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Gráinne Dwyer
Tourism Officer, Chamber of Commerce, Cork

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Assessing Farmers' and Landowners' Attitudes towards Environmental Sustainability and their Motivations towards Walking Tourism in Sheep's Head Way, Co. Cork

Gráinne Dwyer

Abstract

Numerous studies within academic literature examine motivations of walkers engaging with nature-based tourism activities, such as hillwalking. However, a gap exists in the literature regarding the suppliers of this type of tourism, namely landowners and farmers. This research hopes to address this identifiable gap in tourism research in a confined study area located in the Sheep's Head Way in Co. Cork. The purpose of this research was to examine geographical spatial differences in environmental attitudes, and to determine the factors that influenced the landowner's intentions to permit the walkway throughout their land. To examine these factors, seven semi-structured interviews were conducted, and to further examine these factors a survey collection of a near complete census of landowners (212 farmers) on the peninsula was carried out. Through the method of door-to-door collection, the information gathered numerous variables were analysed. The information compiled as part of this study forms a data rich analysis of landowners' and farmers' attitudes to the evolution of the walkway as well as other attributes such as; environmental awareness, issues of sustainability, community links, farm diversification and conservation of the landscape. The results illustrate significant differences among the landowners' orientations towards the environment and a range of factors that influence landowners' intentions to engage in environmental conservation and sustainable tourism. Suppliers of nature-based tourism activities are at the helm of the future direction of sustainable tourism and it is essential that they are examined with the same detail as users of nature-based activities.

Keywords: Nature-based tourism, community collaboration, sustainable development, agriculture, rural tourism.

Introduction

During the next decade, the tourism industry is expected to grow by an average of 4% annually to constitute 10% of global GDP (US\$10 trillion) and by 2022 it is predicted that globally one in every ten jobs (328 million) will be tourism-related. With the unprecedented growth of tourism it is inevitable that sustainable planning guidelines must be adhered to. Sustainable management of our natural resources is now a high priority, as tourism planners attempt to avoid past problems with the mass tourism market such as the rapid growth of the Costas around the Mediterranean Sea from the 1960s until the 1990s. This type of mass or 'fast tourism' characterises the very antithesis of a type of tourism that is considered sustainable. Past models of tourism development illustrated little or no concern for the existing landscape, albeit social, environmental or economic. It is hoped that the dawn of 'slow tourism' and ecological approaches that are based on a valorisation of natural landscapes can remedy the problems of the past and rejuvenate rural economies.

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the literature on the development of nature-based tourism in Ireland, and in particular the role that providers of these land resources have in the development of the rural tourism industry. Extensive literature is available discussing nature-based or slow tourism but has a strong focus on the consumers rather than the suppliers. This data is typically collected through tourism barometers and tourist surveys. Mulder *et al.*, (2006) reiterate the fact that the majority of research in rural access found in the public domain has been based on the demand side, and has tended to ignore the supply side. Multiple case study analysis conducted in the United Kingdom (Evans, 2004, Land Use Consultants, 2004, ADAS Consulting Ltd, 2003, Leisure Industries Research Centre, 2003, Trevelyan, 2003) analysed the needs of walkers with a demand focused approach and did not address or quantify issues of concern to landowners. Landowners and farmers are the tourism suppliers and stakeholders in this study whose voice is rarely heard within the dearth of transport and tourism literature (Lohmann and Pearce, 2012). On a national level (Irish context), environmental discourses and attitudes of farmers, landowners or suppliers of tourism are discussed in detail within some academic sources (Yadav *et al.*, 2013, Power *et al.*, 2013, Laple, 2012, Madden, 2009, Buckley, 2008, Cawley *et al.*, 2007, Kelly, 2007). Further extensive research is available exploring themes of the economic impact of walking tourism in West Cork and in part specifically examines the case study location of the Sheep's Head peninsula. This report was carried out by URS Scott Wilson on behalf of West Cork Development Partnership (2012) and was funded through LEADER funding outlined by the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013¹. This report illustrates a detailed account of definitions of walking tourism, walking tourism in Ireland, walks in West Cork, issues and challenges that the region faces and a summary of the economic impact of walking tourism. One aspect of the report does cover one supplier of tourism, accommodation providers; however it does not delve into farmers' or landowners' attitudes towards the environment or tourism. This research explores these stakeholders through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data and attempts to fill this gap in the research and could complement the already published report.

This paper will briefly examine specific themes within the reviewed literature including rural and walking tourism. The next section will discuss the case study area of the Sheep's Head peninsula in County Cork which is a micro scale analysis and furthermore describe a selection of methodologies used as part of this study. The final section of this paper will give an insight into the provisional results of this study and some conclusions from the literature and initial results presented.

