



# Transition and skills development in peatlands in the Baltic Sea Region

**Technical Regional Forum**

18-19 March 2026, Finland



**Site visit to Haaga-Helia  
University of Applied  
Sciences  
Welcome**

10:00 – 12:00

# Welcome by the host



**Salla Huttunen**

Vice Rector,  
Haaga-Helia University  
of Applied Sciences



Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment of Finland



European  
Commission



Haaga-Helia

Applied Research  
creating  
future-proof  
solutions

03/2026

Salla Huttunen



# Mission of UASs

(Universities of Applied Sciences Act 4§)



# Ulysseus 2.0

## Ulysseus in figures



163,530

Students



54

Research centers



87

Faculties



19,179

Staff, including 8,499 academic staff researchers



1,035

Research groups



235

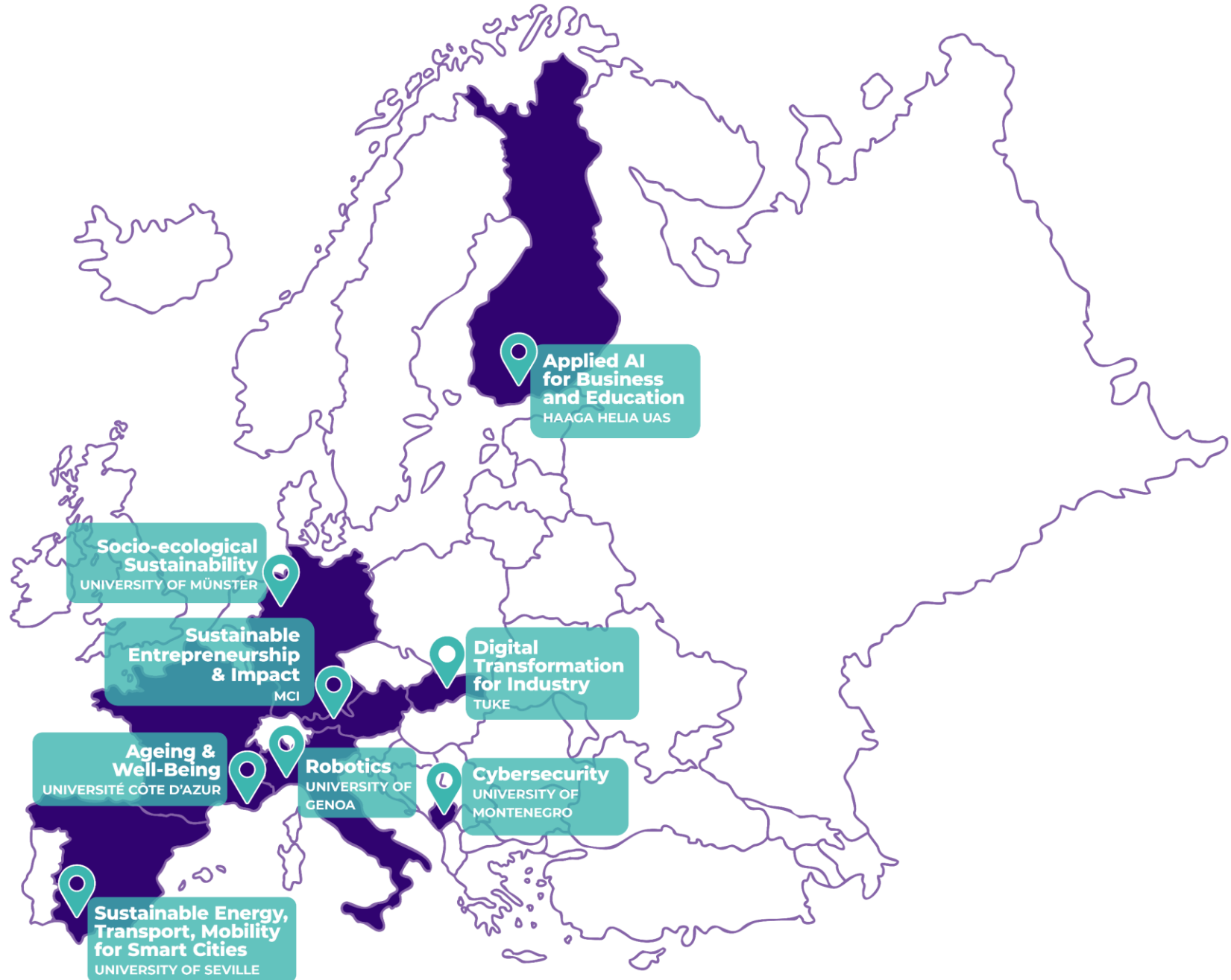
Science & technology-based companies & partnerships



157 Associated Partners, HH 14



Innovation Hubs



# Research Areas

Portfolio  
~23MEUR

~100 projects

~70 currently  
being evaluated  
by funders

## Service Innovations & Design



## Entrepreneurship and Business Development



## Digital Transition and AI



## Pedagogy and Learning

Enjoy your visit!

# Speakers



**Kati Kiehininen**

Project manager,  
Xamk University of  
Applied Sciences



**Päivi Penttilä**

Project manager, Haaga-Helia  
University of Applied  
Sciences



Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment of Finland



European  
Commission



# Digi+ Carbonless 2.0



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# Agenda

1. Project Overview
2. Development Approach
3. Examples of Activities and Results
4. Lessons Learned



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# 1. Project Overview



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The Digi+Carbonless 2.0 project supports the renewal of the tourism and hospitality sector in the Uusimaa region by strengthening the future innovation and growth capacity of SMEs.

The project promotes SMEs' transition to circular economy and accelerates the green and digital transition.

The project also facilitates co-development within SME networks and the creation of collaboration networks and ecosystems.



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the European Union



# Project Overview

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Project duration:</b>          | 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2027                  |
| <b>Implementing organisation:</b> | Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences         |
| <b>Funding:</b>                   | ERDF, Uusimaa Regional Council                     |
| <b>Target sectors:</b>            | Tourism, hospitality and events                    |
| <b>Primary target group:</b>      | Tourism and Hospitality SMEs in the Uusimaa region |
| <b>Total budget:</b>              | 383 952 €  |
| <b>Geographical scope:</b>        | Uusimaa region, 26 municipalities                  |



Fenn-O-maniC - Oma teos, CC BY-SA 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=98076433>

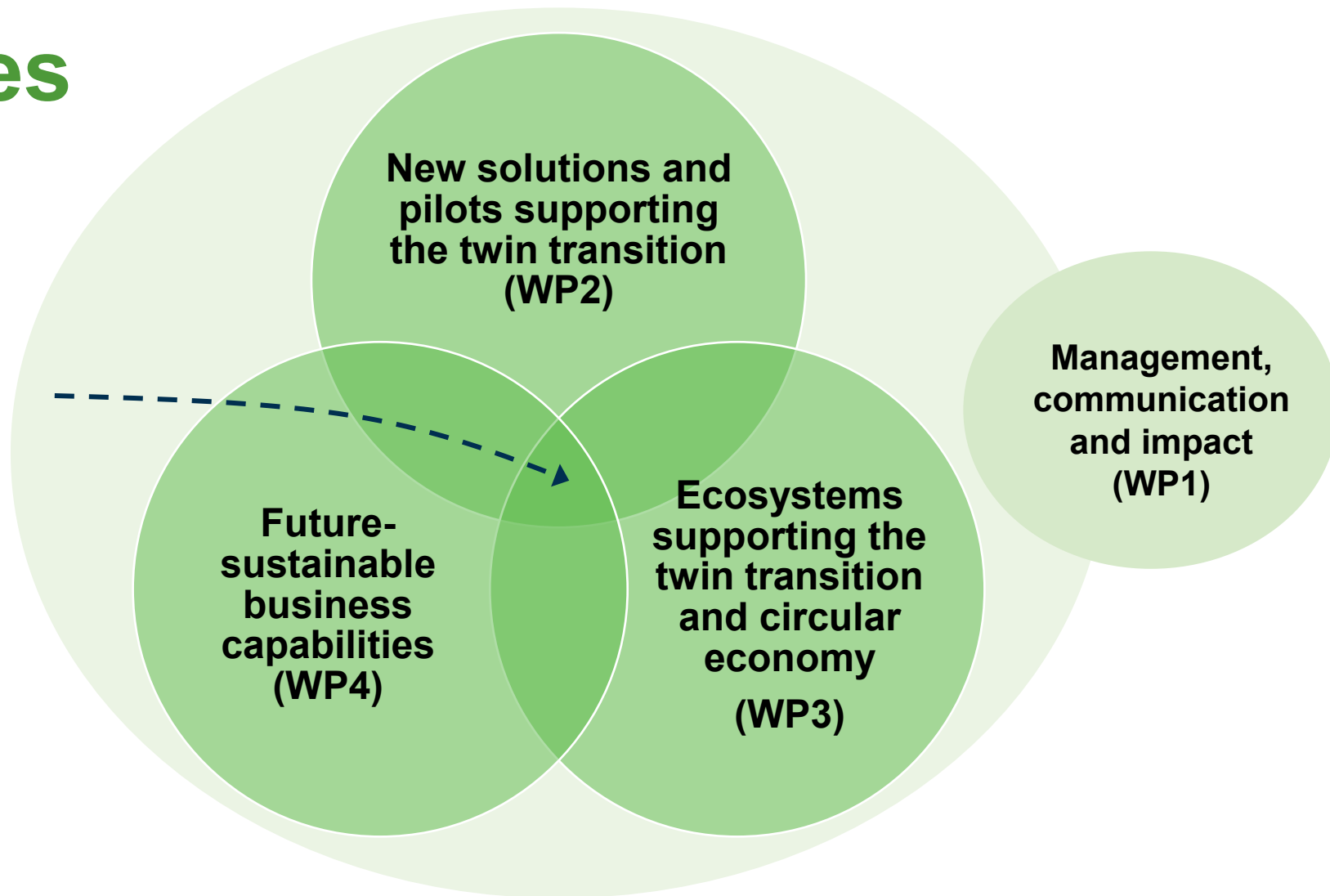


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# Work Packages

**Digi+Carbonless 2.0**  
"Sweet Spot"



# Digi+Carbonless 2.0 Team



**Päivi Penttilä**  
Project Manager

*Co-creation, competence  
development, sustainability,  
Tourism*



**Vesa Heikkinen**  
Project Expert

*Service innovations,  
environmental design,  
Tourism and Hospitality*



**Nino Ilveskero**  
Project Expert

*Digital Business  
AI*



**Teemu Ruohonen**  
Project Expert

*Futures work,  
experimentation,  
co-creation*



**Nora Lappalainen**  
Project Coordinator

*Communication,  
co-creation*



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# 2. Development Approach



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**”The future is not some place we are going, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made.”**

