

EU JUST TRANSITION FUND REGENERATIVE TOURISM AND PLACEMAKING SCHEME

FOR IRELAND'S MIDLANDS 2023–2026

**An Introduction
and Approach
to Regenerative
Tourism**



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Co-funded by
the European Union



Tionól Reiligiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tír
Midlands Regeneration



**Fáilte
Ireland**



Ireland's raised bogs support a wealth of biodiversity at the microscopic level.

They form a vital memory bank that links Ireland's fascinating past to the present, and they are key to the future of our communities and our planet.

Reflecting the rehabilitation and restoration that is happening in our peatlands, there is an opportunity for tourism in the Midlands towards a more regenerative approach, putting nature and communities at the centre of all it does, and creating transformative and unique experiences that benefit visitors, locals and nature.



SUPPORTING A JUST TRANSITION FOR IRELAND'S MIDLANDS

The Just Transition Fund provides financial supports to EU regions with carbon-intensive industries to move to a climate-neutral economy, while supporting those who stand to lose economically. The Midlands area of Ireland is one such region.

The fund in Ireland can help make the transition to a low-carbon economy easier for people living in the Midlands, following the cessation of commercial peat harvesting and the closure of peat-fired electricity generating stations.

The EU Just Transition Territory includes the entire counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath, and municipal districts of Ballinasloe (Co. Galway), Athy and Clane-Maynooth (Co. Kildare), and

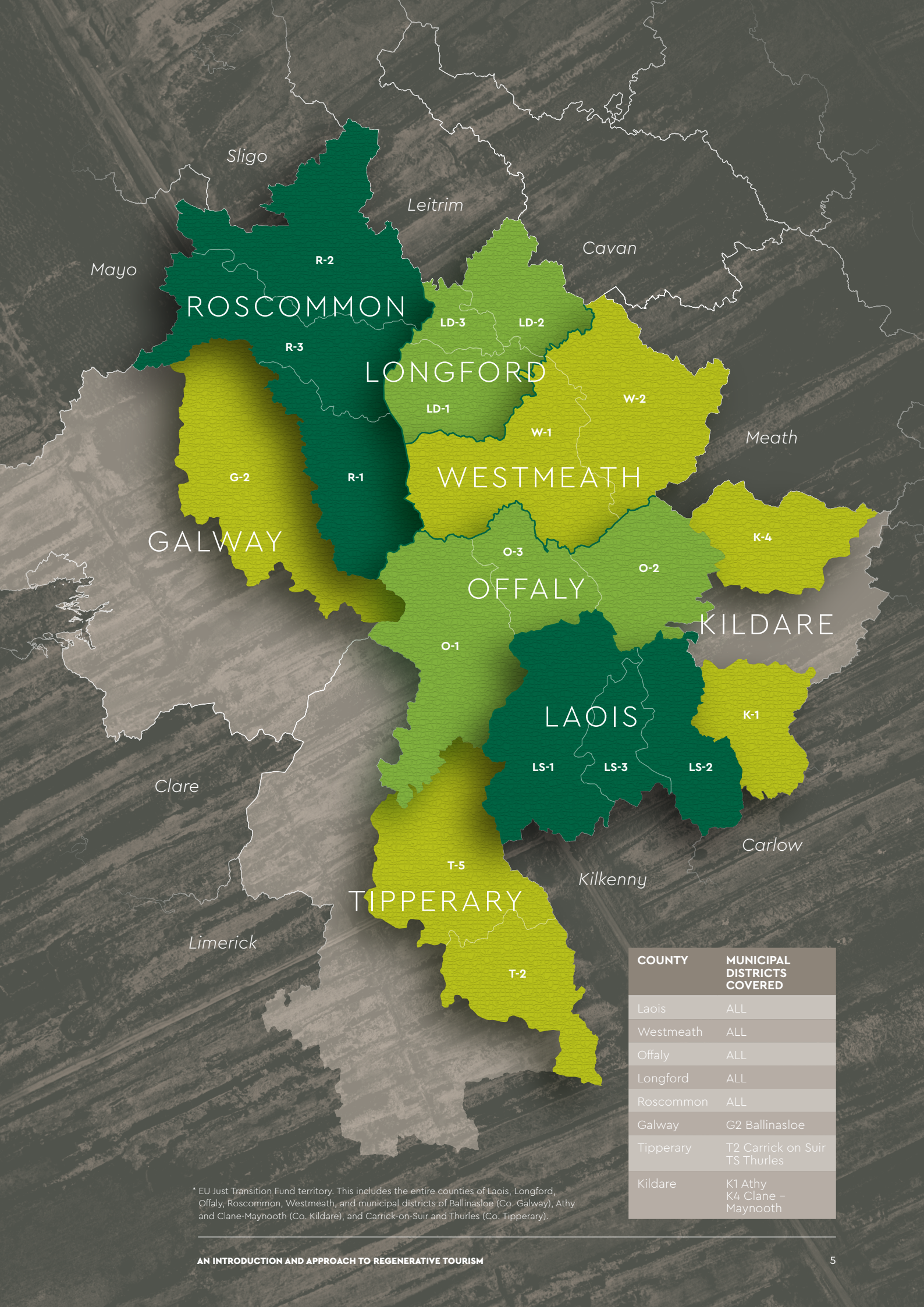
Carrick-on-Suir and Thurles (Co. Tipperary).

Tourism has been identified as an industry that can support the Just Transition, and present new opportunities for this special place to realise its potential.

To this end, Fáilte Ireland has been allocated a portion of the Just Transition Fund to deliver a Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme.

The purpose of this guide is to inform and inspire prospective applicants when they are planning tourism projects and preparing applications for funding through Fáilte Ireland's Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme 2023–2026, under the EU Just Transition Fund.





* EU Just Transition Fund territory. This includes the entire counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly, Roscommon, Westmeath, and municipal districts of Ballinasloe (Co. Galway), Athy and Clane-Maynooth (Co. Kildare), and Carrick-on-Suir and Thurles (Co. Tipperary).

COUNTY	MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS COVERED
Laois	ALL
Westmeath	ALL
Offaly	ALL
Longford	ALL
Roscommon	ALL
Galway	G2 Ballinasloe
Tipperary	T2 Carrick on Suir TS Thurles
Kildare	K1 Athy K4 Clane – Maynooth

JUST TRANSITION TOURISM: A REGENERATIVE APPROACH

Regenerative approaches to tourism put Place at the centre of the tourism model and seek to deliver net positive benefit for all stakeholders – environment, community, industry and the visitor.