The objective of this research was to complete a near census of the peninsula and this provided an in-depth analysis of landowners' and farmers' attitudes to the evolution of the walkway as well as other attributes such as; environmental awareness, issues of sustainability, community links, farm diversification and conservation of the landscape. The approach of this study was then to conduct a spatial analysis of the case study area based on the qualitative and quantitative findings.

¹ The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP) had a budget of €5.778 billion over a seven year period of which €2.339 billion was funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARD) and €3.438 billion by the National Exchequer (Ireland).

Rural Tourism

This research focuses on rural tourism activities, as generally speaking nearly all of walking tourism ventures occur in rural spaces. The majority of walking trails traverse private lands and predominantly through agricultural farmland. Modern agriculture is multifunctional, which Potter and Burney (2002, p.35) define as

“[land] not only producing food but also sustaining rural landscapes, protecting biodiversity, generating employment and contributing to the viability of rural areas”.

In the past, rural areas were seen as places of production, a landscape to provide for the host community. However, these areas can also be considered as places of consumption, and hosts of recreational and leisure activities (Woods, 2011). Rural areas are highly reliant on agriculture to develop the local and national economy and thus tourism intertwined with agricultural areas can play a part in maintaining future development. The primary agricultural sector in 2010 contributed 2.5% of GDP to the Irish economy, this is twice that of the EU average (European Commission, 2012). In review of the past three decades, it can be considered that tourism was the leading contributor to the services sector of employment creation from the years 1981 to 2005 and its contribution to GDP exceeded that of the primary sector in rural Ireland². These developments in the countryside and the rural economy are reflected in the past Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP). Although tourism is not mentioned directly in these aims its importance is implicit of several of the RDP provisions.

In order to counteract this decline in employment, rural tourism was seen as a method of economic recovery. County Enterprise Boards, LEADER companies and sub-regional co-operatives all contribute to the development and promotion of rural enterprises. These areas need the continued support from such actors to reach their greatest potential as they are communities in “areas of low population density areas where natural resources tend to be poor” (Commins and McDonagh, 2002, p. 53). Rural areas are characterised by the natural landscape, which is essential to nature-based tourism development. However, challenges are present with the development of the rural tourism sector. Factors that reduce the effectiveness of rural tourism activities as an instrument for rural development include:

- Limited number of entrepreneurs in rural areas
- Conservative nature of some investors
- Short supply of spare capital in rural areas
- Small scale and dispersed nature of the industry involving many micro enterprises
- Need for co-ordination, co-operation and partnership with government agencies to develop a “destination” as distinct from a ‘stop-off’ point for an hour a day
- Fragmentation in product provision and marketing efforts
- Lack of policy for the management development and marketing of rural tourism (Heneghan, 2002, p. 71)

² Tourism comprised 7% of total hours worked in the economy in 2007, up from 6% in 2000 and 3% in 1980 (Forfas, 2011). Between 1965 and 2000, the number of overseas visitors to Ireland increased almost fivefold while foreign exchange earnings from tourism advanced by a factor of forty. From the years 1985-2000, tourism growth has resulted in the number of overseas visitors climb from under two million to well over six million (Tansey Webster Stewart and Company Economic Consultants).

In recent years there has been a greater emphasis on sustainability and nature based tourism, this has leaked into the tourism consumer consciousness. Hannam and Knox (2010) outline that by examining the interdependence of tourism and the environment we can highlight conservation efforts and value our natural resources. Issues of maintaining a low 'carbon footprint' have also come to the forefront of a significant amount of holidaymakers' decisions when planning tourist travel. The Department of Enterprise Trade and Innovation released a Trading A strategy and action plan for Irish Trade, Tourism and Investment to 2015. Within this plan, the Tourism Renewal Group stressed the need for the tourism agencies to identify new nature-based tourism activities. The report pin pointed a need to pursue new potential areas that could gain a competitive edge for Ireland in the global market. The most important areas for development included Eco-tourism, including outdoor activities, such as surfing and walking (Department of Enterprise Trade and Innovation, 2010). Walking trails and routes have developed rapidly in recent years in many upland areas and largely through farmland that is not being intensively used for agricultural purposes. Persons engaging in recreational walking have increased by (+ 4.1%) from 2007 to 2014. Thus, its growing popularity could signal future development for walking trails that can be dually utilised for tourism development (The Irish Sports Council, 2011).