John H. Schaar (1928–2011)



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# Perform and Transform



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# Digi+Carbonless 2.0

## Future Journeys



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- Futures Thinking and Business

- Regenerative

- Circular

- Digitalisation and AI

- Systems and Systems Thinking

- Radical Innovation

**FUTUREPROOF**

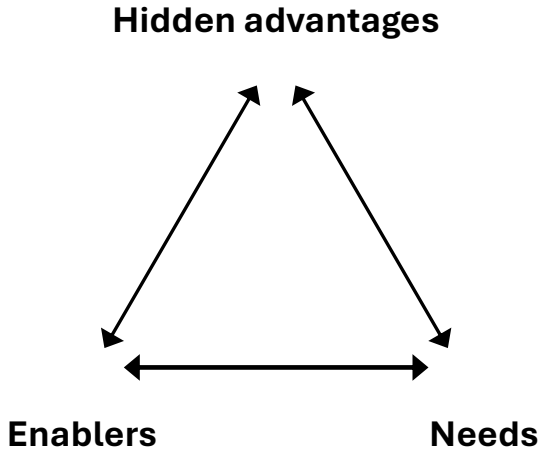


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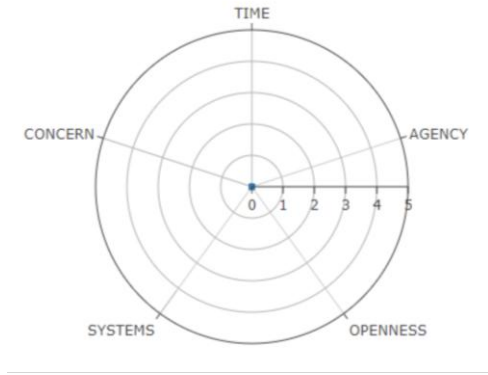


# Frameworks for Exploring the Future

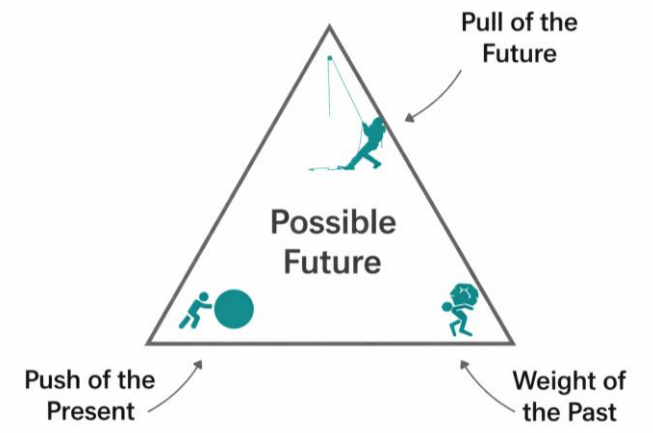
## Radical Innovation



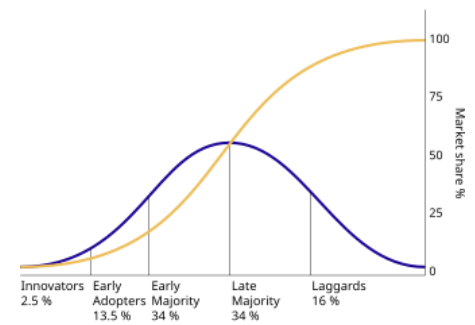
## Futures Consciousness



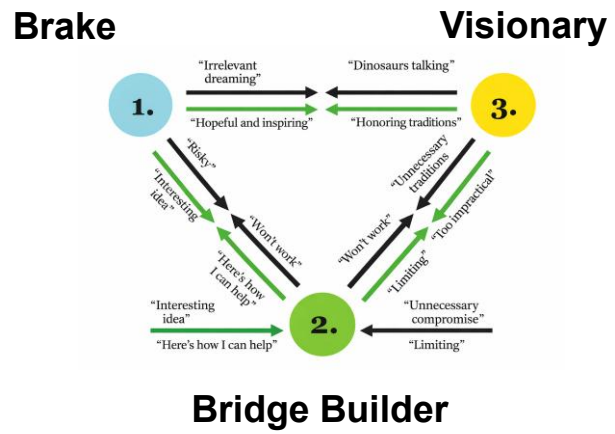
## Futures Triangle



## Innovation Adoption Curve



## Vision Assessment



Bridge Builder

# 3. Examples of Activities and Results



# Key Figures So Far

1.8.2025 — 28.2.2026

8 DMOs (Destination Management Organisation)

12 Co-developing workshops

62 Companies

91 People

6 Platforms and networks supporting co-creation



## FUTURE JOURNEY DEPARTURES

|            |            |         |
|------------|------------|---------|
| 03/2025-   | SCHEDULING | FISKARS |
| 10-11/2025 | SCHEDULING | HANKO   |
| 10/2025-   | SCHEDULING | LOHJA   |
| 10/2025-   | SCHEDULING | PORVOO  |
| 04/2025    | SCHEDULING | ESPOO   |



# Some Results So Far



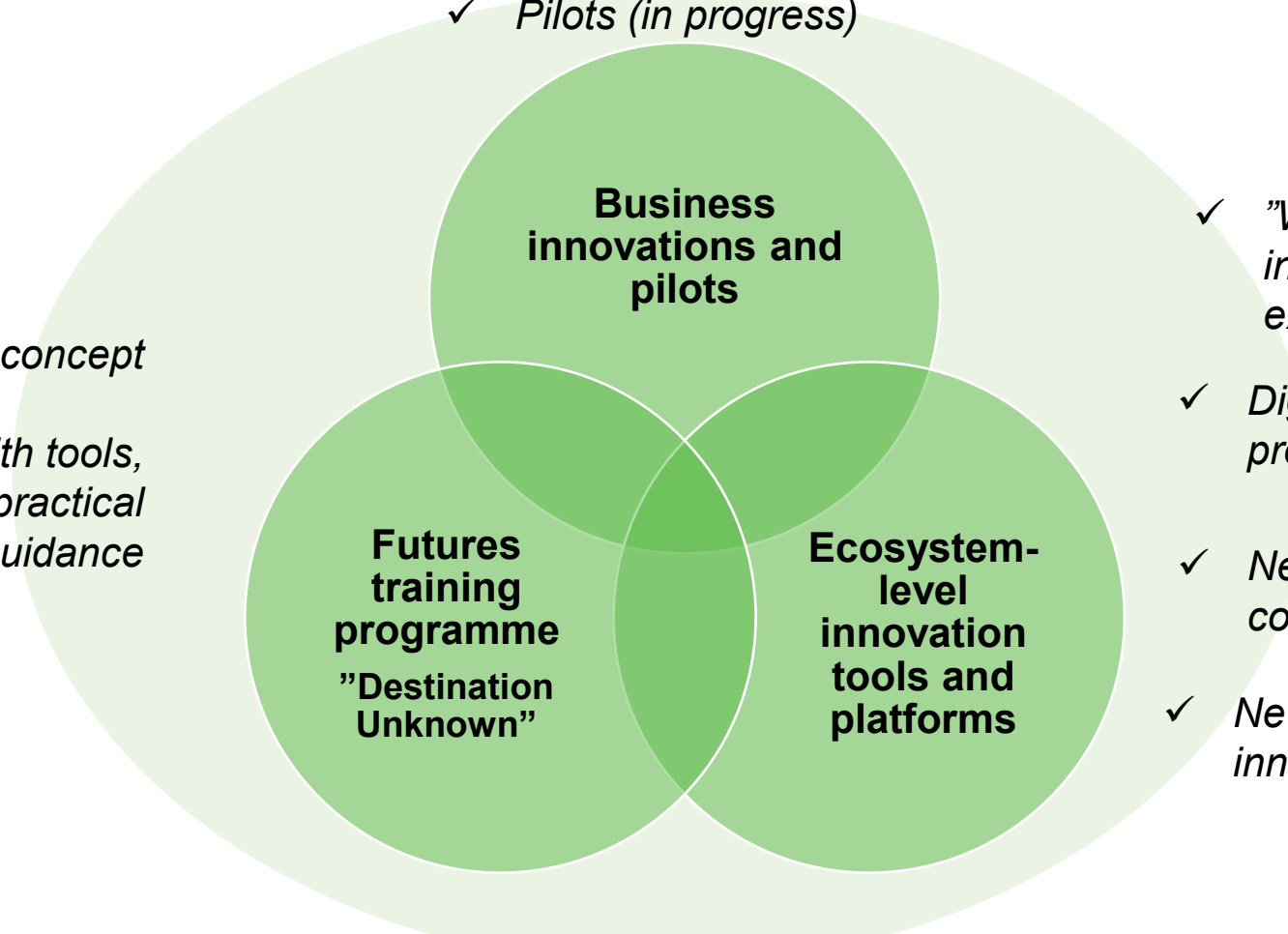
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# Some Results So Far

- ✓ *Radical innovations and business ideas*
- ✓ *AI supported business plans*
- ✓ *Pilots (in progress)*

- ✓ *Peer learning concept*
- ✓ *Handbook with tools, exercises and practical guidance*



- ✓ *”Walk in – Talk out” innovation workshops and excercises*
- ✓ *Digi+Carbonless strategy process and platform*
- ✓ *New ecosystem-based event concept*
- ✓ *New joint product/service innovations*





Onko seuraavat juhlatte täältä?  
Laitte aynkärk, pöytäkirja, firma käänt, teetä vö the on  
käytäväk, vein päätyyön timentä?



os

# Feedback

“The best part was the inspiration and getting to know others.”