A regenerative approach encourages tourism that gives back more than it takes, that not only protects and limits environmental damage, but actively and intentionally delivers positive benefits to nature, habitats, community and places.

A regenerative approach is based on partnership and collaboration. Success depends on working together – from grassroots groups, businesses and individuals through to local authorities and state agencies.

Success also depends on working with nature, recognising the wider web of life that we are part of, and truly committing to supporting biodiversity and including nature in our decision-making processes.



A LONG-TERM VISION

FUELLING A LONG-TERM VISION

Fáilte Ireland has already charted an ambitious, long-term vision for the Midlands region of Ireland, as set out in the recently-published Regional Tourism Development Strategies for both Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Ireland's Ancient East.

These strategies envision a destination where nature is the backdrop to a wide range of compelling visitor experiences, that connect people with nature and heritage, and give easy access to the outdoors.

It is to be a destination that stands out for its biodiversity and where the visitor is re-energised by nature.

Contained in the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy is the ambition to be one of the leading regenerative tourism destinations in Europe by 2033. This fund will help us start this journey.

In particular, the long-term strategy is built on empowering visitors to discover the area through a variety of tracks and trails and a well-connected web of Greenways and Blueways – the ambitious Midlands Trails Network project. This will involve many different infrastructure projects that will interlock to create an attraction of scale that showcases what is on offer in the midland counties.

Ireland's Midlands truly can become a world-class destination for walking and cycling that allows the local economy to thrive and biodiversity to flourish.

In fact, the Just Transition fund allows us now to accelerate the early phases of this strategy. Working together, it allows us to progress solidly and swiftly in a direction that will deliver tangible regenerative outcomes over the long term.

What does success look like?

The Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme runs from 2023–2026. Successful implementation of the programme would mean that:

- ▶ the regional economy is diversified through tourism
- ▶ there are new jobs created for local communities
- ▶ biodiversity is restored and protected through the tourism activity
- ▶ memorable, transformative and authentic experiences attract and delight visitors
- ▶ new services and facilities enhance the quality of life of local people
- ▶ there are enhanced digital skills and business capability amongst tourism providers in the region
- ▶ digital technologies support innovative visitor education and interpretation of the unique environment



Our long-term vision for the Midlands region is that it becomes a destination where

1. Stakeholders work together under a shared vision, in a way that recognises their interdependence and the wider ecosystem to which they belong
2. Tourism facilities, services and experiences are designed to deliver net positive benefits locally – for nature, habitats, community, visitors and businesses
3. Biodiversity is increased and native plant communities are restored as a result of tourism investment and the visitor economy
4. Visitor experiences and facilities are rooted in the unique character of the region, inspired by the very spirit and soul of the place
5. Experiences are fun, engaging and accessible, with the ability to open up new perspectives and insights for visitors and locals alike
6. Local businesses are thriving, digitally agile and commercially robust; they are also authentic in their commitment to their place and community
7. Businesses and communities work together to create strong networks and work in partnership with local authorities and state agencies to form strong coalitions, working for the benefit of all: nature, communities and the visitor.

ALIGNMENT: THE RIGHT CONDITIONS FOR A REGENERATIVE APPROACH

Through the EU Just Transition Fund, Fáilte Ireland is committed to leading the drive to create the conditions for a change in the way tourism is developed and managed, towards a more regenerative approach yielding long-term net positive benefits for all.

It is acknowledged that a full transition will take time and effort. More can be done to create high-quality, year-round jobs and careers and more must be done to ensure that the activity of tourism results in positive benefits for biodiversity.

The move towards regenerative tourism has already begun and we can already identify an alignment of factors and projects that create just the right conditions for a more regenerative approach:

1. There is already a strong tradition of community-based tourism in the region, whether that be community-based tourism enterprises or tourism businesses that are deeply embedded within local communities.
2. Bord na Móna is leading the Peatlands Climate Action Scheme, one of the most significant and ambitious nature conservation projects in Europe. This scheme is transforming the landscape from brown cutaway bogs to newly established wetlands and vegetated areas that are rich in biodiversity. The rewetting of the bogs will help seal the carbon in for generations to come. Renewable energy projects are also helping to transform how we generate our electricity and to secure our electricity supply for the future. The result will be an unparalleled natural backdrop for sustainable and regenerative visitor experiences.

DID YOU KNOW?

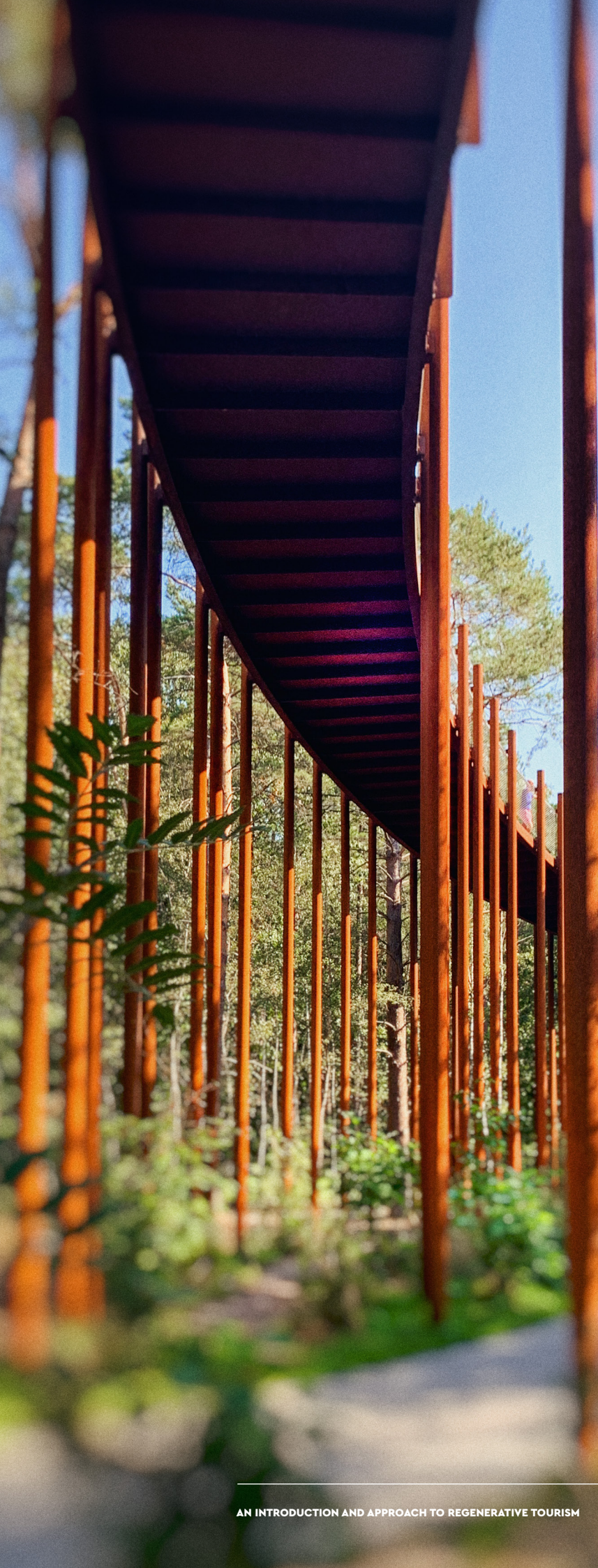
Covering around 3–4% of the world's land surface area, peatlands are responsible for storing nearly one-third of its soil carbon. This is twice as much carbon as in all the world's forest biomass combined. (Source: UN Environment Programme, 2022)