It is evident that rural tourism businesses is often not dependent on outside companies or firms and is more reliant on inter-community co-operation and collaboration (Heneghan, 2002). These local linkages are essential to the future development of the industry and, therefore, there needs to be an emphasis on promoting rural areas as a long term destination rather than a one-day or once-off experience. Since the majority of nature-based tourism activities are often non fee-paying, local communities can only gain financial benefits by tourists spending money in local accommodation sites, shops, restaurants, bars, and services. The expenditure on these local businesses is often neglected due to short term or one-day trips instead of spending a few days in the area. Rural areas that have walking trails can only experience economic benefits if money is spent by walkers in the local area. It is essential to realise that the rural landscape is not a redundant backdrop for the incoming visitor, but is a dynamic living environment in a constant process of change (Meldon, 1995). An essential component of rural tourism development is often cited as the sustainable management of the landscape and the establishment of regional and local partnerships (Cawley *et al.*, 2007). Genot as cited in Fennell and Malloy (2007) mirrors this theory, and states that the primary obstacle to environmentally sound tourism management can be attributed to the lack of co-operation and collaboration between tourism stakeholders. However the success of the Sheep's Head Way as a tourist destination can undoubtedly be linked to strong community links, collaboration and the innovative yet sustainable use of the landscape as a resource. The walkway is an example of a tourist product where individual community members have through their own initiative and with the added assistance of outside funding developed a successful, rural tourism business, based on nature-based walking tourism. The marketing strategy for Sheep's Head Way has drawn inspiration from a highly successful walking route already in place, Loop Head in County Clare. This walk way was voted the best tourist destination in Ireland from a poll in an Irish Newspaper 'The Irish Times' in 2013. Mr John Tobin who is the chairperson of the Sheep's Head and Bantry Tourism Co-operative (SHBTC) stated that

"from the outset, we have been working towards developing a plan like the one that was used on the Loop Head peninsula in County Clare... we need to work together, and promote ourselves actively in order to win a substantial share of the available tourist market." (Keogh, 2013, p.1)

Case Study Analysis – Sheep’s Head Way

The Sheep’s Head Way³ also known as Slí Mhuintir Bhairé extends out towards the Atlantic Ocean in between Bantry Bay and Dunmanus Bay as seen in Figure 1.

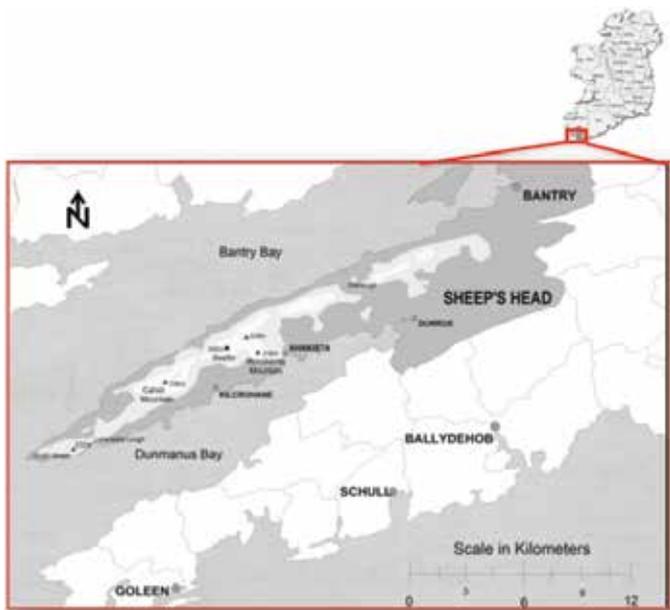


Figure 1: Case Study Location of the Sheep’s Head Peninsula

The walkway spans over 88km and also contains looped walks that encroaches into other neighbouring walks such as the Drimoleague walkway (Dillon, 2010). This neighbouring walk is known as the Sheep’s Head Eastern Trail which is 52.5km in length and runs through the villages and towns of Bantry, Drimoleague, and Gougane Barra (URS Scott Wilson, 2012). The walkways on the peninsula traverse through a landscape of outstanding natural character and the inclusion of the adjacent islands of Bere, Dursey, Garnish and Whiddy are additional draw factors for the visitor. A West Cork Development Partnership report published in 2012 reported that in 2009 the industry generated around 470,000 tourist visits which led to the generation of €134 million in revenue for the region. As this study is still in an early stage, initial findings suggest varied attitudes towards sustainability of the environment, economic and social benefits of the walkway and also mixed feelings about the level of community collaboration. From the data compiled examples of ‘good practice’ of slow or nature-based tourism have emerged from the interviews undertaken in this study.