“I have never attended such a fun workshop before.”

“The project team’s broad perspective, creativity and willingness to spar have been an amazing bonus.”

“Wonderful stories, people, enthusiasm and psychological safety.”

# 4. Lessons Learned



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# Lessons Learned

- ✓ **Go to companies** – don't just wait for them to come to you
- ✓ **Solve real business problems** with **concrete** impact
- ✓ **Ensure continuity** beyond one-off or pre-defined workshops
- ✓ **Strengthen futures thinking** with practical talk, tools and empowering attitude
- ✓ **Combine the right expertise** to encourage radical innovation
- ✓ **Be agile and promote experimentation** through small, concrete pilots



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# Scalable solutions and tools

Uusimaa Region (*now*)

Finland (*next*)

Baltic Sea Region, Europe (*future?*)



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# Learn more: digihiieton.fi

- News
- Useful links
- Contacts



# Learn more: [digihileton.fi](https://digihileton.fi)



## Circular Economy and Regenerative Tourism as Themes of the February Co-Creation Workshop

The co-creation workshops of the Future Training programme continued on 26 February 2026, when a group of SMEs



## The Future-Driven Training Programme Kicked Off the Year with a Co-Creation Workshop in Hanko

The new year of the Future-Driven Training programme started on 30 January 2026 with a co-creation workshop in Hanko. SMEs from Hanko, Lohja, Porvoo and Helsinki gathered



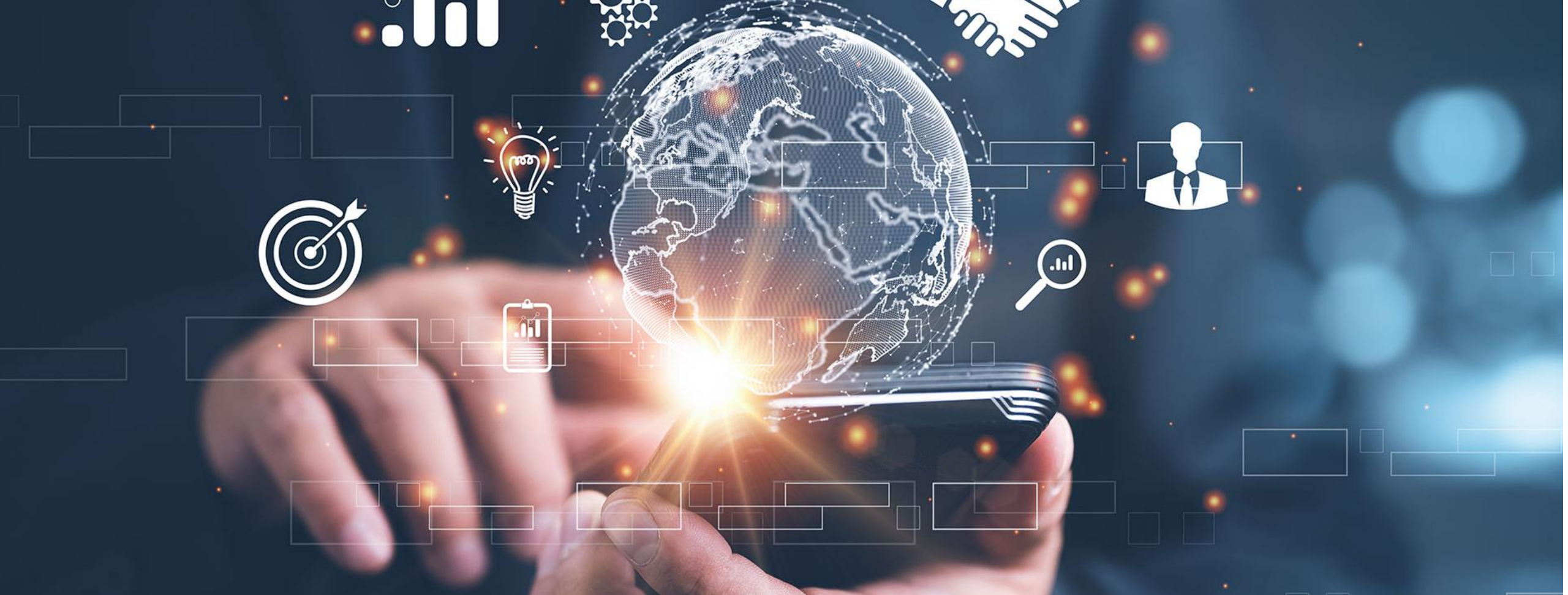
## Tuning into the Future of Tourism – Future Coffee Sessions in Porvoo

The tourism sector and experience-based businesses benefit from moments where people can step out of everyday routines and focus on the future together. In the Digi+Carbonless 2.0 project, we wanted...



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# Thank you

More information: [paivi.penttila@haaga-helia.fi](mailto:paivi.penttila@haaga-helia.fi)



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**Kati Kiehinien,  
Xamk University of Applied  
Sciences  
JTF-funded projects LISÄ and  
RUOTI**

### WHAT'S NEW?

- The Ruoti project develops regenerative wellbeing and tourism services that strengthen nature and local communities while boosting business opportunities and positioning the region as a leader in regenerative expertise.
- A regenerative approach that goes beyond sustainability by restoring and enhancing ecosystems and community vitality.
- Concrete responses to biodiversity loss and climate change.
- Creates opportunities for meaningful experiences where visitors can give back to nature and local communities.

### GOALS

- Increase knowledge and awareness of regenerative services and their market potential.
- Create new business opportunities in South Savo.
- Build strong networks between companies, environmental actors and other stakeholders.
- Develop a shared vision for protecting natural environments and managing growing tourism sustainably.

### ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURS

- 20 participating companies from South Savo.
- Each develops a new regenerative wellbeing or tourism service concept.
- Companies act as co-creators, pilots and early adopters of regenerative practices

### EXPECTED RESULTS

- New regenerative service concepts and business models.
- Strengthened regional expertise and competitiveness.
- A more resilient, attractive and biodiverse South Savo.

# LISÄ– creating nature-based wellbeing services

## LISÄ – Added Value to the Development of Rural Areas through High-Competence Natural-Based Services

1 January 2024–30 April 2026

### WHAT'S NEW?

- The project has raised awareness of nature-based wellbeing and, in particular, the role of the South Savo region in this regard
- The participating entrepreneurs have made high-quality and impactful operations the focus of their services

### GOALS

- Increasing awareness of the wellbeing effects of nature and nature-based methods
- Developing easy-to-access nature-based services in collaboration with companies
- Supporting the emergence of new businesses as providers of nature-based services
- Positioning South Savo as a leading region for nature-based wellbeing in Finland and internationally

### ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURS

- 31 participating companies working in the area of South-Savo
- Developing new nature-based wellbeing services
- Entrepreneurs have been involved in developing a high-quality nature-based wellbeing service model in South Savo
- Featuring entrepreneurs from a wide range of industries: housing services \* coaching \* animal-assisted speech therapy \* workplace development \* rehabilitation services \* neuropsychiatric coaching \* nature tourism \* wellbeing coaching \* virtual nature \* virtual rehabilitation \* hiking equipment rental \* riding school \* yoga \* retreats \* guided tours \* wellbeing farm

### RESULTS

- Developed over 30 new service innovations, including joint initiatives with companies (such as virtual rehabilitation using virtual nature)
- Among other things, this has resulted in a high-quality nature-based wellbeing service model for South Savo, a shared nature-based wellbeing platform, numerous theses, and new networks.

