

Ecotourism as a positive change for nature and people



INTERVENTION

**Co-created
Community-based Action**
Living Lab Approach.
Citizen Science
Tailored Itineraries.



CHALLENGE

Tourism vs. Ecosystem Integrity
Fragile Habitats.
Tourism Footprint.
Limited best-practice guidance.



FUTURE

Community-Led Resilience
Ocean Literacy.
Viable Co-existence.
Nature-based Solutions.



Key Message

- Ecotourism links economic growth to conservation, fostering new environmental values and stewardship
- Citizen science and guidelines enhance ocean literacy and minimal-impact experiences.

Policy Relevance

International policies

- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Guiding Principles for Sustainable Investment in Tourism
- The World Charter for Sustainable Tourism
- Ecotourism: Principles, Practices & Policies for Sustainability

National policy

- Nature Diversity Act (2009)



What is the Challenge

Tourism in the North Atlantic and Arctic is undergoing rapid development, with nature-based tourism often limited to specific seasons and locations. This blueprint aims to address the challenges posed by increasing tourism while promoting sustainable practices in rural communities. By integrating ecotourism into protected and non-protected areas, we can create sustainable economic opportunities, foster local community engagement, and contribute to environmental conservation.

This solution aligns with global sustainability goals, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the EU's Blue and Green Growth strategies, and the UN Oceans Decade. It emphasizes the importance of local ownership, community engagement, and the protection and restoration of ecosystems.



An Innovative Solution

This innovative solution involves the development of ecotourism concepts and practices that integrate environmental conservation, community engagement, sustainable economic growth, and consideration of nature and people. The solution includes:

- A “Living Lab approach” that fosters collaboration between researchers, local communities, tourism operators, and conservation groups.
- Creation of ecotourism concept packages that promote environmental awareness, education, ocean literacy, and sustainable practices.
- Development of visitor guidelines to ensure respectful and minimal-impact tourism.
- Active participation in conservation efforts and citizen science such as kelp forest restoration, bird watching, and wild food foraging.

Development of a business model and itineraries scaled to small communities and operators.

This solution creates a framework for sustainable tourism that benefits local communities, enhances biodiversity, ocean literacy, and promotes environmental stewardship.



The Benefits the solution produces

- **Environmental Conservation:** Protection and restoration of ecosystems, including marine protected areas and surrounding areas as well.
- **Economic Value Creation:** Sustainable economic opportunities for local communities, including new livelihoods and incentives for biodiversity conservation.
- **Community Engagement:** Increased local ownership and participation in tourism development.
- **Education and Awareness:** Enhanced ocean literacy, environmental awareness, and appreciation for nature and local culture.
- **Sustainable Tourism:** Development of responsible tourism practices that minimize environmental impact and promote long-term sustainability and preservation of environments.

How developed is the solution

The solution is in advanced development, with marine and terrestrial concepts mapped to meet local and marine protected area needs while ensuring respectful, eco-friendly visits. Guidelines have been finalized, and concept packages tested in Karlsey Municipality's Arctic Archipelago. The final step involves aligning the business plan with infrastructure and small-scale operator needs.



Where could also be applied to?

Several area characteristics comply with this solution. One can also use the solution as inspiration or modify it to fit the area of scope. The solution can be applied to both smaller communities and additionally be scaled up to larger communities in different geographical regions.

Area characteristics	Intention for applying this solution
Communities that are impacted by ecosystem and biodiversity loss	To support conservation and restoration through nature-based activities that promote ecosystem monitoring, biodiversity rehabilitation, and marine awareness, alongside community programs and citizen science to engage diverse audiences and foster environmental values.
Kelp forest and ecosystem deterioration	To promote conservation and restoration through nature-based activities that contributes to ecosystem monitoring and kelp rehabilitation, while raising awareness about marine biodiversity.
Need for new environmental values economically and socially	To diversify local income sources by linking economic growth to conservation, fostering pride in natural heritage, and encouraging community stewardship through sustainable tourism operators.
No wish for large scale tourism	Promote small-scale, low-impact tourism where visitors actively support biodiversity preservation, balancing economic benefits with environmental care. Local communities can shape tourism to align with their vision and values.
Poor infrastructure	To use ecotourism as a gradual and sustainable driver for improving basic infrastructure while maintaining a low ecological footprint. Develop local guidelines as a tool to safeguard responsible and respectful visits.
Need for sustainable new livelihoods attracting youth	Engage and train people in guiding, conservation, hospitality and environmental management, creating long-term employment linked to preserving local natural resources.
Large marine protected area and non-sufficient infrastructure to monitor	To support protection efforts by using ecotourism and citizen science to enhance monitoring, enforcement and education within marine protected areas.

What do you need to have in place:

- A marine protected area or a nature-rich destination with ecological and cultural significance.
- Local stakeholders, including community members, tourism operators, and conservation groups who are interested.
- A good understanding of the environmental settings, policy, and regulations of the area.
- Educational materials and guidelines for visitors and operators.
- A business model.
- Concepts including citizen science and restoration the concepts can be connected to.
- Infrastructure for sustainable tourism, such as eco-friendly transportation.
- A monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact and outcomes of ecotourism activities and ocean literacy created

Who is this relevant to?

- Local tour operator
- Local community
- Visitors
- MPA's
- Volunteers
- Environmental organizations
- Research
- Municipality

Key components of implementation:



Understand the area you plan to operate in and local regulations.



Engage local stakeholders to identify needs, concerns, and mutual benefits.



Draft your ecotourism concepts.



Make a realistic business plan and budget.



Minimize environmental impact.



Build educational material.



Partner with conservation groups.



Market responsibly.



Monitor and adapt, be prepared to take feedback.



Seek certifications for credibility.



Monitoring your success

Good things to monitor:

Uptake of ecotourism concepts by local operators and visitors.

Environmental impact of tourism activities on protected and non-protected areas.

Economic benefits generated for local communities.

Visitor satisfaction and awareness of environmental conservation.

Effectiveness of educational materials and visitor guidelines.



The challenges you may encounter

Activity	Challenge 1	Challenge 2
Piloting the change	Understanding the core elements of ecotourism to take the steps for safeguarding a sustainable outcome.	Reconnaissance of the area and environments, including building upon insights, perceptions and knowledge of different stakeholders.
Facilitating collaboration	Proper planning and management to include all the relevant stakeholders.	Engaging and mobilizing local citizens.
Educational components and citizen science	Bringing guests to the field while leaving natural habitats and ecosystems as undisturbed as possible.	Raising environmental awareness and engaging visiting participants in citizen science.
Developing concepts	Identifying current trends to align the needs and wishes for the chosen destination with what consumers are looking for.	Identifying what the logistical needs are, after having chosen where a concept could take place geographically.
Monitoring	Continuous, systematic monitoring can be difficult to implement and maintain within remote protected areas.	Different levels of engagement, knowledge and motivation can result in uneven data quality, making it harder to accurately assess environmental impacts and visitor behaviour.



Key Contact who to talk to about your application idea

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Further information

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Blueprint

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