As seen from Table 1, it is clear that the Sheep’s Head Way is the opposite of conventional mass tourism through the examples of good practices as listed. The interviews also revealed specific examples that illustrate the experienced benefits and challenges that emerge from the walking route. From the literature reviewed it is evident that tourism brings tangible benefits to a local community such as economic gain, an improvement in infrastructure and services, and a visible increase in tourist presence.

³ The Sheep’s Head is not an administrative unit; it has natural boundaries such as Dunmanus Bay and Bantry Bay. For statistical purposes, I am including eight DEDs, which are listed below. A DED or district electoral division is a former name given to a low-level territorial division in Ireland, they are the smallest legally defined administrative areas in the state. Seniūnija (elderate or eldership in English) is the equivalent of a DED and is the smallest administrative division of Lithuania.

Tourism however also provides intangible benefits such as social cohesion and new networking opportunities, along with conservation of the environment and landscape, and destination branding. Nature-based tourism often reflects stronger evidence of intangible benefits to the host community this was evident from the interview stage of data collection.

When asked ‘Have you experienced any benefits from the walkway?’ one interviewee responded:

“Oh yes definitely, it is bringing people to the area and it is very well known as a walking route since... there is no doubt about that. There is a lot of extra developments - a lot of places have expanded things as a result”. (Interviewee No.3)

MASS TOURISM	SLOW TOURISM	SHEEP’S HEAD WAY EXAMPLES
Development without planning	First plan, then develop	Development of Sheep’s Head Way development group who consulted with all landowners.
District level planning only	Regional co-ordination of district plans	Co-ordination of plans to integrate the Drimoleague walkway.
Building outside existing settlements	Development within existing settlements	Developed the walkway on existing pathways and shared commonage land.
Intensive development in areas of finest landscapes	Fine landscape conserved	No railings or invasive signage was installed as part of the walkway.
New building and new bed capacity	Re-use existing buildings- better utilisation of bed capacity	Farm houses converted to Bed & Breakfast and hostels. No evidence of any new development to facilitate bed capacity.
Development by outside developers	‘Native’ developers only	Local people developed the idea and invited other members of the community to get involved.
Employment primarily for non-natives	Employment according to local potential	Local tour guides charge a minimal fee for groups of walkers.
Development only on economic grounds	Discussion of all economic, ecological and social issues	Consultation was evident among landowners with regards to the best possible route for the walkway. The area is also host to Special Area Protection status.

Farming declines, labour forced into tourism	Farm economy retained and strengthened	Farm income supplemented by farm diversification and on-farm tourism businesses.
Community bears social costs	Developer bears social costs	As the walkway traverses over 300 farms the developer essentially is the landowner who shares the opportunities and challenges of the walkway.
'Natural' and historical obstacles removed	'Natural' and historical obstacles retained	Old famine ruins such as buildings and potato rows preserved as part of the natural landscape.
Source: Adapted from Butler (1992) and Lane 1988, Table. 1 has been constructed from the initial interviews at the primary stages of data collection.		

Table 1. Typical examples of mass tourism, slow tourism and examples of best practice of slow tourism activity in the Sheep's Head Way.

Another respondent highlighted the transformation of existing buildings to provide bed capacity for the walkers. When asked about accommodation facilities for walkers, one interviewee stated "Yes there is a B&B and self-catering place completely rebuilt just down across the fields from us here" (Interviewee No. 1). There was also evidence of improvements to infrastructure which does not only benefit the tourist but also the local community. One interviewee highlighted the fact that some dangerous roads along the peninsula were widened, and finance only became available due to the success of the walkway. (Interviewee No. 4) "Yes there were bits of work done there too (the roads), we have managed to get bits of finance and bad bends and things we have improved along the way".

Methodology

In terms of this study, the need for both quantitative and qualitative research was evident from a review of the literature and an analysis of both primary and secondary research. Table 2 summarises the research objectives and research methods utilised for this study. Firstly, an analysis of current literature was undertaken. Secondly, an analysis of maps and online data sources and face-to-face interviews where the findings were used to construct a questionnaire. This questionnaire was then distributed in the case study area to measure demographics, farming circumstances, economic circumstances, participation in farming schemes, experiences and motivations that relate to the Sheep's Head Walkway, and overall to attempt to assess environmental attitudes.