# Speakers



**Kati Kiehininen**

Project manager,  
Xamk University of  
Applied Sciences



**Päivi Penttilä**

Project manager, Haaga-Helia  
University of Applied  
Sciences



Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment of Finland



European  
Commission



**Collaboration across regions  
and governance levels for  
successful transition in the  
Baltic Sea Region**

13:30 – 14:30

# Speakers



**Laila Gercane**

Head of  
Development and  
Project, Vidzeme  
Planning Region



**Laurence O'Reilly**

SEAI Sustainable Energy  
Communities Regional  
Coordinator & Mentor



**Lisa Kealey**

Programme Manager,  
Public Good, BnM  
spokesperson



Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment of Finland



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# CONNECTING PEOPLE, POLICIES AND PLACES: THE VIDZEME PLANNING REGION APPROACH

**Laila Gercāne**

Head of Development and Project Department  
Vidzeme Planning Region, Latvia

19.03.2026 / Helsinki



Regions are strategic partners in governance and innovation



# WHO WE ARE AND WHY REGIONS MATTER

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## VIDZEME PLANNING REGION

- **public regional authority** coordinating development across municipalities
- operate **between national ministries and local governments**, ensuring that EU and national policies are translated into **effective territorial action**
- administration has long-standing experience in **EU-funded projects, regional coordination and stakeholder management**

# OUR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MISSION

## STRATEGIC FOCUS OF VIDZEME



### How we work:

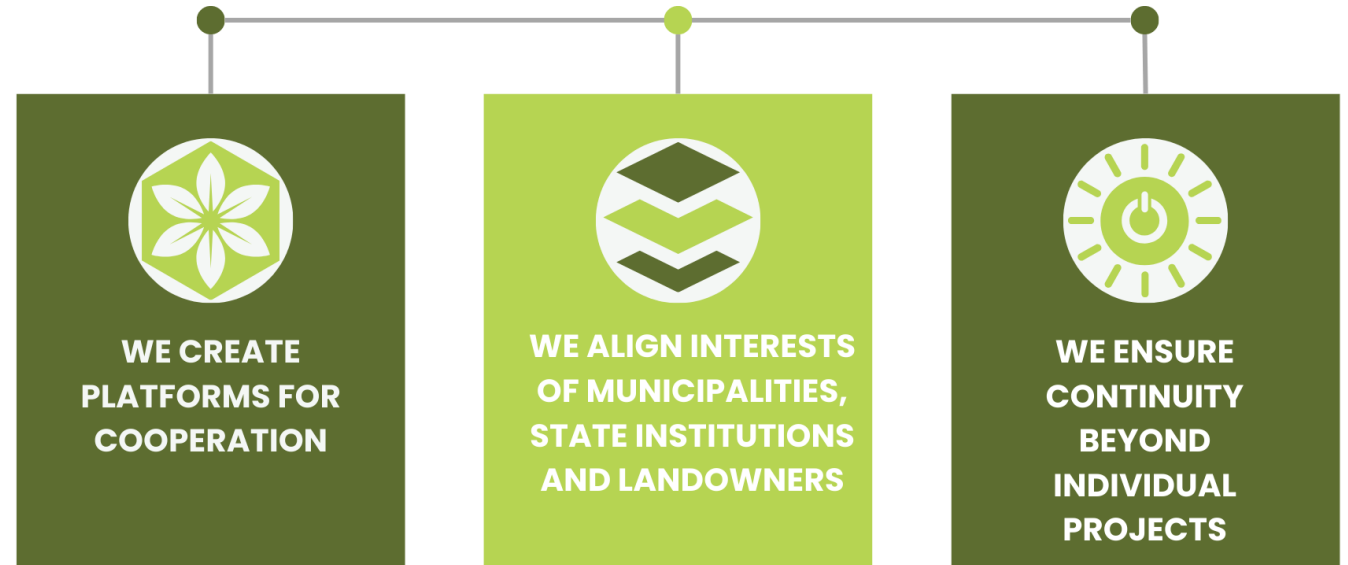
- Evidence-based planning
- Cross-sector and cross-municipal coordination
- Alignment with EU Green Deal and national strategies
- Ability to manage complex stakeholder landscapes

# COLLABORATION AS A GOVERNANCE MODEL

## And why it is essential

- Climate and land-use challenges **cross administrative borders**
- Fragmented governance leads to fragmented solutions
- Region play a key role as:
  - Coordinators
  - Knowledge brokers
  - Trusted intermediaries

### OUR ADDED VALUE





Līdzfinansē  
Eiropas Savienība



**PURVI  
ATDZIMST**

ATBALSTS VĒSTURISKO  
KŪDRAS IEGUVES VIETU  
REVITALIZĀCIJAI

Implementation period:  
01.10.2024. – 31.12.2026.

# PROJECT: Revitalisation of Historical Peat Extraction Areas

Example of multi-level collaboration

# 4 Regions



9,574 Hectares



799 Land Parcels



350+ Owners

private individuals, legal entities, municipalities



## 85% Private vs. 15% Municipal Ownership





# PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Data collection (**inventory of 9574 ha**) and analysis (site status verification, exclusion of areas no longer degraded, identification of revitalisation options)
- Collect and analyse information on **peat use in municipal heat supply and alternatives** based on renewable energy sources
- Provide municipalities, private owners and potential applicants with **information (revitalization strategies, 4 guidelines, seminars)** for preparing project documentation for Just Transition Fund investments

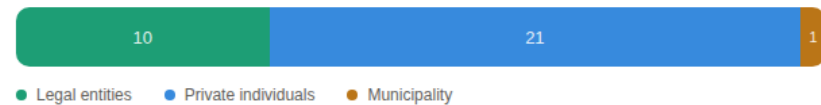


# CASE EXAMPLE

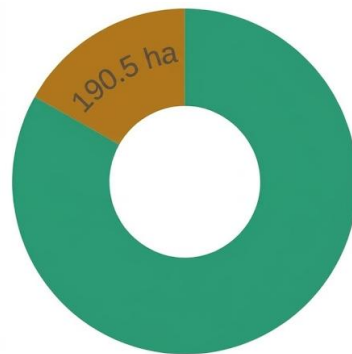
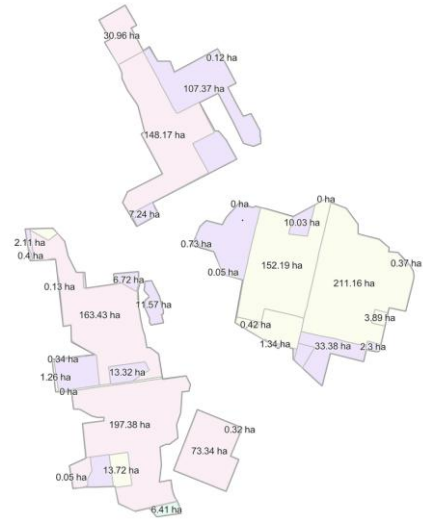
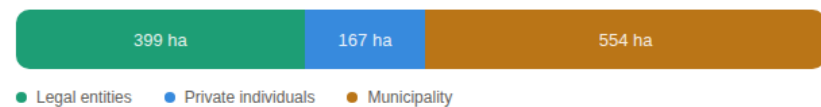


*Lielais-2 historical peat extraction site (VPR)*

Ownership composition — 32 owners total



Land area by owner type — Total: 1,120 ha



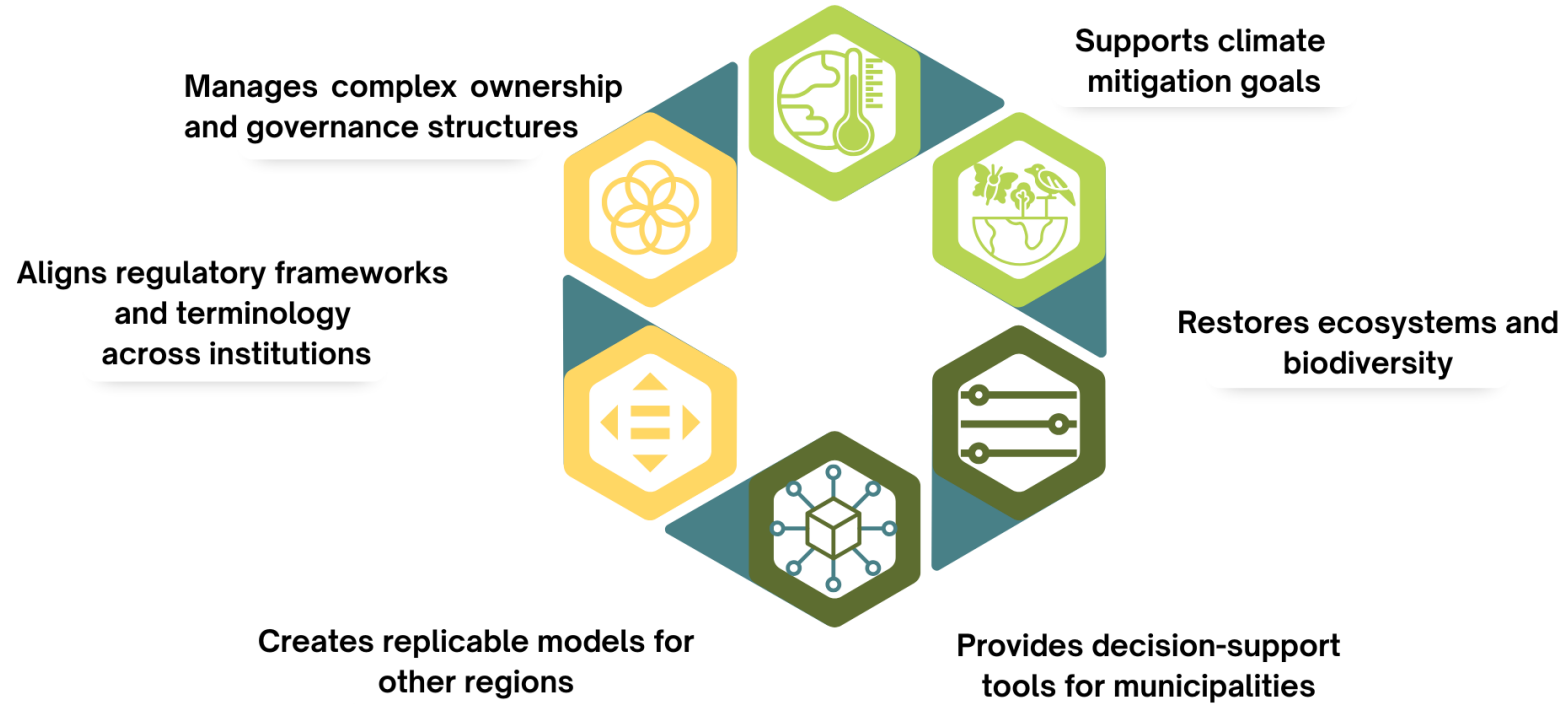
- 83% Successfully revitalized
- 17% Active intervention needed



