic coastline formed of massive limestone cliffs that have been savagely eroded to create deep sea caves, perilous sink holes and majestic sea arches. Within the golden cliffs, winter streams have carved out wide valleys (the "hanging Valleys"), in which secluded beaches are sheltered from the power of the ocean.



**Benagil Cave**

The Algar de Benagil, or Benagil Cave, is undeniably one of the most impressive natural landmarks in Portugal. This cave, which hides a beach of golden sands and blue waters, lit by the sun by a kind of skylight on the ceiling, is absolutely wonderful. Algar de Benagil, will be close to 20 million years old and arose due to the natural action of erosion.



**Laura Rizzotto's Postcard Eurovision 2018**

Where LAURA RIZZOTTO, from LATVIA, filmed her Eurovision Song Contest 2018 Postcard

**WHY HERE?**

The Benagil Sea Cave, in the Algarve beach of Benagil, is one of the most beautiful wonders of Portugal. Considered one of the world's "Top Ten Coolest Caves" by The Huffington Post, Benagil is located in Lagoa.

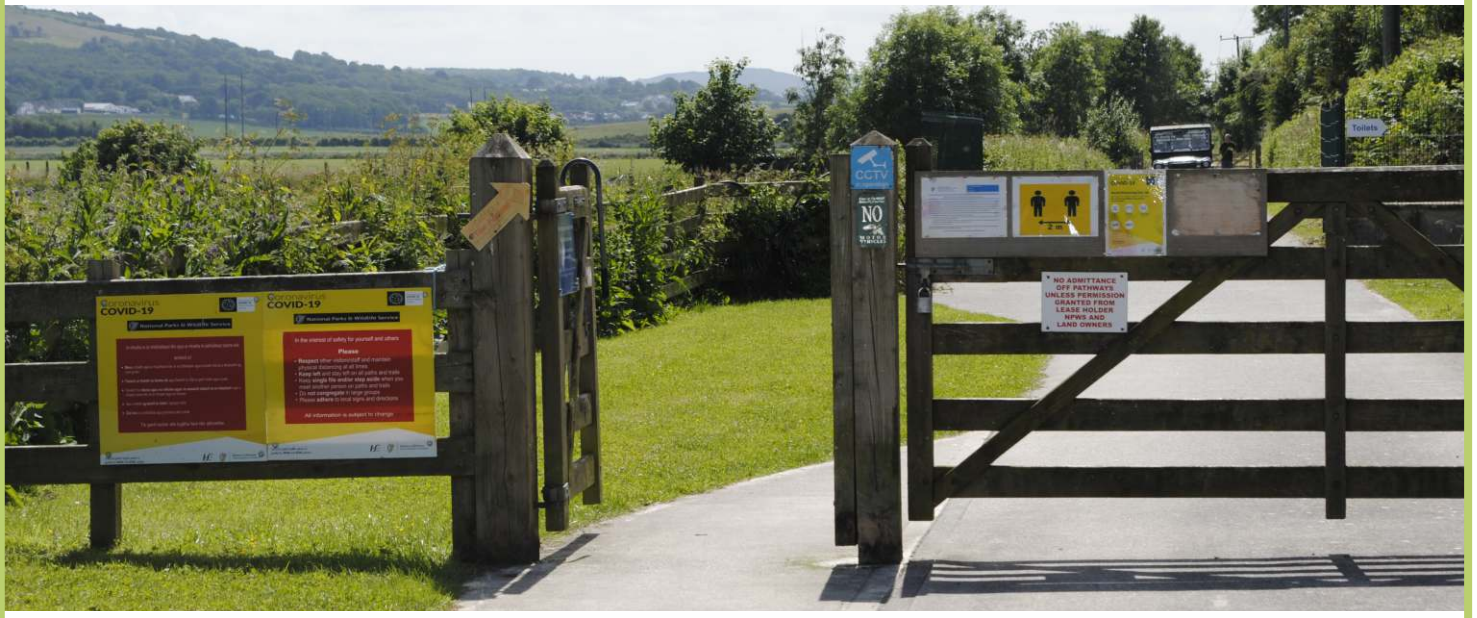


**7. Appendices**

See all documents listed: <https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/wp7>

# 8

## Community Trail Plans



# 8

## Community Trail Plans



### 'Best Practice in Community Trail Planning'

As walking, hiking and cycling activities continue to grow in popularity across the Atlantic Area the need to manage and enhance the trail environment and to capitalize on trail footfall to sustain rural communities is becoming ever more apparent. To do this in a coordinated fashion would require the development of tailored 'community trail plans' to generate a picture of where the trail is at, to examine issues arising, find practical solutions and identify key opportunities to bring the trail and its catchment to the next level.