Research Objective	Research Method
<p>[1] To conduct an analysis of landowners' and farmers' attitudes to the evolution of the walkway</p> <p>To examine to examine the catalysts of local development (the Sheep's Head walkway)</p>	<p>Phase 1a Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six participants from the Sheep's Head Peninsula all were asked the same 17 open ended questions (n=6)</p> <p>Phase 1b Objective investigated on data obtained from questionnaire completion</p>
<p>[2] To investigate attitudes towards environmental awareness, sustainability, community links, farm diversification, conservation of the landscape, quantitative economic impacts and qualitative social impacts of the walkway.</p>	<p>Phase 2 A total of (n=212) participants completed a questionnaire that was administered on a door to door basis. The overall number of refusals was (n=9) so the response rate was 95.8%. A total of 26 questions (with 64 parts) were asked in the questionnaire.</p>
<p>[3] To investigate spatial differences of environmental attitudes, motivations and behaviours if any.</p>	<p>Phase 3 Data obtained from the completed questionnaires was mapped to establish spatial variations in results.</p>

Table 2: Summary of Research Objectives and Research Methods Utilised

According to Crowe et al. (2011) using a case study approach allows in-depth, and varied explorations of specific issues in their local setting. This type of approach allows for interpretation of what the local setting is and its context from the 'locals' point of view. This allows the researcher to develop an "interpretive understanding" of the subjective understanding (Lee and Hubona, 2009). Utilising the case study approach has both benefits and limitations as listed in Table 3.

Benefits of a case study analysis	Limitations of a case study analysis
Spatially map the results	A lack of a second case study to add a comparability element to the study
Compare and contrast geographical spatial differences or similarities	Issues with comparability with national figures
Gain access to all participants due to the localised nature of the data collection	Maintaining objectivity throughout the research project
Compare results on a county or national basis.	

Table 3: Benefits and limitations of a case study analysis

As this research focuses on a single-case study location it was ensured that the data collection process was in some form standardised so that it can be compared with other studies. With this in mind, the majority of the questions asked in this study were based on previous studies and national data collection methods such as the Census of Population and the Census of Agriculture. To determine the spatial boundaries of this case study both natural and administrative boundaries were used. The selection of this boundary was a relatively simple task as the narrow peninsula of the Sheep's Head has a natural sea boundary. Further to this, eight Electoral Divisions (EDs)⁴ were selected to create an inland boundary as seen in Figure 2.

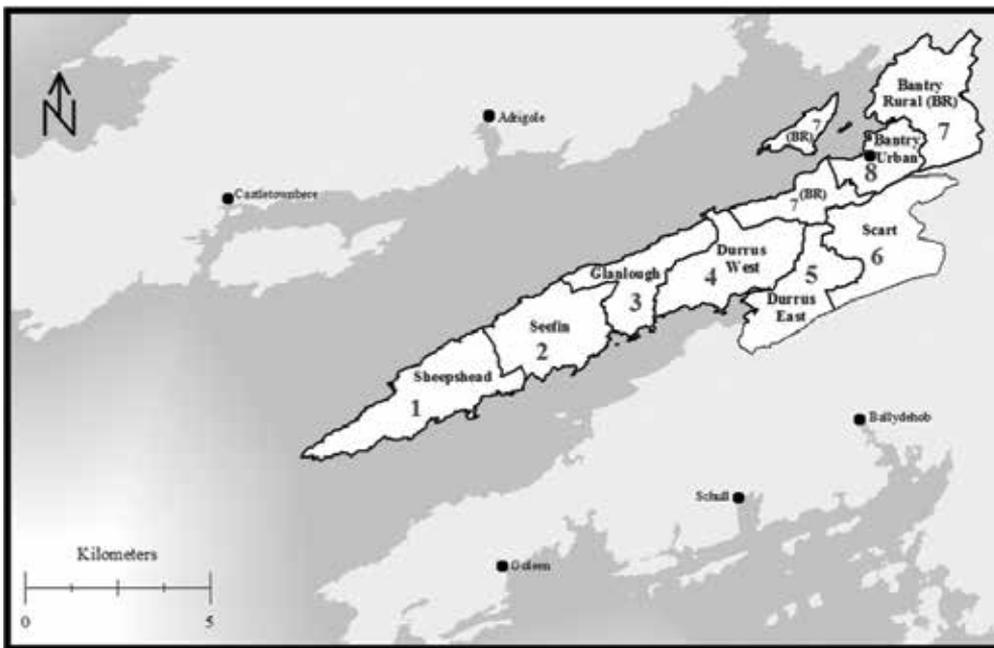


Figure 2: Map of the eight selected EDs of Case Study location

The case study area on the Sheep's Head peninsula is located in an isolated and peripheral location. The key to the progression of this research was to gain trust in the community due to its peripherally. Undertaking initial interviews with various stakeholders of the walkway was a crucial stepping-stone for the planning and preparation of more in-depth data collection. The final approach of this study was to conduct a spatial analysis of the case study area based on the qualitative and quantitative findings.