*Photos: Examples illustrating the diversity in different historical peat sites*

# STRATEGIC VALUE OF THE PEATLAND PROJECT

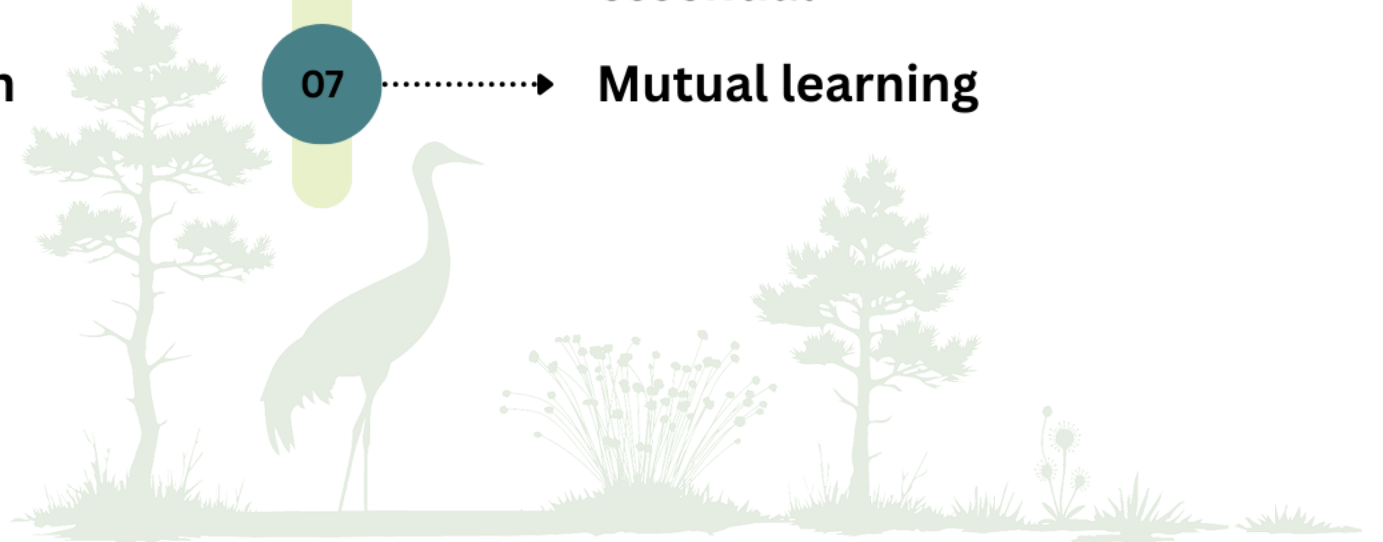
Why this project matters beyond the territory



*Environmental revitalization works best when **interests and capacities** are coordinated across levels*

# LESSONS LEARNED

- 01 .....→ **Cooperation is essential to improve governance**
- 02 .....→ **Policy and practice must evolve together**
- 03 .....→ **Direct engagement with different landowners is critical**
- 04 .....→ **Two-way interaction is necessary**
- 05 .....→ **Regional coordination plays a key role**
- 06 .....→ **Clear and coherent policy frameworks are essential**
- 07 .....→ **Mutual learning**





**Laila Gercāne**  
Head of Development and Project Department  
Vidzeme Planning Region, Latvia

[laila.gercane@vidzeme.lv](mailto:laila.gercane@vidzeme.lv)



# Speakers



**Laila Gercane**

Head of  
Development and  
Project, Vidzeme  
Planning Region



**Laurence O'Reilly**

SEAI Sustainable Energy  
Communities Regional  
Coordinator & Mentor



**Lisa Kealey**

Programme Manager,  
Public Good, BnM  
spokesperson



Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment of Finland



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## Sustainable Energy Communities Programme

### *Ireland's Sustainable Energy Communities Programme*

### *Overview*

*Technical Regional Forum of the Just Transition Platform  
Helsinki, Finland,  
March 2026*

Laurence O'Reilly  
SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities Regional Coordinator & Mentor



# Sustainable Energy Community



**A community that works together to develop a sustainable energy system for the benefit of the community**

- Aiming to be as energy efficient as possible;
- Use renewable energy where feasible;
- Consider smart energy solutions

**An SEC can be as small as a street or as large as a county or region**

**Communities of active energy citizens will lead the societal transformation to a low carbon future**



# OVER 1,000 COMMUNITIES

Part of SEAI's Sustainable Energy Communities Network



MORE THAN  
**50,000**  
CITIZENS ENGAGED

**196** ENERGY  
MASTERPLANS  
COMPLETED



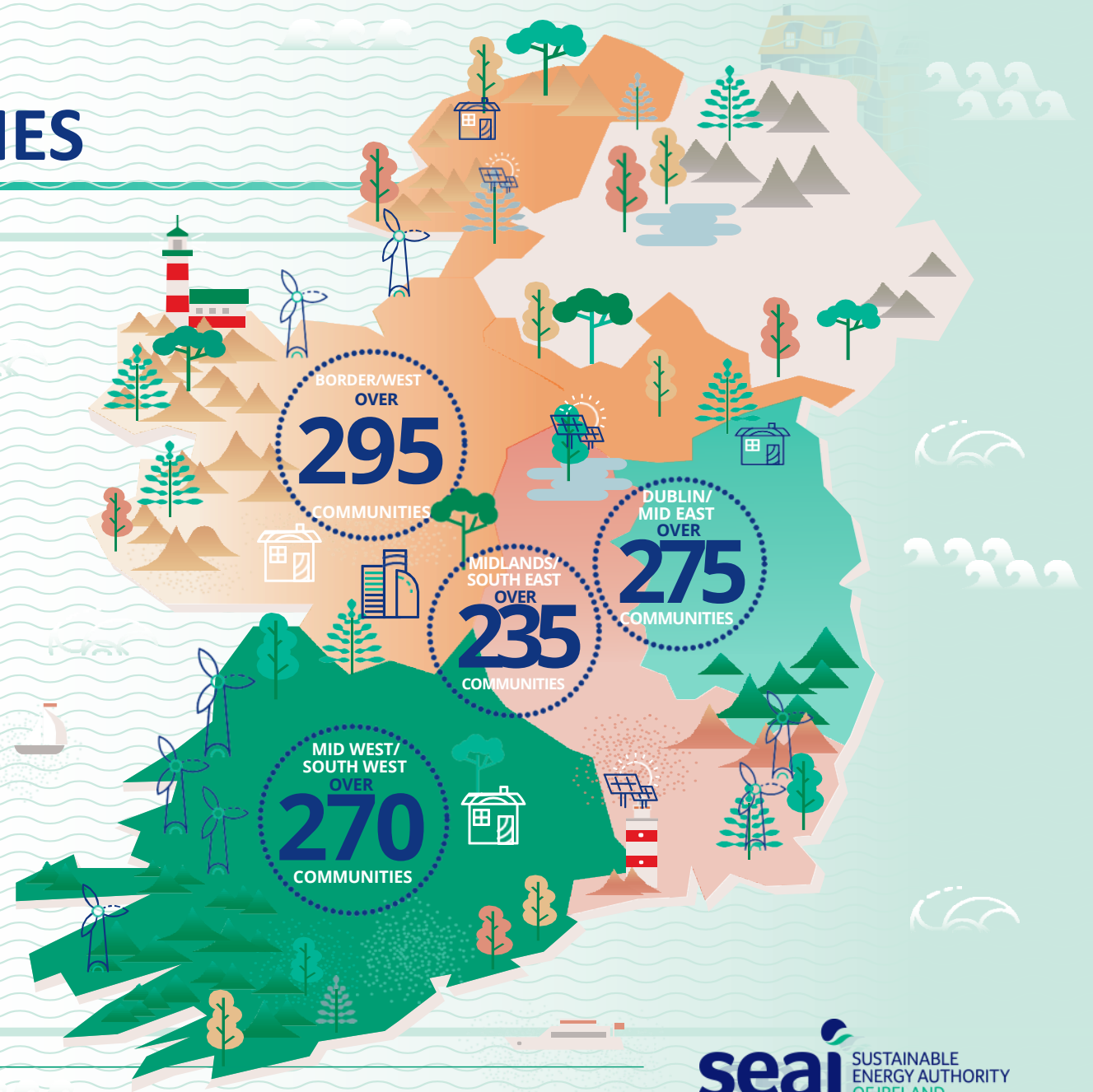
**18** Local Authorities  
Bridge funding  
support



**118**  
COMMUNITIES

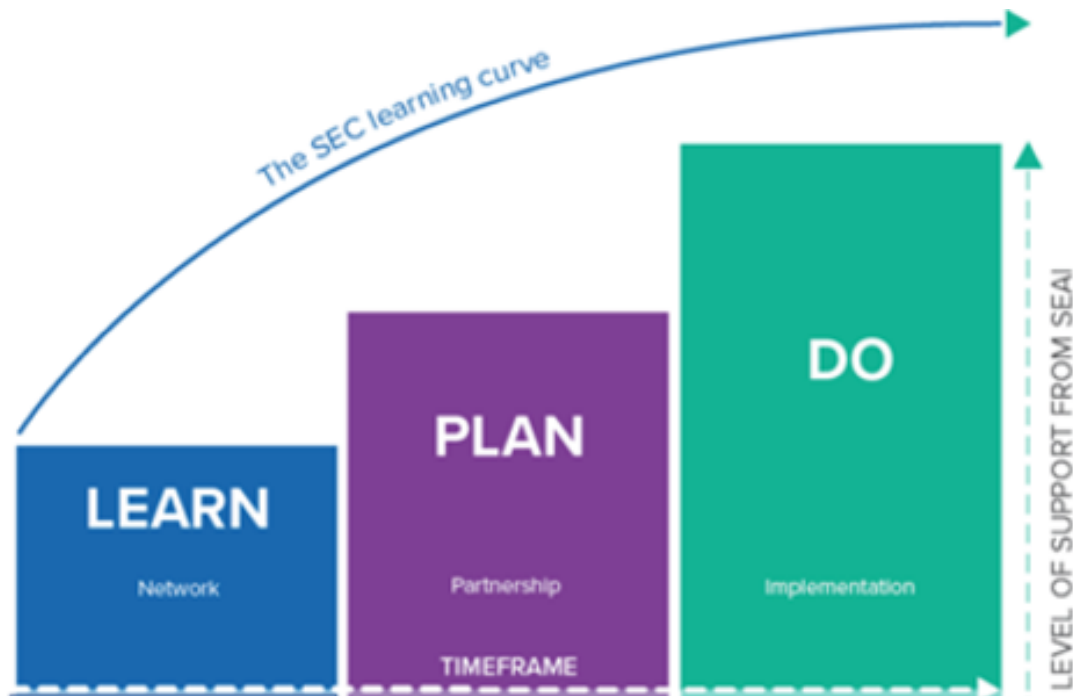
Are currently working on their Energy Master Plans