However, instead of storing carbon, drained and degraded peatlands around the world emit billions of tonnes of carbon each year.

Restoring peatlands and natural habitats preserves biodiversity and rebuilds the capacity of the peatlands to store carbon, thereby massively reducing emissions.

3. Fáilte Ireland is leading the planning and design of an interconnected Midlands Trail Network, an ambitious, long-term project set to create a walking and cycling destination of national and international distinction. Many of these new trails will be developed along former Bord na Móna rail lines. A latticework of walking, cycling and water trails across the Midlands has the potential to provide visitors and locals alike with ways to get active, explore and make connections right across the region. The Just Transition Fund enables us to take an ambitious and strategic approach now so that we create a valuable network that supports high-quality, low-impact tourism and quality of life for generations to come.
4. Thanks to the EU Just Transition Fund, the Fáilte Ireland Regenerative Tourism Placemaking Scheme is available to provide grants and other capability-building supports to businesses and communities who have ideas for visitor experiences, accommodation choices and other services that complement these developments. The scheme will deliver grant-aid to private and community-based micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to improve the quality of the visitor experience. The ambition is to give visitors confidence that there is a lot to see and do so that more visitors are attracted to the region, with a longer dwell time and a greater number of overnight stays. This will create jobs in the sector and grow the visitor economy.





FROM COAL TRACKS TO BIKE PATHS

The Limburg Trail Network

Limburg, the most southerly province in the Netherlands, has become a 'Top 3' Flemish destination, thanks to almost 30 years of investment in a distinctive multi-layered and multi-use trail network, which has helped tourism to fill the gap left when the Dutch government announced the complete cessation of coal mining in the region in the late 1960s. Today, 1 in 10 people in the province work in a tourism industry that is flourishing on and around trails that link vibrant hubs, attractions and experiences.

Limburg's imaginative cycle and hiking routes take visitors under bodies of water, over heathlands and even through the treetops. Every construction and development decision along the way is focused on the core values of sustainability and respect for the environment that underpin the region's appeal to visitors.

1 in 5 Flemish overnight stays take place in the area, and an annual 4.4 million overnight stays contribute more than €430 million directly to the economy. Limburg was named by Time Magazine as one of 'The World's 100 Greatest Places' in 2018.



DEVELOPING YOUR OWN PROJECT

WHAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR OWN PROJECT AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE?

Through this scheme we are encouraging projects that will create opportunities for local jobs and support the local economy, enhance the quality of life of local people, restore and protect biodiversity while also creating a compelling visitor experience.

This section describes some key characteristics of a regenerative tourism project that can help shape your application:

CONNECTED

Plugged into the network of trails and against the backdrop of rewetted and restored bogs, we want visitors to find an inviting web of inspiring and accessible visitor attractions, activities and experiences. Projects that clearly complement the Midland Trails Network and connect with other enticing things to see and do support our vision, as do projects that involve collaboration and partnership within your destination.

ACCOMMODATION CHOICE

We want to add new accommodation choices to the Midlands , to give our visitors options that support their adventures, encourage longer stays and ensure that greater dwell time and spend benefits rural communities as well as towns and villages. Think about small, low-carbon, micro developments at key locations. Could an existing building get a new lease of life? Could that place where a visitor lays their head give quirky opportunities to get closer to nature, e.g., opportunities for dark skies viewing? Consider traditional building techniques and eco-builds that integrate habitat, like green or thatched roofs, for example.

BIODIVERSE

We want to see tourism projects that not only protect biodiversity but actively support it, ensuring that the natural world is enhanced through tourism. How does your project support ecological restoration? In what ways does it support native plant life and wildlife? Think about how you create opportunities for visitors to learn about and appreciate biodiversity, and even how they themselves can support it. Check out our Take Action on Biodiversity section for some great practical ideas.

SMART

We want to help tourism and hospitality businesses to deploy digital technology to step-change key business processes, unlock greater productivity and enable improved financial outcomes. From websites to content development, from chatbots to inventory management systems and more – we are talking about true digital transformation! We can even help you improve the quality and accessibility of visitor experiences through virtual reality and augmented reality. Think about how you can design digital transformation into your existing business or a new project.

ROOTED

Let's invite our visitors to share in meaningful experiences that offer powerful connections with communities, culture, nature and heritage. Think about original and imaginative ways to appreciate the natural world, relax and have fun with loved ones, and engage with authentic and intriguing stories from past and present. Go a step further and think about how to empower the visitor to contribute to enhancing the natural world, to support host communities to meet their own goals in the place where they love to live. Show how your project contributes to the local community as well.

ACCESSIBLE

We want to create a welcome for all. We can do this through well-designed infrastructure, amenities and experiences, and a skilled network of tourism businesses and ambassadors that together support access and enjoyment for everyone. We'd like to hear your ideas for improving the physical accessibility of indoor and outdoor visitor experiences and services. What about awareness training for staff? We also want to support improvements in the accessibility of information, both online and offline.