⁴ The eight EDs that were selected include (1) Sheep's Head, (2) Seefin, (3) Glanlough, (4) Durrus West, (5) Durrus East, (6) Scart, (7) Bantry Rural, and (8) Bantry Urban.

Semi-structured Interviews

As there is limited literature available regarding the establishment of the walking route, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with six landowners lasting twelve minutes to one hour in duration. The six participants were chosen on a purposeful sampling basis on their geographical location rather than selected at random, as a geographical spread of knowledge was most desirable for this study. The same seventeen open-ended questions were asked to all interviewees. All questions were standardised to facilitate comparability and also that they could be more easily analysed. The questions examined the interviewees involvement with the walkway, reactions from family and local people, any observations positive and negative, and offered room for the participant to discuss other aspects of the walkway. Only six people were contacted individually for the interviews; however it was common for family members such as husbands, wives, partners, children or even neighbours and co-workers to sit in and willingly participate in the interview process. This added depth to the conversation and possibly contributed to a better flow of ideas and thoughts. The addition of 'other' interviewees inadvertently altered the planned methodology to a 'joint interview' rather than a one-to-one interview. A 'joint interview' being one interviewer questioning two or more respondents, this may allow for some added benefits and drawbacks to the data collection process. Potential benefits of this included the collection of more comprehensive qualitative data, obtaining an agreed understanding of the event or it may also add encouragement or flow to the conversation to someone who might otherwise be silent (Arksey, 1996). In the case of interviews with multiple family members present, they were asked the same questions so their answers were possibly a merged account when reconciling their own personal versions. Bjørnholt and Farstad (2014) discuss further the advantages and disadvantages to interviewing couples and in future research may provide a basis for an excellent case study analysis based on interview methodology.

Indeed problems may arise if utilising this 'joint interview' method as some participants may over shadow others and disagreements may arise when accounting for particular events. It is suggested that 'joint interviews' may be considered as 'contributions' in the lesser case as suggested by Drummond and Mason (1990). As this initial stage of research consisted of exploring the shared experience of the development of the walkway, a joint interview resulted in the best option for data collection. This method in exploring shared experiences is recommended by both Morris (2001) and Radcliffe E. *et al.*, (2013).

Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

The final questionnaire design was created to focus on the research objectives of this research. Initially, the study was aimed at approximately 300 landowners or farmers as depicted on the Census of Agriculture however on further investigation this figure seemed inaccurate. These anomalies in data may be from multiple ownership of commonage land, and/or absent farmers who reside outside of the case study area. In total (n=212) landowners and farmers participated in the study and the breakdown of respondents is evident in Table 4 and Figure 3.