↓ Find out more at: [www.seai.ie/sec](http://www.seai.ie/sec)



# The SEC *Learn* – *Plan* – *Do* approach

## *Learn* – *Plan* – *Do*



### *Learn phase*

- Tapping into SEAI supports
- Linking with other SEC's
- Building the local SEC team.

### *Plan phase*

- Developing an Energy Master Plan (EMP)
- Identifying Energy-saving opportunities
- Action Plan for key Energy projects.

### *DO phase*

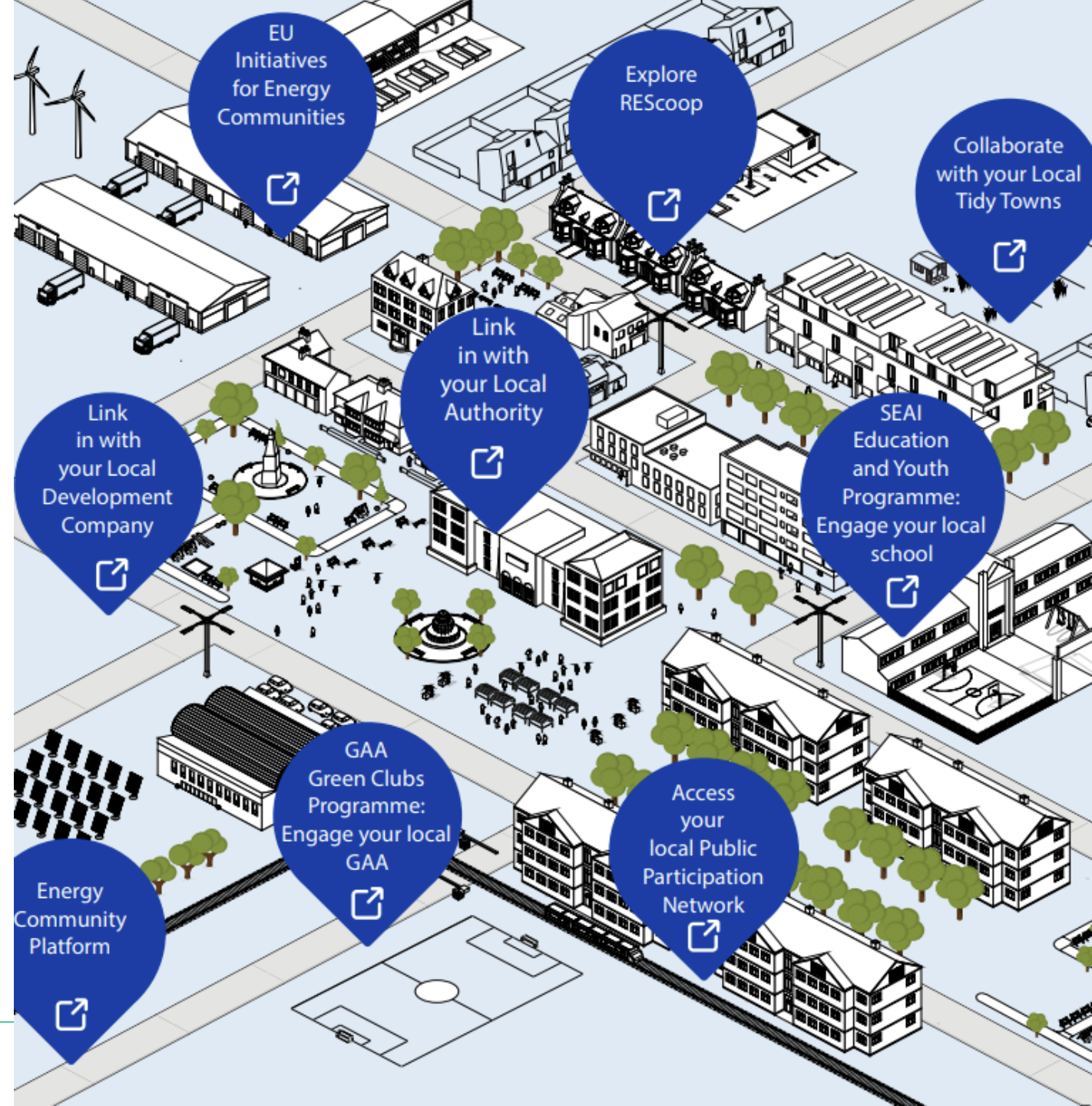
- Applying for SEAI grant aid and supports
- Doing projects identified in the Master Plan
- Delivering energy sustainability & cost savings.  
& **Data Capture** - post-works Data & Metrics.

SEC's can progress at their own pace – doing Energy Master Plan or Projects only if they wish to. Many SEC's implement *DO* projects without completing an EMP.

# Learn Stage

Sustainable Energy Communities achieve success through collaborating with partners who have a shared vision.

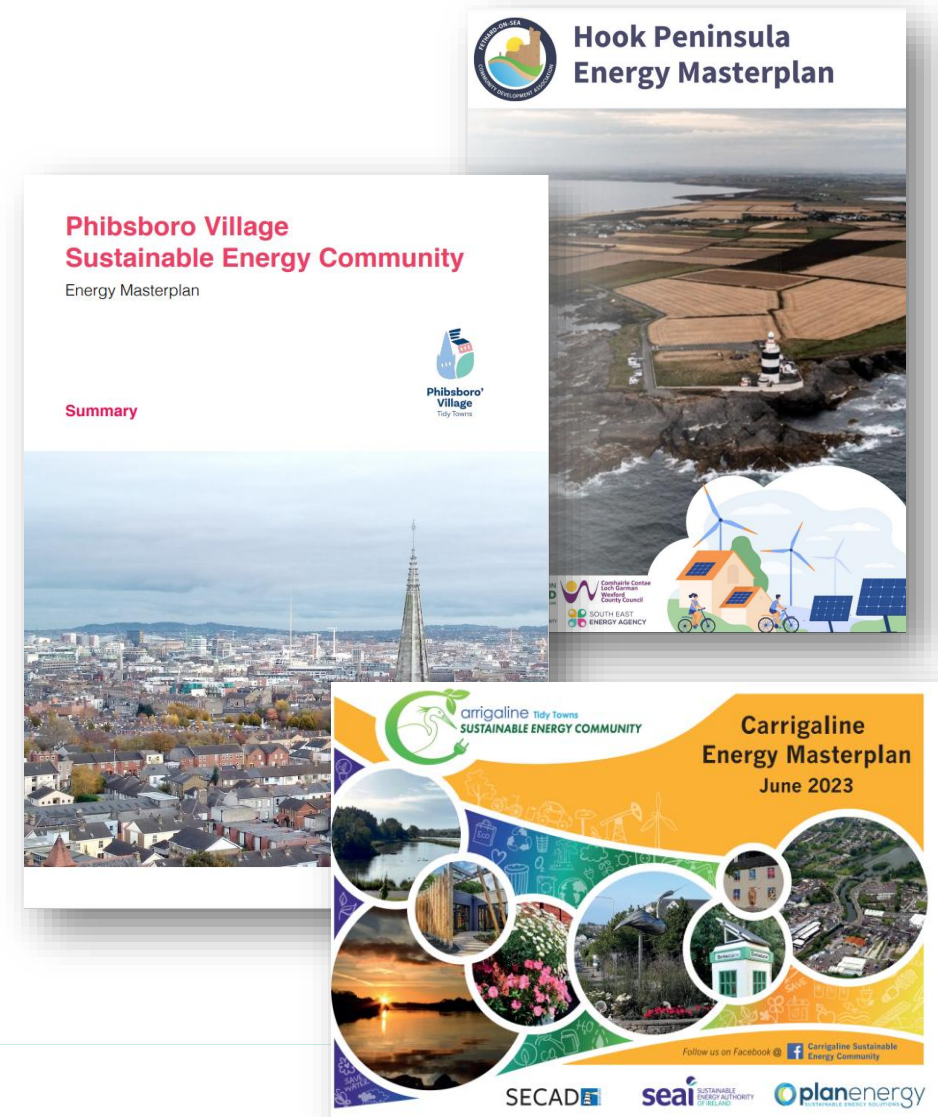
Connect with active organisations in your local community to reach more people and achieve common goals together.