LOW CARBON

We wish to support projects that can demonstrate a low carbon footprint, that ensure the sustainable use and protection of water resources, that contribute to the circular economy and have provision for waste prevention and recycling. We will encourage all successful applicants to measure their carbon footprint and pursue sustainability certification.



TAKE ACTION ON BIODIVERSITY

DESIGN FOR BIODIVERSITY

- ▶ Incorporate traditional and low-impact building techniques like cob and strawbale
- ▶ Grow your own organic food or partner with local growers and regenerative farmers
- ▶ For planned parking, consider permeable reinforced grass or gravel options that allow rainwater percolation
- ▶ Invest in composting toilet systems, or properly-designed reed/willow bed treatment systems that protect our water ecosystems
- ▶ Manage meadowlands in a staged regime, cutting some annually, some in a 2-year cycle and some in a 5-year cycle
- ▶ Develop your landscaping plans so they result in diverse, native plant communities
- ▶ Plan or retrospectively fit lighting installations in line with Dark Skies Ireland guidelines (<https://www.darksky.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Toolkits-and-Guidelines.pdf>)
- ▶ Develop rain gardens and swales along road and path networks, to slow water down and help create immunity during periods of drought
- ▶ Eliminate the use of herbicides and embrace natural management practices that celebrate the importance of 'weeds'
- ▶ Identify non-native invasive plants on your land, as these are major contributors to ecosystem collapse. Learn more on <https://invasives.ie/about/irelands-invasive-species> and follow the guidelines of your County Council relating to invasive plant management.



CREATE UNDISTURBED HABITATS

- Keep areas of scrubby native shrubs and thorny plants, that are undisturbed by people and domestic animals
- Dead wood is a life-giving habitat – keep dead-hedge boundaries, shelter belts and logpiles
- Create water sources for wildlife such as wildlife ponds, bird baths, and butterfly drinking stations
- Make safe holes in your boundaries to allow wildlife to pass through or, even better, replace solid boundaries with native hedgerows
- A wildlife corridor connects habitats that are separated by human development. They allow safe and accessible passage for birds and animals. Create wildlife corridors
 - ▷ at ground level through hedges, drystone walls and deadwood hedges.
 - ▷ up above through native tree canopies that give flight paths for birds and bats
- For new driveways, create underpasses that allow animals retain their existing territories and routes
- Add wildlife homes, for example owl and bat boxes and bird houses
- Keep naturally built, clean bug hotels as well as earth and sand banks for solitary bee habitats



IDEAS TO INSPIRE

If you are interested in using the regenerative strength of tourism to power your community into a greener future, you can do that by making changes in your existing tourism business, you can innovate in that business or in a totally new project, and you can engage in collaboration at the community and regional level.

To help generate and refine ideas that can work for you, this section shares examples of businesses, groups and destinations that are already successfully progressing regenerative approaches.

Their stories may trigger ideas for how you can create and refine world-class visitor experiences and services that also work in harmony with nature.

The EU Just Transition Fund allows a focus on the unique and distinctive character of the Midlands, its heritage, its stories and its natural gems. It provides an opportunity to match the rewetting and restoring of peatlands with regenerative and restorative visitor experiences.

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape in Ireland, overlaid with a semi-transparent map showing county boundaries and various planning regions. The map includes labels for counties such as Sligo, Leitrim, Mayo, Roscommon, Longford, Westmeath, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Carlow, and Wexford. Specific planning regions are also labeled, including R-1, R-2, R-3, LD-1, LD-2, LD-3, W-1, W-2, G-2, LS-1, LS-2, LS-3, T-3, and R-2. The text is centered over the map, with the first part in yellow and the second part in white.

**Small-scale and low-carbon
accommodation options that
bring visitors closer to nature
and the locality are a great
fit for the EU Just Transition
Territory**

Glamping Under The Stars

Co. Laois

Glamping Under the Stars offers quirky accommodation across two glampsites. The business positions itself as the ideal place to run in wildflower meadows, take a walk in the woods, explore the flora and fauna of Abbeyleix Bog, do some wild swimming or mountain biking in the Slieve Blooms, or splash around in the outdoor pool at Ballinakill.



The glampsites have a focus on waste reduction, re-use and recycling, and operate a 'no single use plastics' policy.

As many natural spaces as possible are retained throughout both glampsites. Wildflowers are planted in two meadow areas, around the base of tents, at the edges of the site, and even on the grass roofs of the six hobbit houses and Glamp House kitchen.

A biodiversity pond supports plant and animal life including dragonflies, frogs, fish and ducks

The business adopted the Age Friendly Charter and has been recognised by Age Friendly Laois, having installed even, textured pathways, wheelchair accessible parking, and both ensuite and wheelchair accessible bathroom options.

www.glampingunderthestars.ie



Clifden Eco Beach Camping and Caravanning Park

Co. Galway

"We wanted to engage with conscious travellers, and, from the outset, our aim was to be able to offer them the opportunity of a carbon-neutral holiday in a place of exceptional natural beauty."

*Tatjana and Kris Acton, Clifden Eco Beach
Camping and Caravanning Park*

Nestled in the sand dunes along Connemara's Wild Atlantic Way coastline, this business provides a semi-wild, eco-camping adventure to guests. In 2013, it became Ireland's first eco-certified carbon-neutral accommodation provider. The business is a gold-certified member of Sustainable Travel Ireland and is carbon-neutral certified by South Pole Global.

www.clifdenecocamping.ie

Lundies House

Scotland

Lundies House is a friendly guesthouse in the village of Tongue on the most Northerly shore of Britain's mainland. It has a conservation mission which is to create 'an endowment for generations to come'. Guests can avail of curated experiences that allow full immersion in nature: 4x4 tours, nature walks, wild swimming, bike hire and fishing tuition.



The business is part of the Wildland family of properties. Wildland is an organisation dedicated to a 200-year Vision of Hope for Highland landscapes.

To date, it has planted over four million trees, and created the conditions for countless more to regenerate themselves. The business assures guests that, by staying at Lundies, they are directly contributing to that mission

www.lundies.scot

BREAC.HOUSE

Co Donegal

"Thinking regeneratively means acting ethically and responsibly which includes everything from hosting small numbers of guests, adopting equitable trading practices with suppliers to providing quality terms and conditions of employment for staff and supporting the local community."

