

# METHODOLOGY FOR ORGANISING LEARNING JOURNEYS

Sustainable Heritage Areas: Partnerships for Ecotourism  
Deliverable DT1.4.3

SHAPE

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## Acronyms

SHA Sustainable Heritage Areas

## Introduction

One of the objectives of the SHAPE project is to establish enduring stakeholder partnerships that maintain and develop cultural and natural heritage assets in SHAs through ecotourism initiatives that contribute to the sustainable growth of local communities, and transnationally share the experience gained.

## Methodology for organising learning journeys

### Learning Journey Concept

The learning journey concept was first discussed in detail during the 3<sup>rd</sup> partner meeting where the principles for a successful learning journey were presented by Tarja Kupianinen, lecturer at Karelia University of Applied Sciences. The ideas that underpin the SHAPE learning journeys are summarised below:

The learning Journey concept

- Origins in educational psychology: based on young children's learning and developing processes
- The concept is now used to describe various life-long learning processes e.g. tailored learning programs for professionals, University/college study programmes
- In SHAPE the term is used to describe an exploration undertaken as a type of field research.

Aims of learning journeys

- To gain information about the object or theme.
- To learn from designed learning journey activities.
- Transformation and development as a result of the learning process.

In the beginning, learning journeys proceed with an open plan, and results can be diverse.

Observation of learning journeys as a Method

- Observation is one type of information collection method typically used in qualitative research.
- Observation is often used together with interviews to understand participant responses.
- Observation process proceeds from general to focused perceptions
- Observation can be divided three levels or phases:

1) General perceptions

2) Focused perceptions

3) Complementary perceptions

Ways of observing a learning journey :

Observation level 1: Observe the environment with all your senses!

- Who are present? How accessible the target is? What facilities are available?
- Look at your environment carefully, discover signs, notice colours, footprints of animals
- Use your ears to hear all the sounds surrounding you: silence is also something you are able to hear, and absence of ambient noise is to be considered
- How does the environment smell?
- Touch the different materials: ground, trees, grass, plants, water,
- Do you feel safe there?

Observation level 2

- Clarify and decide your targets based on the former perceptions.
- E.g. following questions can be considered:
  - How visitors / guests act? What takes their attention? How they react? Do They seem to enjoy? How long they stay?
  - Do the offerings & services fulfil visitors' needs and expectations? Families with little or adolescent children? Seniors? Student groups?
  - How are guests' experiences facilitated? How does the destination welcome visitors? What makes/ could make guests to prolong their stay?
  - Consider security issues: what makes guests feel safe? Is there enough information? Are potentially dangerous places or spots marked?
  - Accessibility: is the area / destination easily reached? Can disabled guests visit the destination without any inconveniences?

How to Prepare Yourself for a Learning Journey

- Be curious.
- Be open-minded.
- Be ready to change your opinions,
- Remember to use all your senses.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions.
- Facilitate yourself with camera, tape recorder, paper & pen, video camera or other devices you need for making notes.

## Learning Journey Planning in SHAs

The methodology for organising the learning journeys was developed in consultation with the SHA partners. These discussions took place following the planning for ecotourism initiative development in each SHA. The factors to be included in the planning of learning journeys were agreed during the 4<sup>th</sup> partner meeting. Each SHA completed a learning journey planning template including the following information:

- Aims of learning journey
- Theme
- Activities employed to discuss challenges and demonstrate innovative aspects of ecotourism initiatives
- Methods to share experience of stakeholders taking part (learning and imparting knowledge to inform developing initiative)
- Defining how activities will be of interest to other SHAs?
- Which local stakeholder to be involved in design and delivery of learning journeys
- Which stakeholders from participating SHAs will learning journey be useful for?
- Proposed timing

## Logistics of Learning Journeys

There are a number of issues to be considered to ensure that the learning journeys make up a cohesive and useful package of experiences that meet the objectives of SHAPE.

Overlapping interests have been identified between SHA partners during discussions so there are already tentative plans for which learning journeys certain SHA stakeholders may be invited to attend.

Each SHA has budgetary resources to allow a certain number of stakeholders to attend up to two learning journeys. There will be six learning journeys in total. An online questionnaire will be sent to each SHA partner in December 2018 to establish their interest in each of the proposed learning journeys and to gather information on the identity of stakeholders likely to attend. Following this UHI as lead partner will design a schedule of learning journeys which will SHA to participate in their preferred learning journeys. However it is important that each learning journey has a sufficient number of stakeholders so it may be necessary to alter the distribution of stakeholders across learning journeys if preferences for locations and themes make this uneven. All efforts will be made to design a programme that is tailored to the needs of the stakeholders attending each learning journey. We estimate that there will be approximately 10-12 participants taking part in each learning journey (including both local and visiting stakeholders). This may be a larger or smaller number depending the learning journey theme. Some learning journeys are expected to address quite broad themes e.g. managing large numbers of tourists in Snaefellsness Regional Park while others will be more focused e.g. destination management planning in Wester Ross Biosphere. The themes of each learning journey are shown in Table 1. Where possible, learning journeys will be scheduled to coincide with tourism-related events taking place in the SHAs e.g. festivals. The SHA partners will

design a program of events in collaboration with key local stakeholders. These will be discussed and refined in collaboration with the lead partner and SHAPE project steering group during the early months of 2018. The first learning journey will take place in Nordhordland in May 2019.

Sustainable Heritage Area	Learning Journey Theme
Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Biosphere Experiences</li> <li>- Land use change in the biosphere – people, land and wildlife</li> </ul>
Wester Ross Biosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sustainable/Responsible collaborative tourism management and destination planning</li> </ul>
Nordhordland candidate Biosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local craft, traditions and culture as basis for sustainable visitors experiences in Nordhordland</li> </ul>
North Karelia Biosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning from experiences; what entails sustainable and responsible tourism</li> <li>- Exploring innovative uses of natural resources &amp; light in tourism development</li> <li>- Co-governance and networking for tourism development, and destination management</li> </ul>
Snaefellsnes Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visitor harbour to promote sustainable and responsible tourism</li> <li>- Engagement with coast festival</li> </ul>

Table 1 Learning journey themes