# Plan Stage

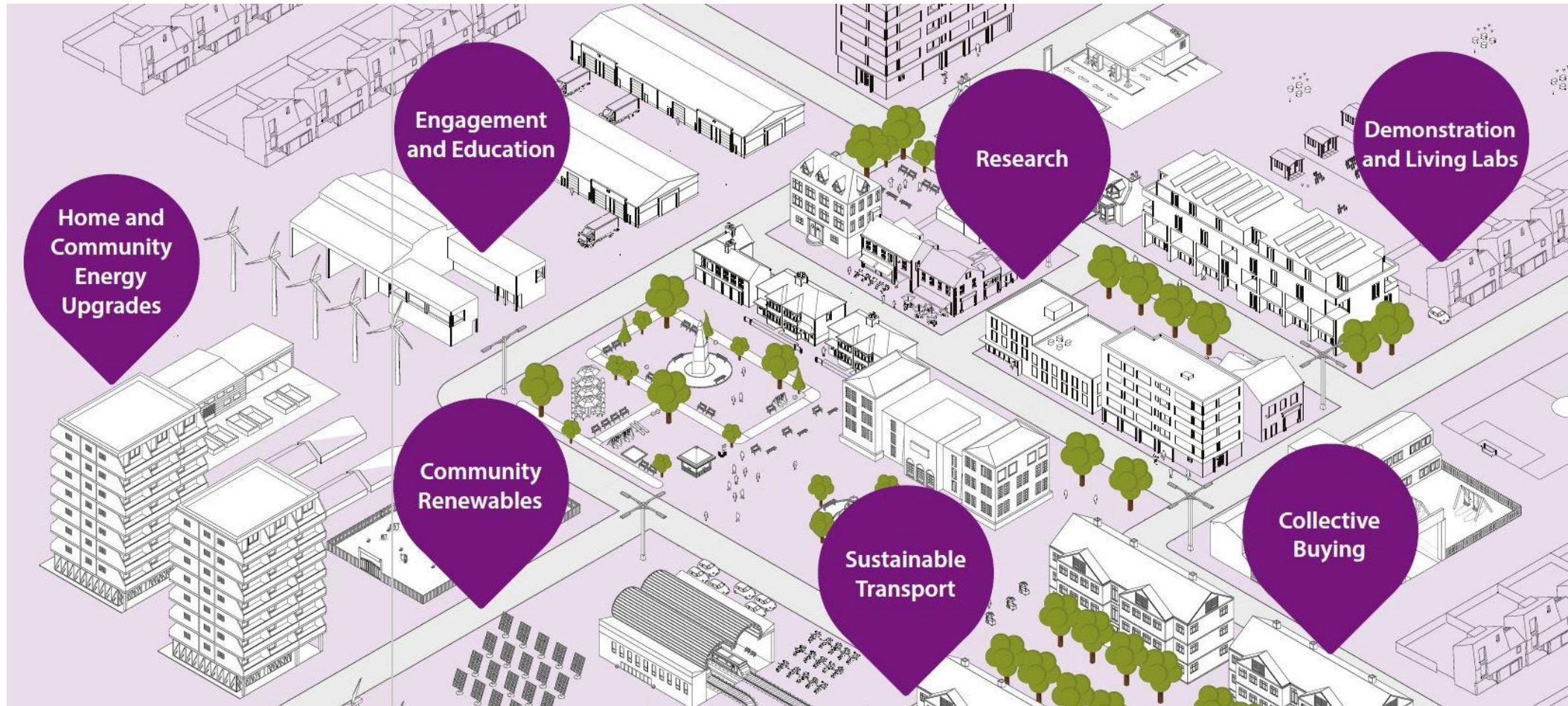


- An Energy master Plan (EMP) helps communities:
- understand how energy is used locally through a comprehensive baseline assessment (electricity use, heat demand and transport use), across key sectors.
- identify and prioritise practical opportunities to measurably improve on this baseline.
- have a clear, near to medium-term action plan to avail of these opportunities and reach community goals.



# DO STAGE - Pathways to Action

## What are communities doing in the DO?



# Sample Projects & Activities



# Abbeyshrule Yard Hub SEC, Longford



- Transforming a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Waterways Ireland storehouse. Creating a 21<sup>st</sup> Century **NZEB standard** Remote Working Hub & Training / Meeting Room facilities.
- Partners: Longford County Council; Waterways Ireland; Abbeyshrule Tidy Villages.
- Funding: EU Just Transition; Rural Regeneration. Cost: €1.4M.
- Officially opened April 2023; part of Connected Hubs network. <https://connectedhubs.ie/hubs/profile/4420>



Royal Longford welcome for Rural Affairs Minister to Abbeyshrule Yard Hub



# Fivealley SEC – Solar *Meitheal*, Offaly



Demonstrates a scalable, replicable model for other communities impacted by the transition.

- Fivealley SEC, Co. Offaly, Ireland completed Phase 1 of Ireland's largest Solar *Meitheal*.
- Located in proximity of decommissioned peat powered plant.
- Community-led rollout applying the traditional *Meitheal* model.
- Over 700 solar panels installed across 56 homes within a 10km area, 320kWp.
- Over €75,000 in annual household energy savings generated.
- Targeted transition away from turf & briquettes.
- Survey showed 83% had no plans to change energy source, mainly due to cost.
- Engagement with 103 homeowners attending initial public meeting in April 2024.
- Project delivered using SEAI grants, private funding & BnM Derrinlough Wind Farm **Community Benefit Fund**
- €4,200 grant support per home with many expecting payback under 2 years.
- Phase 2 ongoing throughout 2026 for further 76 homes.

# Common Challenges, Solutions & Importance of Partnerships



- **Challenges**

- Voluntary groups, limited skills, including technical & administrative capacity.
- Contractor capacity & front-loading of funding.
- Quality of works.
- Additional funding & financing the balance.
- Proximity restrictions with Wind & Solar CBF (frustration for those outside).
- Anchor tenants within Connect Hubs.
- Access to suitable services (Fibreoptic Internet).

- **Solutions**

- Utilise SEAI Technical Mentors (Technical advise & project development).
- Support communities through strategic suitability planning (EMP)
- Secure appropriate commitments from funders which aids contractor front loading or low interest community financing.
- Utilise contractors from SEAI registered list.
- Match funding through SEAI & negotiate bulk discount through *Meitheal* (Additional €1,000 saving per home).

- **Partnerships**

- Tripartite integral to success of domestic PV (SEAI, SEC & Energy Developer).
- Greater funds available.
- Relationship have grown, additional projects conceived from this.
- Positive exposure – national media, case studies

# Thank You

Laurence O'Reilly

SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities Regional Coordinator & Mentor

Email [l.oreilly@ors.ie](mailto:l.oreilly@ors.ie)

# Speakers



**Laila Gercane**

Head of  
Development and  
Project, Vidzeme  
Planning Region



**Laurence O'Reilly**

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Coordinator & Mentor



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Programme Manager,  
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# Collaboration for Public Good Projects

Lisa Kealey  
BnM Programme Manager – Public Good Projects

19 March 2026



BORD <sup>NA</sup> MÓNA



 BnM



# BnM – Journey from “Brown Gold” to Renewables



# Our role has not changed...

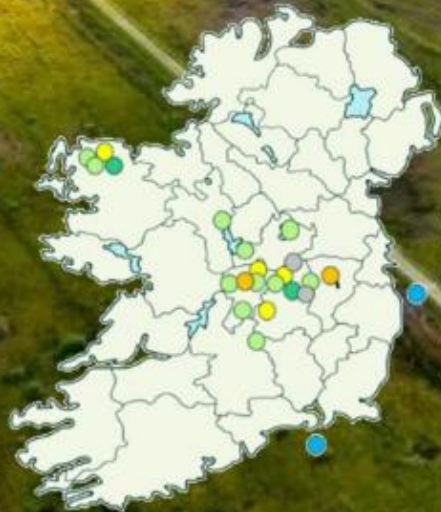
## ...how we deliver it has

**80,000 HA**

Landbank

**15+**

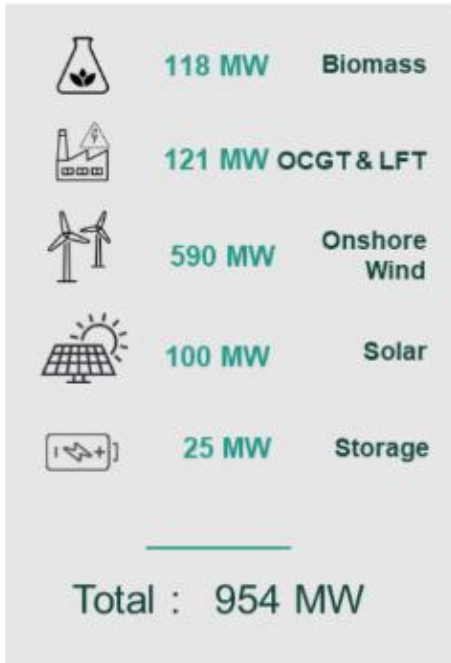
Onshore Wind Projects  
under development



# An Integrated Land Use Strategy



## Renewable Energy



## Peatland Rehabilitation



## Public Good



Riailtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Area supported by an Access Dispatch  
Co-funded by the European Union



# The Opportunity for Public Good Projects

- Construction in peatland is challenging and costly
- Ecologically sensitive nature of peatland environment



- Opportunity to transform access to open spaces in the Midlands
- Repurposing the extensive narrow gauge railway which connecting large tracts of BnM's landholding

# BnM and Fáilte Ireland are working together to deliver the Midland Trail Network

- Development of universally accessible cycle trails.
- Enhance the potential of the midlands as a place to live, work and visit, regenerate regional towns and villages as attractive places to live with strong tourism & recreation infrastructure that can transform the economy of the territory beyond tourism.
- Trail locations determined by availability of unconstrained BnM lands and the Midlands Trail Network Toolkit developed by Fáilte Ireland which at a minimum will link two hubs.