Niall Campbell, Breac.House

Some specific carbon reduction measures the business has implemented:

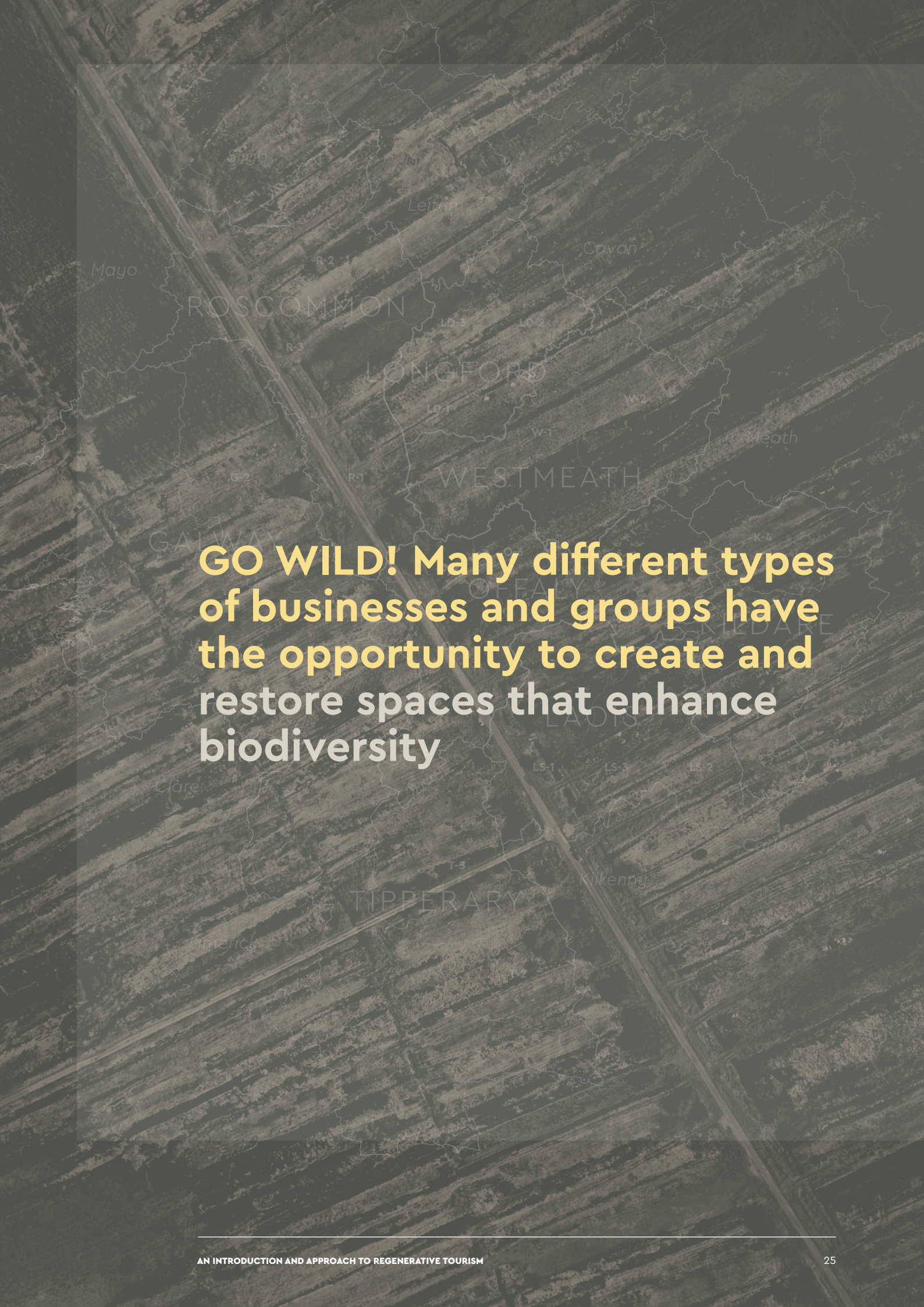
- Fossil fuels have been eliminated and only renewable energy sources are in use
- Rainwater harvesting systems reduce the use of main waters and build in a degree of resilience for future climate events
- Using a mix of on-site grown fruit and vegetables and quality Irish-grown produce, food miles are reduced while supporting local growers and delivering high-quality local produce to guests
- Many initiatives help reduce waste: elimination of single-use plastics in in-room amenities, on-site composting, eliminating single-use glass bottles, switching to all eco-friendly cleaning products
- Guests are empowered to make greener choices in a few ways: providing free EV car charge points, free guest bikes, advice on local amenities and encouraging longer stays

Breac.House is a contemporary retreat that aims to balance luxury and comfort with the natural, rugged beauty of North West Donegal.

The owners, Cathrine Burke and Niall Campbell, showcase local and national suppliers as part of the Breac.House Experience, bringing together local design and art, food and heritage in one location experience.

They invested in environmentally friendly materials and in high-environmental performance buildings and use the building itself to showcase their architect, building craftsmen, and suppliers of furniture and household objects. You can even buy specially commissioned products, mostly made in Donegal, on this accommodation's website

www.breac.house



GO WILD! Many different types of businesses and groups have the opportunity to create and restore spaces that enhance biodiversity

Make It Wild

Yorkshire

That's the mission of the Neave Family whose business, 'Make It Wild', grew out of their desire to create a bit more wild space – more trees, more meadows, more ponds. The business offers events, talks, accommodation, and retreats.



"It's not our aim to protect nature. It's our purpose."

Tourists are encouraged to enjoy mindful nature walks in the wood or volunteer with an on-site project. Guests have an opportunity to volunteer in nature rewilding activities, such as tree-planting, gorse-clearing and checking bird boxes. They can also give back through a 'Carbon Mitigation Through Tree Planting' Scheme.

The business has planted over 60,000 trees across their land, dug ponds, restored wildflower hay meadows, made 'leaky dams', and installed bird and bat boxes. They have also put up a deer fence to protect the precious Ancient Woodland to encourage natural regeneration.

Funds generated through the business are re-invested in nature reserve projects.

www.makeitwild.co.uk

Knepp Wildland Project

West Sussex

Knepp Wildland is the first major lowland rewilding project in England, comprising 3,500 acres of former arable and dairy farmland. In 2001, the estate started to move away from farming to nature conservation, letting nature take the driving seat.



