



# TUS

**Technological University of the Shannon:**

**Midlands Midwest**

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:

Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

## POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

### Project Title: Sustainable Shannon Boats Initiative

#### Short Project Description

The aim of this project is to support the greening of the cruise boating sector on the River Shannon. At present, there are more than 200 cruise boats for hire on the River Shannon in addition to large numbers of privately owned boats. These boats are popular and occupancy is high. However, they rely on older diesel technology engines, despite recent adoption of hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel and their environmental impact on a delicate ecosystem is clear. In cooperation with the Irish Boat Rental Association and our RUN-EU partners, the proposed PHD project developed in TUS will identify a clear roadmap for the future sustainable development, diversification and greening of the cruise hire sector over the next 10 years, identifying future market potential. Sustainability and environmental best practice are fundamentals of this proposed research. The project is mapped against pillars 8, 13, 14 & 17 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The student will work in collaboration with the Irish Boat Rental Association and relevant stakeholders to deliver specific objectives, including:

- To conduct desk research of good practice case studies, complemented by site visits to RUN-EU partners, which will provide benchmarks to benefit the local industry;
- To critically analyse the consumer behaviour of current cruise boat sector providers and tourists in relation to environmental sustainability on the River Shannon. This will be conducted through interviews, focus groups and participant observation.
- The knowledge gained from Objective 1 will be used to develop and test new cruise boat tourism products and services, which have positive environmental impacts on the biodiversity of the River Shannon. This will be conducted through participative action research.

Reasons to undertake this project are clear. Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2021 requires a 51% reduction in greenhouse gases (GHG) by 2030 and to become carbon-neutral by 2050. Tourism suffers from significant challenges related to greening, sustainable recovery and specific sustainability challenges such as decarbonisation and biodiversity protection. Carbon emissions rose 5.4% in 2021. Ireland's sustainable energy authority show emissions going in the wrong direction when energy-related emissions should be cut by 4.8 per cent a year from 2021 to 2025 under the Irish Government's carbon budget. Achieving the carbon targets will be impossible for the tourism sector without applied and theoretical research, international benchmarking and bringing novel ideas to the table. Such ideas will include policy and governance knowledge, technical knowledge (e.g. around hydrogen fuel cell/ battery/ boats), ecology and biodiversity expertise and specific geographical knowledge around habitat vulnerability, exposure, resilience and adaptation. This project proposes to initially identify such practices from international examples and then to summarise and disseminate this knowledge in Ireland. Objectives 2 and 3 will then involve fieldwork, including interviews, focus groups and participative action research. In undertaking this feasibility study, wide consultation will be required with the Irish Boat Rental Association (IBRA), the main industry members, Waterways Ireland, the relevant Local Authorities and other tourism stakeholders as deemed appropriate and as directed by Fáilte Ireland.

#### Duration of Project: 48 months

**Funding Agency:** TUS RISE Scholarship comprises of a monthly stipend, materials budget and postgraduate fee for the duration of the award only.

#### Type of Degree Offered: PhD



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Northern & Western  
Regional Assembly



Tionól Réigiúnach  
an Deiscirt  
Southern Regional  
Assembly



AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS  
HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY

TU RISE is co-financed by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the ERDF Southern, Eastern & Midland Regional Programme 2021-27 and the Northern & Western Regional Programme 2021-27



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## **Minimum Qualifications/Experience Necessary/Any Other Requirements:**

Candidates with primary degrees in tourism, business, marketing, geography or other closely related discipline.

Minimum classification of *2.1 honours or equivalent*.

IELTS [International English Testing System] Applicants must have a minimum of 6.0 with no component score less than 6.0.

**Research Supervisors: Dr Tony Johnston, Dr Noelle O'Connor, Dr Lucia Tomassini and Irish Boat Rental Association.**

**For further information, please contact: Dr Tony Johnston; [anthony.johnston@tus.ie](mailto:anthony.johnston@tus.ie)**

Closing date for receipt of completed application form is 5pm on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June. Interviews will take place within subsequent weeks.

**Download TUS RISE application form here:**

<https://tus.ie/rdi/research/office/funded-research/>



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