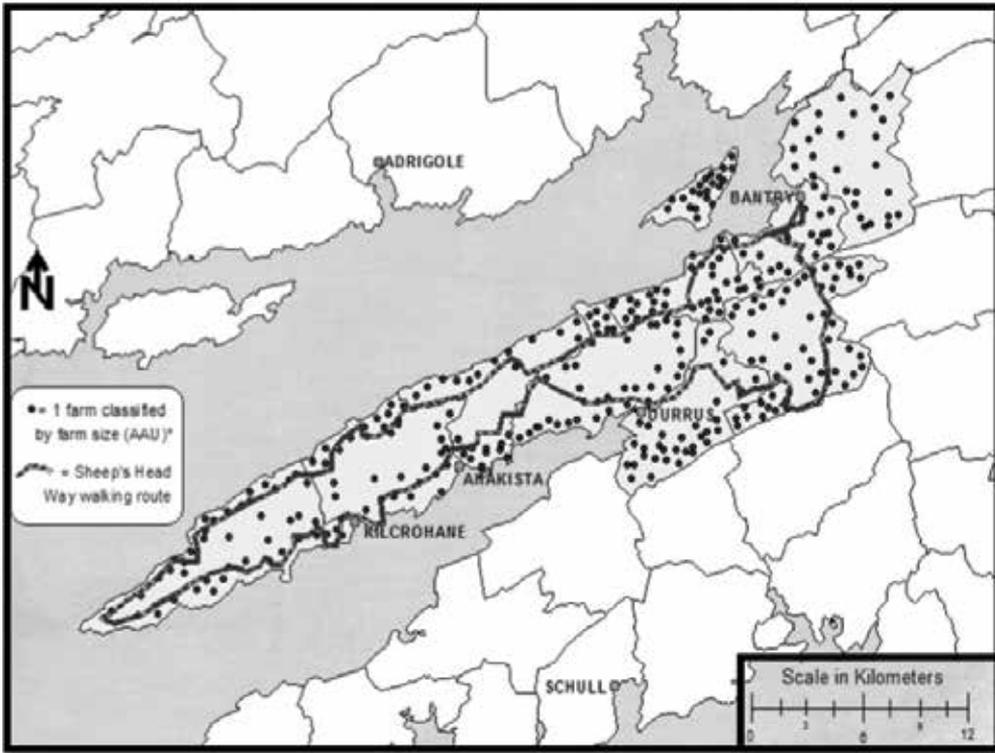


Figure 3: Number of Farms on the Sheep's Head Peninsula, 2010

Source: Data extracted from Census of Agriculture, 2012

To get a near accurate account of land folios that the walkway traversed the land registry⁵ website (www.prai.ie) was consulted. A series of maps were created to identify the relevant folios of land that needed to be investigated; this formed the selection criteria for this study. Before questionnaire completion, the respondent was asked to identify their land on a series of maps that the researcher created. This method created a two tailed benefit; firstly it facilitated marked points on the map that connected their questionnaire to their land folio. Secondly, it created a mapping checklist of households that were surveyed and households that were vacant. The time needed to distribute and fill in the completed questionnaires lasted from October 2013 to January 2014⁶ and over 1,400 kilometres of roadway and pathway were covered on the peninsula.

⁵ The land registry digital maps are based on Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM projection) and are linked to a digital form of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) maps. These published scales are 1/5000 rural, 1/2500 urban/rural, 1/1000 urban.

⁶ Limitations to this research include extensive storm damage to roadways in the months of December and January, which impeded research progress. In December 2013 Met Eireann reported gale force winds on 20 days during the month and storm force winds were reported on 6 days.

	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Total number of households contacted	(n=276)	-
Number of respondents	(n=212)	100%
Number of refusals	(n=9)	4.2%
Number of vacant households after three call backs	(n=55)	-
Total response rate =	-	95.8%

Table 4: Response rate for questionnaire collection – Sheep’s Head Peninsula 2013/14

The first section of the questionnaire asked questions that established demographic information such as gender, age and nationality. The second section investigates the farm type, size and importance of farming as an occupation for the respondent. The third section evaluates farm diversification and on-farm enterprises. Questions asked in section two and three were adapted from the Census of Agriculture (COA) as the farmer or landowner would be familiar with the language and question type used. This facilitated an ease of response and created familiarity. As well as utilising COA questions to make it easier for the respondent it created an avenue to compare results of this case study with national figures. The fourth section examines participation and motivations to engage with farming schemes that complement farm income. The fifth section investigates details about the Sheep’s Head walkway, such as attitudes towards it, motivations for taking part, evaluating positive and negative aspects of the route and future recommendations on the walk. This section also examines environmental awareness, attitudes towards tourism development and community participation. The final section, section six included a blank text box for ‘additional information’. In this section the researcher asked the respondent if they would like to add any other experiences they had of the walkway. This section proved quite useful as a means of gathering qualitative data that was not covered in the questionnaire design. This final section provided a vast array of responses that could not be categorised into themes but instead created a personal collection of experiences that were unique to each respondent. Sections one to five were coded and then imputed as quantitative data into the data analysis programme SPSS. Any qualitative questions were typed into Excel and themes were then established on the information given. These themes were then inputted as coded questions into SPSS.

Results and Discussion

As this research is still in progress this paper will discuss the initial findings from Phase 1a and Phase 2 of data collection as outlined in Table II. This section of this paper will give insights into the findings from the 212 questionnaires and a comprehensive results chapter will be available with the submission of a Masters by Research Thesis in August 2014 in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. In summary the gender breakdown of respondents was 62.3% Male and 37.7% Female but as mentioned previously the setting in which the questionnaire was completed included other family members for the majority of cases. 83.2% of respondents were long-term farmers in the area who were farming for more than 10 years. 56.5% of respondents stated that farming was their ‘sole occupation’, which highlights the importance of agriculture in the area.

The theme of environmental awareness and protection of the landscape was an important element of the data collected. Table 5. summarises questions that delved into attitudes towards environmental conservation. What is evident from the results in this table is the significant percentage of respondents claiming that ‘protecting the environment is very

important to them', (66.8%) Agree, and (22.3%) Strongly Agree. A similar trend emerges when asked 'if walking tourism can contribute to sustainable tourism' with (54.1%) Agree and (29.3%) Strongly Agree. When the respondents were asked 'why did you permit the walk on your lands?' (60.5%) said it was Important and (22.4%) said it was Highly Important to sustainably manage the landscape. When asked the same question (57.1%) stated it was Important and (28.6%) stated it was Highly Important as they had an interest in sustainable tourism. Overall, on investigating the theme of attitudes towards the environment it is evident that questions favouring sustainability or environment score over 80% when you combine the 'agree and strongly agree' and 'important and highly important' answer values.