"Working with nature to build a sustainable future."

More than 20 years later, Knepp Wildland Project is now a leading UK conservation project, with demonstrated value in areas such as grazing ecology, pasture landscape, wildlife, ecosystem services, species reintroduction, river restoration and monitoring and surveys. Visitors have a choice of accommodation options on the Estate (glamping, camping and self-catering) and can enjoy wildlife safaris, rewilding learning events, and sample wild range meat.

A Knepp Wilding Kitchen and Shop is due to open, located in an 18th Century Sussex Barn – the business is working with carbon specialists to massively reduce the carbon footprint of the development, repurposing old materials and using new technology to build as sustainably as possible.

www.knepp.co.uk

**Visitor attractions can tell
the story of a place and its
people, and offer new ways
to experience tradition,
heritage and history**

Arigna Mining Experience

Co. Roscommon

In Arigna, an industrial heritage site was re-imagined and re-vitalised through tourism. Arigna Mining Experience is a community-inspired initiative that converted disused mines into a flagship visitor experience. By mobilising community and government support, the mine, which closed in 1990, was able to re-open as a visitor attraction in 2003.



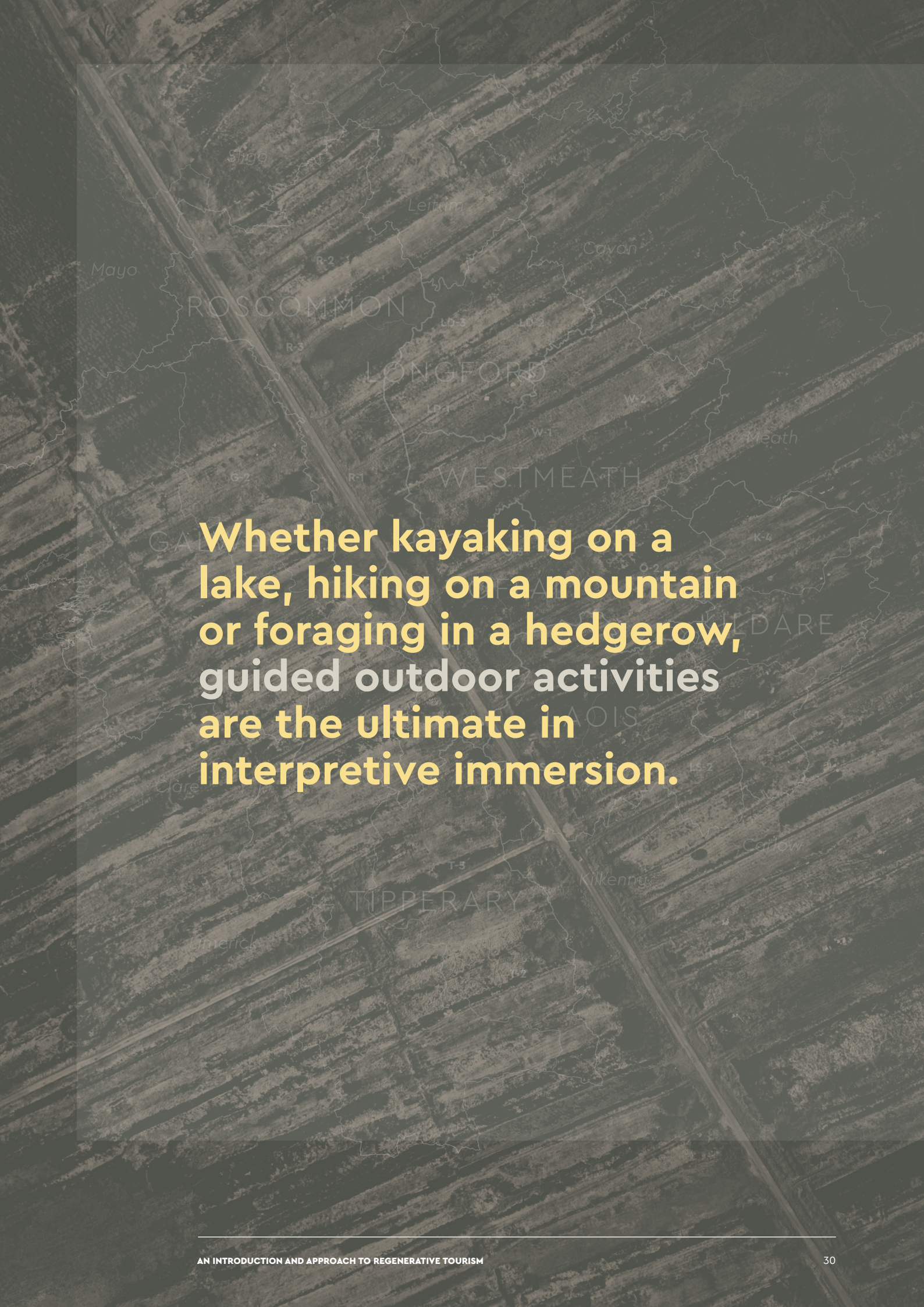
Since 2003, more than 400,000 visitors have learned about the mining history of the area and got an insight into the coal-mining life as it was in the Arigna Valley for centuries.

The visitor attraction preserves the 400-year-old mining heritage of the area.

The highlight of the experience is the underground tour into the mine, where the tour guide is a former miner who shares his first-hand experiences of a life worked underground.

The centre is fully wheelchair accessible, even for underground tours.

www.arignaminingexperience.ie



**Whether kayaking on a
lake, hiking on a mountain
or foraging in a hedgerow,
guided outdoor activities
are the ultimate in
interpretive immersion.**

Cavan Adventure Centre

Co. Cavan

Offering a promise to relieve your mind of clutter and be at one with nature, Cavan Adventure Centre seeks to speak directly to the visitor who wants to re-connect with nature and feel a personal sense of rejuvenation.



Part of the Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark and a member of the Geopark Business Network, the business seeks to connect meaningfully with its community and the wider destination.

As well as offering numerous land and water-based activities, Cavan Adventure Centre offers a Climate Change Awareness Programme and Biodiversity Education Programme for primary and secondary schools.