As well as acting as lead partner for the TrailGazers Project (DCC) was selected to lead out on this action on the basis of its expertise in trail development; visitor management planning and community development project delivery. They also have vast experience in collaborating with local communities, the private sector and government agencies both regionally and nationally. This section aims to set out a summary of the work carried out by DCC for Work Package 7 to deliver action 4 – A Community Trail Plan Toolkit.

### Best Practice developed

To capitalize on the different project outputs delivered through the 7 work packages, it was important to establish a bespoke methodology for community trail planning. This methodology was framed through the following 7 key best practice principles.

#### 1 Short, Simple, Agile, Action Based Planning

- ◆ A simple, practical approach to identifying, coordinating and making 'shovel ready' actions for delivery
- ◆ A CTP can be developed for any area or region placing any existing asset at its centre
- ◆ Where resources do not allow for certain elements to be undertaken, the planning process can still progress to completion

#### 2 Onsite and Strategic Impact

- ◆ Safeguarding and enhancing the resource itself – management and user improvement to the trail site
- ◆ Harnessing the Resource as a driver to transform its catchment – repurposing its economic ecosystem...reinventing the trail towns...physically and promotionally linking all assets in the catchment (& beyond) Essentially a plan to develop a slow tourism network across the wider trail region. Such a plan can be developed for any area or region placing any asset at its centre, in this case it has been developed for Trails

#### 3 Biodiversity responsible, Community Centred Planning

- ◆ All actions environmentally sound, having been proofed across key stakeholders
- ◆ Packaging together a necklace to connect and promote the wider area ensuring the host community (users and business) benefit directly and collectively, creating a slow tourism network (the ethos of the TrailGazers project).

#### 4 Targeted & Tiered Stakeholder Consulting

- ◆ Identification of & sensitive confidential liaison with individuals central to delivery
- ◆ Careful and focused management of stakeholders to maximise the opportunities through joined up planning
- ◆ Targeted consulting of wider stakeholders through surveys & events to identify optimal actions

## 5 Evidenced based actions

- ◆ A range of analytical and consultation tools (e.g. trail profile, user survey, stakeholder consultation template, swot analysis, etc.) used to generate a picture of where the trail is at, issues arising, practical solutions and key opportunities to bring the trail to the next level
- ◆ Trail Footfall dashboard analysis provide user heat map data to inform actions directly

## 6 Clear Road Map to Delivery

- ◆ Step by step implementation strategy (permissions, licensing, etc)
- ◆ Costed with targeted funding streams and timelines

## 7 Interactive, Accessible Easily Rolled Out Digital Plans

- ◆ Story Map based display tool - Map, Infographics, Video Clip compatible



## Best Practice Implementation

The following 10 Key steps were developed to guide the community trail planning process.

### 1) Defining the Catchment Area for your Trail.

Draw your trail route on a simple mapping app such as Google My Maps highlighting trailheads and all other start and end points. Zoom out to examine the wider area surrounding your trail, identify businesses, attractions, community hubs, villages, towns and cities along your trail corridor. Although rudimentary, often an initial catchment area can be obvious from this exercise. A catchment can vary greatly depending on the unique characteristics of your trail site, however the site catchment area should be extensive enough to capture its natural ecosystem but close enough to be directly related to or impacted by your trail. As part of this step it is often helpful to also define the broader zone of influence of each trail site and its catchment. Essentially, this is the area where policies, plans and structures can have a strategic impact on the development of the trail site. Draft boundaries shall be examined and agreed by key stakeholders and can be amended throughout the planning process as more data becomes available and opportunities present.

### 2) Understanding How Your Trail/Trail Catchment operates

The management and policy matrix can be used to grasp the broad framework that your trail site is working within [for example who owns the site; who is responsible for management and maintenance; who are the key stakeholders; what is the policy framework (i.e. existing destination management plans, environmental plans etc)]. The completed matrix will assist the Plan Lead to understand the site from an operational perspective and most importantly who they need to engage with, who can steer the development of emerging actions; who could champion the site.

### 3) Establishment of Your Stakeholder Group(s)

An essential step in the development of your Community Trail Plan is to develop an engagement strategy. This can be as simple as you like. Stakeholder collaboration in the TrailGazers Project comprised:

- ◆ Project Advisory Groups (PAGS) to steer the project and most importantly to guide the development of community plans for each trail site. Your group can be made up of trail managers, local landowners, tourism agencies, officers of the local authority such as Trail Recreational Officer, Roads Engineer, Community Development Officer, heritage officer as well as members of the local community, local businesses, heritage groups, voluntary groups, walking cycling groups, etc. Establishing this group will ensure you get specific feed in from a range of sectoral perspectives.
- ◆ Community Trail Ambassadors to champion the uniqueness of the trail to visitors and locally and to advocate how the trail can act as a catalyst for rural development. The Community Trail Ambassador Programme set out to instil a sense of pride and place among local stakeholders. Undertaking this programme served to build up confidence and capacity within the community to play an active role in shaping and delivering a community blueprint for the future development of their local area.