Another theme that was investigated in this study was cooperation amongst other landowners and facilitating public access. Examples of best practice in the nature-based tourism industry indicate local co-operation and collaboration is imperative to any local development project. As seen from Table 6, a trend among respondents appears when asked if they were facilitating local land owners or facilitating public access. The statement 'cooperating with other landowners' scores (25.3%) as Highly Important and only (9.2%) stating Little Importance. Whereas when asked was permission given to 'facilitate public access' only (16.7%) stated that it was Highly Important and over (19.3%) stating it had Little Importance. Thus illustrating that cooperating with local landowners was more important to the respondent.

Attitudes towards the environment			Why did you permit the walk on your lands?		
	% Protecting the environment is very important to me	% Walking Tourism can contribute to sustainable tourism		% Sustainably manage the landscape?	% An interest in sustainable tourism?
Strongly Disagree	.5	.5	No Response	2.0	1.2
Disagree	1.5	0.0	Not at all important	0.0	0.0
Neither agree nor disagree	8.9	16.1	Little Importance	1.3	.6
Agree	66.8	54.1	Neither important or unimportant	13.8	12.4
Strongly Agree	22.3	29.3	Important	60.5	57.1
Total	100.0	29.3	Highly Important	22.4	28.6
			Total	100.0	100.0

Table 5: Attitudes towards the environment and sustainability

One of the most significant themes that emerged from the primary findings of this research was that farmers did not originally permit the walkway on the premise of a type of maintenance payment for their participation. The Walks Scheme rewards the landowner financially for maintaining open walkways were introduced in 2008 (five year contracts), the Sheep's Head walkway was officially opened in 1995. This opinion is evident in Table 7, when asked was 'gaining financially my main reason for getting involved in the walkway' (33.1%) Strongly Disagreed and (44.2%) Disagreed which shows a strong consensus of disagreement with the statement. When asked 'if walking tourism contributes financially to the local people' (43.4%) stated that they Agreed and (47.3%) said they Strongly Agreed with this statement. It can be suggested that the respondents have experienced an economic benefit from the presence of the walkway.

	% Cooperate with other landowners?	% Facilitate public access?
No Response	1.1	4.2
Not at all important	0.0	4.2
Little Importance	9.2	19.3
Neither important or unimportant	21.3	24.0
Important	43.1	31.8
Highly Important	25.3	16.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 6: Why did you permit the walk on your lands?

	Gaining financially was my main reason for getting involved in the Sheep's Head walkway (%)	Walking tourism in the area contributes financially to the local people (%)
No Response	1.9	0.0
Strongly Disagree	33.1	0.0
Disagree	44.2	2.4
Neither agree nor disagree	8.4	6.8
Agree	7.8	43.4
Strongly Agree	4.5	47.3
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 7: Economic benefits of the walkway

Conclusions

For years, there has always been competing objectives between agriculture and landscape conservation and maintaining this balance is a major challenge for policy makers (Lee, 1995). There needs to be input from both providers and consumers of nature-based tourism activities in order to create a balance to tourism development. The management of the walking trails' landscape requires proper planning and creating the optimum balance between human development and environmental protection (Nugent, 1995). In the case of the Sheep's Head way it seems that agriculture and tourism are working in relative harmony. Although farm-based tourism has been the core of a majority of agricultural activity especially within Europe, farm diversification into tourism has, in recent years, become an acceptable means of addressing the socio-economic problems of rural areas (Sharpley and Vass, 2006). At present walking tourism is estimated to generate over €14 million for the economy of West Cork and supports approximately 353 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs. If the region can successfully combat future challenges to walking tourism and improve weaknesses within the tourism product. Walking tourism could contribute nearly €22 million to the region by 2016 (URS Scott Wilson, 2012). In 2013 onward a new tourism co-operative was formed by many businesses along the route as well as the adjacent town of Bantry. The chair of the co-operative founding committee is John Tobin who hopes that one single voice can promote the region more efficiently and be much more effective than individual actors. He also hopes that "as well as helping tourists, we'll be promoting strong and productive links between local businesses." (Wordhoard Communications., 2013). Although the results in this paper is only an insight into the larger scope of this study indicative results from Phase 3 of this study are signalling spatial trends from the data collected. This data will be mapped and spatial differences of environmental attitudes and opinions will further be examined.

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