Young people get to explore a variety of habitats, including waterways, marshlands, farmland and woodlands, and to experience the wonder of nature first-hand. The aim of these programmes is to engender a love of the natural world, and enthusiasm to learn about the natural environment and our place within it.

www.cavanadventure.ie



Blackstairs Eco Trails

Co. Carlow

With a mission 'to get better, not bigger', this family-run business offers a small, safe, sustainable space for people to immerse themselves in nature.

Restored shepherd huts provide the accommodation, while an 1829 farm building got a green facelift and a new lease of life as a sustainable Eco Barn for guest events and workshops.

Guests can enjoy guided foraging walks and hikes in the Blackstairs Mountains.

The owners have been recording and reporting wildlife on the farm for over 40 years and the business has earned the prestigious Gold Level Certification with Sustainable Travel Ireland.

www.blackstairsecotrails.ie

Wilderness Ireland

Co. Sligo

Wilderness Ireland specialises in offering a range of small group, self-guided and private adventure tours.



Through its carbon-labelling project, they measure not only the carbon impact of the business overall, but also that of each trip. The business is committed to reducing emissions by 90% by 2030 and to investing in projects that remove, avoid or reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.

This means that Wilderness Ireland can reassure travellers that they are taking an adventure holiday for which the carbon impact has already been mitigated.

Travellers are also asked to consider contributing to conservation – at the time of booking, they are asked to donate a small amount and the funds go to conservation projects selected by Wilderness Ireland.

www.wildernessireland.com

**Local guides, with intimate
knowledge of the landscape
and specialist expertise,
can really open up nature
to locals and visitors alike**

Guides of the Burren Ecotourism Network

Co. Clare

The Burren Ecotourism Network counts nearly 70 tourism-based businesses amongst its members. Many are professional guides, who expertly host guests in the Burren & Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark.



The guides, along with fellow members, collaborate with each other in many areas: marketing, conservation projects and community initiatives.

They each have a distinct expertise, storytelling angle or geographical location that ensures they complement each other, guaranteeing that visitors to the Geopark have a compelling choice of guided interpretive experiences.

For example, Cormac McGinley of Cormac's Coast offers zoological and geological-themed walks, Pius Murray of Walk with Pius specialises in spiritual and mindfulness walks, Oonagh O'Dwyer of Wild Kitchen offers guided seaweed and wild food/plant identification walks, while Marie McGauran of Burren Experience Guided Walks leads heritage & nature walks in her Burren homeland, now part of the Burren National Park.

www.wildernessireland.com



Ambassadors & Champions Programme, Cuilcagh Lakelands Unesco Global Geopark

Co. Cavan & Co. Fermanagh

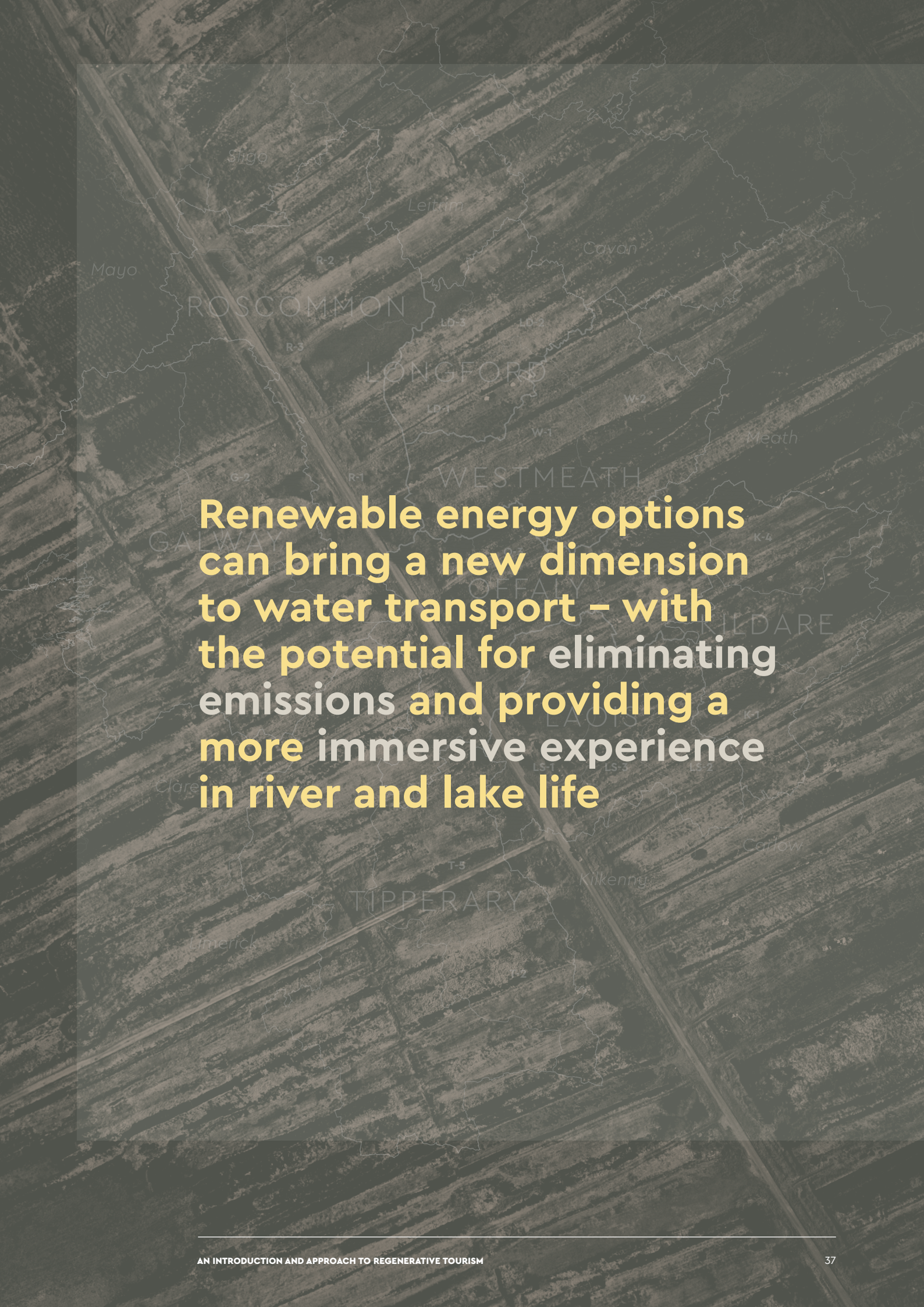
Cuilcagh Lakelands UNESCO Global Geopark was the world's first cross-border Geopark, straddling Counties Cavan and Fermanagh. The Geopark has trained local people to become Geopark Ambassadors in Cavan and Heritage Champions in Fermanagh.