#### 4) Capturing Stakeholder Perspectives

A range of tools were developed through the Trail Gazers project from which valuable insights on the trail and trail catchment can be gathered from local experts. This involved getting feedback on certain findings such as the Trail Profile results and Trail Multiplier results as well as directly targeted engagement through for example the Stakeholder Engagement Survey & User Survey (click for templates). All this information provides the Plan Lead with an emerging picture of:

- ◆ where the trail site is at physically / developmentally and how it interacts with the surrounding towns and villages
- ◆ what are the issues arising and how these might be addressed to enhance the trail environment and user experience
- ◆ the emerging opportunities in the trail catchment and how these can be capitalised on to optimise economic and social returns from trail users to local communities in a sustainable fashion

#### 5) Using SWOT to Examine Assets & Constraints on your Trail and Catchment.

To do this the Project Advisory Group including local environmental and heritage experts to undertake a SWOT analysis in a workshop. Assets can be defined as natural, built and cultural heritage, key attractions, points of interests, etc. Constraints can be defined as areas where capacity issues may exist in terms of user numbers, environmental concerns, maintenance issues, gaps in signage, promotion and other issues arising on the trail. At the workshop the Trail Lead will work with the attendees to complete the SWOT exercise and a view to teasing out 10 potential actions to sustainably develop assets and address constraints. Alongside this, findings from the Trail User Survey and Customer Insights report will be presented to assist in identifying 10 emerging actions.

#### 6) Drafting Development Options

Using the findings to date and emerging actions from the workshop the Trail Lead will draft key Development Options for the trail and trail catchment. These will capture; what could benefit the site most; how the trail(s) themselves can be better enhanced/managed; how trail users can be better serviced; how linkages between the site and local communities/enterprises can be strengthened; optimal ways to harness the areas built and natural heritage in a sustainable fashion; how the trail and surrounding attractions can act as a catalyst to develop a destination hub in the wider catchment.

#### 7) Testing Development Options

Here each development option will be proofed to ensure it fits strategically with existing plans and policies, such as local planning and environmental policies. The draft development options shall be examined in close collaboration with key stakeholders such as the local Planning officer, heritage officer, trails officer, trail manager, local engineer, etc. As a result of this testing Development Options may be tweaked or amended as necessary. These development options shall become the Key Actions of the Community Trail Plan.

#### 8) Developing an Implementation Strategy

The Plan lead shall develop an implementation strategy for the delivery of each Key Action on the ground. This shall include the key steps to be taken, assigning of roles and responsibilities, identification of potential funding streams for delivery as well as setting out timeframes for delivery.



## 9) Collation of Community Trail Plan

The outputs from each of the key stages above will come together to form the Community Trail Plan. For easy access and distribution the plan can be presented digitally. Trail Gazers used the ArcGis Story Maps platform. A Plan Content Framework and Story Maps Guide has been developed to assist in organising and displaying your plan. [Sample Story Maps Community Trail Plan](#)

## 10) Implementation & Monitoring of Community Trail Plan

The formation of a lean and dynamic implementation team will be critical to drive the delivery of the plan on the ground. The team will monitor the delivery of the actions and measure the impacts of their delivery in terms of visitor numbers, visitor spend, number of local businesses, community vitality, etc.

## Best Practice Review

The Community Trail Plans developed through the TrailGazers Project played a central role in drawing from the many and varying outputs across the work packages. The plans provided an opportunity to evaluate these results and findings in a practical way on the trail pilot sites in collaboration with key stakeholders to develop a future blueprint comprising key actions to manage and enhance the trail environment and to capitalize on trail footfall to transform the wider catchment as a trail destination to sustain rural communities in the long term.

With the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions from early 2020 globally, the Project as with the majority of all activities were heavily impacted. With reference to the development of Community Trail Plans, site visits to the pilot trails were prohibited which greatly curtailed on the ground analysis, onsite collaboration between the lead partner and trail leads and in person meetings with key stakeholders. Partners must be acknowledged for their hard work and commitment to successfully deliver Community Trail Plans for their trails as planned.

## Appendices:

<https://www.trailgazers.eu/pages/ctp>



