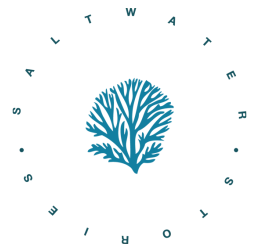


Coastal Livelihood Transitions in the Blue Tourism Economy

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“What if we built a structured pathway for fishers, in marginal coastal communities, and beyond, to transition (partially or fully) into sustainable marine wildlife tourism?”



Let's Get to Know Each Other



- Earth & Ocean Science | Marine Biology | Project Management
- 15 years across research & industry
- Offshore monitoring & marine construction (MMO)
- Fisheries engagement - MPAs & offshore renewables
- EU environmental project management
- Science communication - podcast, education & international talks



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Connecting the (blue) dots

- Years working alongside small-scale inshore fishers
- First-hand exposure to the challenges facing coastal fishing communities
- Working with sustainable marine tourism operators across Europe
- Experiencing visitor reactions to marine wildlife and conservation in real time
- Seeing operators successfully balance tourism income with marine research collaboration



Fishers Already Have the Transferable Skills



- Generational ecological knowledge
- Navigation and seamanship
- Weather and ocean awareness
- Storytelling and maritime heritage
- Existing maritime infrastructure - vessels, ports, jetties



The Opportunity



- Global growth in marine wildlife tourism
- Whale watching expanding year on year
- Best practice examples where I've seen this in action - Iceland, Madeira, Costa del Sol



The Gap

- Barriers to entry - permits, finance, vessel adaptation, training, finding research partnerships
- No clear transition pathway for fishers into marine wildlife tourism
- Structured retraining pathways exist for Offshore Renewables
- Despite the fact that Tourism & hospitality support ~270,000 jobs in Ireland (~1 in 10 jobs)*

**Source: Irish Hotels Federation (2025), Budget 2026 Submission: Supporting Irish Tourism & Hospitality*



An Initiative in Development

- Working with ATU Sligo to build a consortium of research institutions, marine eNGOs and sustainable wildlife tourism operators
- Early partners across Ireland, Spain, Sweden, Portugal, Turkey and Montenegro

Framework aims to:

- Develop training pathways for fishers interested in marine wildlife tourism
- Address barriers to entry (digital literacy, financial and regulatory challenges)
- Host workshops, living labs and knowledge exchanges
- Foster collaboration between experienced tourism operators, researchers and new entrants
- Explore future opportunities for tourism–science collaboration (e.g. acoustic monitoring and marine biodiversity data collection)



Let's Talk!

- Initiative currently seeking partners
- Opportunities for collaboration across coastal regions
- Keen to learn from similar projects and initiatives
- I'm 100% sure we're not the only ones thinking about this

Grazie mille!