Ambassadors and Champions that act as a colourful conduit for meaningful community engagement and visitor interaction within the Geopark.

The training ensures that local people have the skills, knowledge and expertise to ensure the special landscapes of the Geopark are understood, interpreted and celebrated.

It also provides them with a means to gain economic and commercial benefit from living in the Geopark and sharing it with visitors. Meeting with local experts and hearing their first-hand insights into the geology, culture and landscape of the Geopark enhances the overall visitor experience.

www.cuilcaghlakelands.org



**Renewable energy options
can bring a new dimension
to water transport – with
the potential for eliminating
emissions and providing a
more immersive experience
in river and lake life**

Carrick Day Boats

Moon River, Co. Leitrim



This business operates a small fleet of day boats which are 100% electric powered.

They are designed to be safe and easy to drive, leading to a stress-free boating experience.

Not only that, but they also run very quietly, with visitors reporting how they can get close to rare experiences such as seeing a kingfisher mid-flight.

Visitors get to moor up on the quays of Shannon-side towns and villages, have a spot of local lunch and then sail away again, naturally guided by the River Shannon.

www.moonriver.ie

Erne Water Taxi

Co. Fermanagh

"Many visitors remark on the sense of tranquillity they experience and how it allows them really hear and see lake wildlife up-close."

Barry Flanagan, Erne Water Taxis



The owner of Erne Water Taxi, Barry Flanagan, wanted to reduce emissions, have a fully accessible boat and also increase his capacity.

An electric-powered boat proved to be the solution. While the boat can be plugged in to charge, it is also fitted with solar panels on its roof (providing 30–40% of the boat's power).

It is able to accommodate 6 wheelchairs at once and offers customers an

ease of boarding and disembarking without the need for a ramp. As the boat is silent, it also favours visitors with auditory sensitivities.

Visitors get to moor up on the quays of Shannon-side towns and villages, have a spot of local lunch and then sail away again, naturally guided by the River Shannon.

www.ernewatertaxi.com



Community groups, not-for-profit and charitable organisations play a rich part in creating thriving communities and flourishing places

Brigit's Garden

Co. Galway

A not-for-profit registered charity, Brigit's Garden offers unique Celtic-themed gardens based on the seasonal festivals and featuring Irish sculpture and crafts. The gardens are surrounded by restored wildflower meadows, natural woodlands and wetlands laid out with walks and interactive family trails that bring nature and related mythology alive for visitors.

A photograph of two women sitting in a garden. The woman on the left is wearing a blue jacket and the woman on the right is wearing a red top. They are both smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, there is a stone structure with a thatched roof and some trees. The garden is lush with green plants and flowers.

"We live in a world where many people's lives are increasingly detached from the natural world. My dream for Brigit's Garden was to create a place where people of all ages could connect with nature in beautiful surroundings and find inspiration, delight, tranquillity and learning as they do so."

Jenny Beale, Founder, Brigit's Garden

The project is truly regenerative in outlook – becoming a centre for environmental sustainability, offering environmental education for all ages, enabling community involvement, honouring Celtic heritage and facilitating experiences of learning, reflection, participation and celebration.

Visitors can enjoy a café serving fresh local food, browse the gift shop or attend an event or workshop. The buildings and the gardens are accessible, and a section

of the nature trail is also accessible to wheelchair users. Carers accompanying people with disabilities are admitted free of charge. There's even a reduced entry fee for those who use eco transport – public transport, e-car or bicycle.

www.brigitsgarden.ie

Díseart Gardens Dingle

Co. Kerry

The Díseart Centre of Irish Spirituality and Culture is located in the heart of Dingle. The centre is available to the community for artistic, cultural and Irish language activities, agus is áit é gur feidir le daoine a.mbuanna a thabhairt i lár an aonaigh agus iad a roinnt.

An Díseart organises events throughout the year and the gardens are a location for community and cultural gatherings as well as private prayer and meditation.

Three walled gardens provide a series of natural spaces for connection and community: the Family Tree Garden, the Prayer Garden, and the Sensory & Biodiversity Garden.



The gardens include biodiversity and cultural supports such as:

- Dead hedges and native hedgerows for insect and bird support
- Native plants to increase wildlife support
- Mowing regimes that support diversity
- Strategies to naturalise and protect native woodlands
- Wild scrubby areas and woodlands for habitat
- Locally produced artisan benches and garden structures
- A year-round schedule of events, attractive to visitors and locals, that supports local storytellers, musicians and artists

www.diseart.ie

Questions to Consider

With a regenerative lens on your project, idea or experience, here are some questions to help shape your tourism proposal for grant application:

PLACE

- ✓ How does your offering share the unique essence of the place?
- ✓ How does your project or experience harmonise with the woodlands and forests, bogs and peatlands, lakes and rivers of the Midlands?
- ✓ What does it do to enhance the spirit, culture and vibrancy of your place?

ENVIRONMENT

- ✓ In what ways are nature, habitats, wildlife and plant life better off as a result of your project/offering?
- ✓ How does your project/offering enhance biodiversity?
- ✓ In what ways are carbon emissions being minimised or eliminated?

COMMUNITY

- ✓ In what ways does your proposal contribute to the local community?
- ✓ How does it showcase the creativity of your community and your place?
- ✓ How does your proposal make inventive and respectful use of the industrial heritage of the Midlands?

VISITOR

- ✓ How does your project bring enjoyable learning experiences to the visitor?
- ✓ How does it connect with other experiences in the area?
- ✓ What is unique about how you empower visitors to connect with nature and the local community?

INDUSTRY

- ✓ How does it contribute to a robust and profitable local economy?
- ✓ In what ways do you plan to collaborate with other local businesses?
- ✓ How can you show that your proposal is economically viable and profitable?

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SCHEME
OR TO COMPLETE AN EXPRESSION OF
INTEREST FORM PLEASE GO TO
WWW.FAILTEIRELAND.IE/JUSTTRANSITION**

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midlands and the nation for
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a new partnership with
nature that allows the
peatlands to power our
places and communities
for generations to come.





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