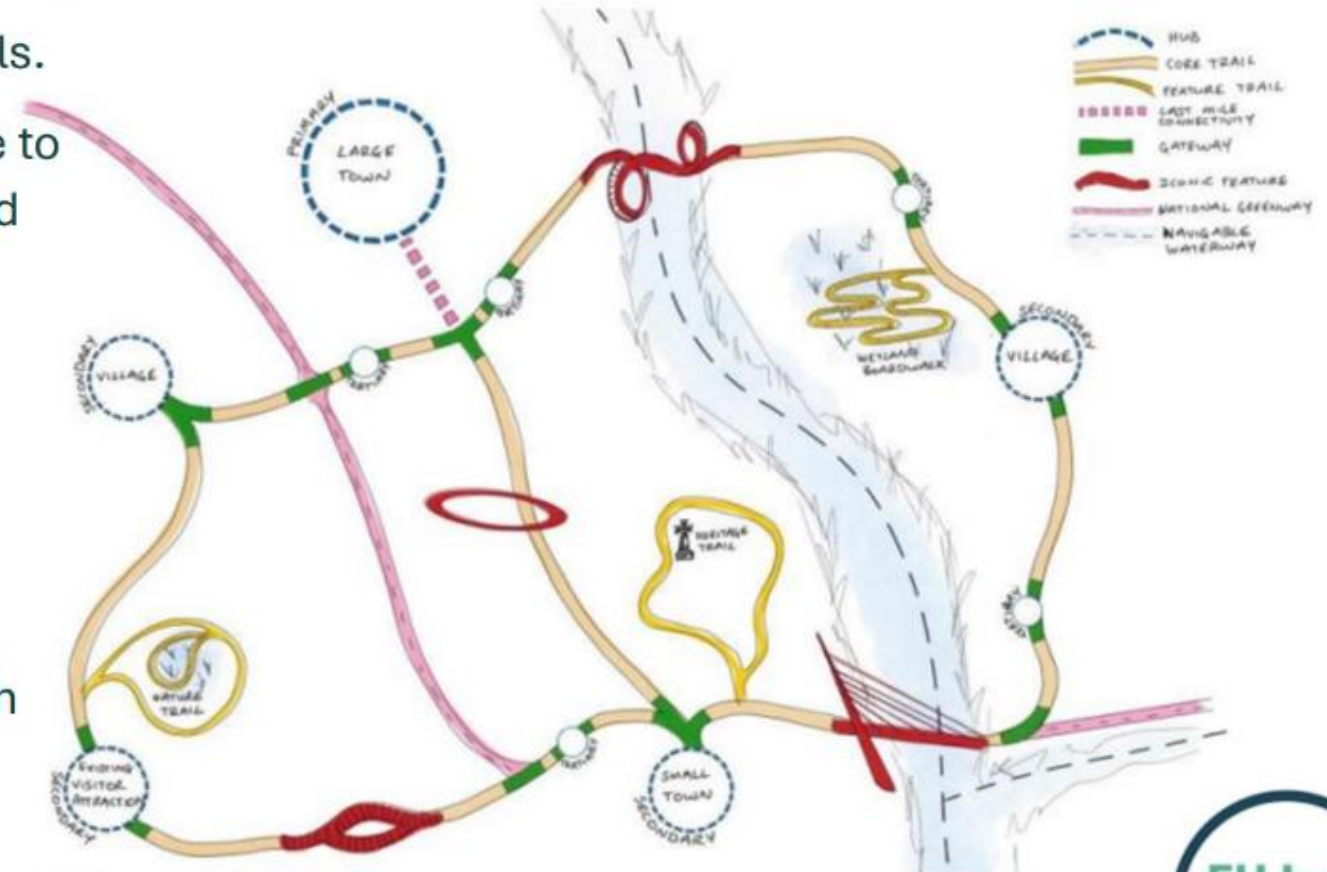


Figure 2- Midlands Trail Network Summary Diagram



## EU JTF Scheme A: Trail Network Development Scheme

# Midland Trail Network: Development & Planning



76 km  
Trails

Roscommon  
Longford  
Westmeath  
Offaly  
Tipperary  
5  
Local Authorities



2  
New Bridges



3  
Bridge Upgrades



28  
Gateways



19  
Rest Points

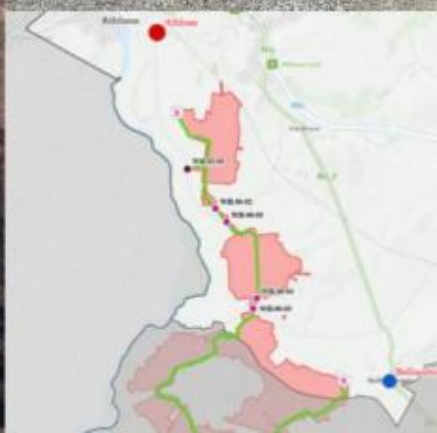


4  
Thematic Experiences



Wayfinding & Interpretation:  
for all trails

# Midland Trail Network – Currently under construction



# Collaboration, Partnership & Engagement



# LoughBoora

DISCOVERY PARK

- 2000 hectare former industrial peat extraction site that has been rehabilitated to form a spectacular parkland site.
- 50km of walking and cycling trails and 4 lakes.
- Unique Sculpture Park with 14 innovative works of art formed using industrial materials of the bog.
- Visitor Centre, on-site café, bike hire. Guided walking and cycling tours. Team building activities. Velo rail
- Accessibility for All – Horizontal Principles
- Hosts over charity 20 events throughout the year supporting local and national causes.



## BnM & Local Communities partnering for Public Good

BnM worked with local community in Ballyforan in East Galway to deliver opportunity for outdoor recreation in a rehabilitated peatland.

Bridge Bog Loop is a 3km shared walking & cycling trail.

Project funded through JTF.



Thank-you.



**Collaborative art making for  
nature restoration – shaping  
common narratives**

14:30 – 15:30

# Facilitator



**Nina Luostarinen**

Principal Researcher at  
Humak University of  
Applied Sciences



Ministry of Economic Affairs  
and Employment of Finland



European  
Commission

# SHAPING COMMON NARRATIVES

## Collaborative art making for development and new possibilities

Nina Luostarinen, Principal Researcher, Resilient Societies Research Programme  
HUMAK University of Applied Sciences, Finland  
Just Transition Platform Technical Regional Forum, Helsinki, 19 March 2026

# SHIFTING RELATIONSHIP WITH PEATLANDS

- Just a few decades ago, peatlands were primarily sites of extraction — drained, cultivated, made productive. They were rarely counted among valued cultural environments.
- Now the relationship is changing. Peatlands are becoming meeting places — spaces where the bond between people and nature can be rebuilt.
- This shift also concerns former peat extraction sites. When production ends, a question opens up: what is the new meaning of these landscapes?
- Are they merely former production areas — or can they become something entirely new?

In the *Peat and Innovations* project, we set out to explore this question through the lens of the creative industries.





# PEAT AND INNOVATIONS — PROJECT FACTS

A pilot study exploring how creative industries — culture, tourism and recreation — can generate new value for former peat extraction areas and their surroundings.

- **Period:** February–October 2025
- 
- **Target areas:** Joutsa, Karstula, Saarijärvi, Keuruu, Multia (Central Finland)
- **Approach:** Human-centred, community-driven development

**Sparsely populated rural municipalities need new sources of vitality.**

**Creative industries can strengthen regional attractiveness, create jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, support identity building during transition, and generate tourism potential.**

# THREE-PHASE MODEL

**Phase 1 — Initial meetings:** Mapped local strengths and development needs. Brought together peat sector and creative sector actors — often for the first time.



**Phase 2 — Ideation workshops:** Developed concrete concepts through co-creation methods. Participants selected ideas for piloting.



**Phase 3 — Pilots:** Tested ideas in practice. Documented lessons learned and pathways for further development.



A key finding: connecting creative and peat sector actors required active bridge-building — phone calls, explaining, inspiring. Email invitations alone were not enough.

# PILOTS

**A cultural sauna event** born from collaboration between two municipalities — the first time their cultural actors developed a new concept together.

Soiden Sauna combines sauna culture, live music and peatland themes. Piloted twice, in both Saarijärvi and Karstula. Participants described it as a unique experience — encountering art from a sauna and hot tub strengthened both relaxation and a sense of grounding.

The concept is replicable and scalable as a tourism product.

**Skills and collaborations involved:** Event production, cultural programming, cross-municipal cooperation, tourism product development.



Kulttuurisaunatapahtuma Soiden Sauna

## PILOT — LAND ART ALONGSIDE RESTORATION (LEIVONMÄKI)

The largest pilot took us to Haapasuon — a former peat extraction site, part of which has been restored as a bird wetland.

**Day 1:** We brought together a diverse group — a Neova representative, a former peat entrepreneur, the PLUPS foundation, the EhTo project, a local nature association, and artists. We discussed restoration processes and the role of art.



**Day 2:** An open land art workshop where we collectively created a ten-metre butterfly image from natural materials — leaves, branches, moss. The work depicts the *Boloria eunomia* (bog fritillary), a butterfly species that has returned to the area thanks to restoration. A two-hour session with a small group — yet a strikingly impressive result.



- A former peat extraction site is like a vast blank canvas — a dark, deep surface waiting for new meaning. It is a human-shaped landscape that carries history but is open to redefinition.
- Crucially, peat extraction sites are fenced off from the public. They are invisible landscapes. Art-based interventions physically return these places to people — and through that encounter, place empathy is born. When people walk on the site, touch the soil, and build something together, they develop an emotional bond that no policy document can create. This also makes it easier for communities to accept and support restoration and conservation measures.
- When the work was complete, we photographed it by drone. Participants lay down to become part of the piece — part of the bog, part of the butterfly.



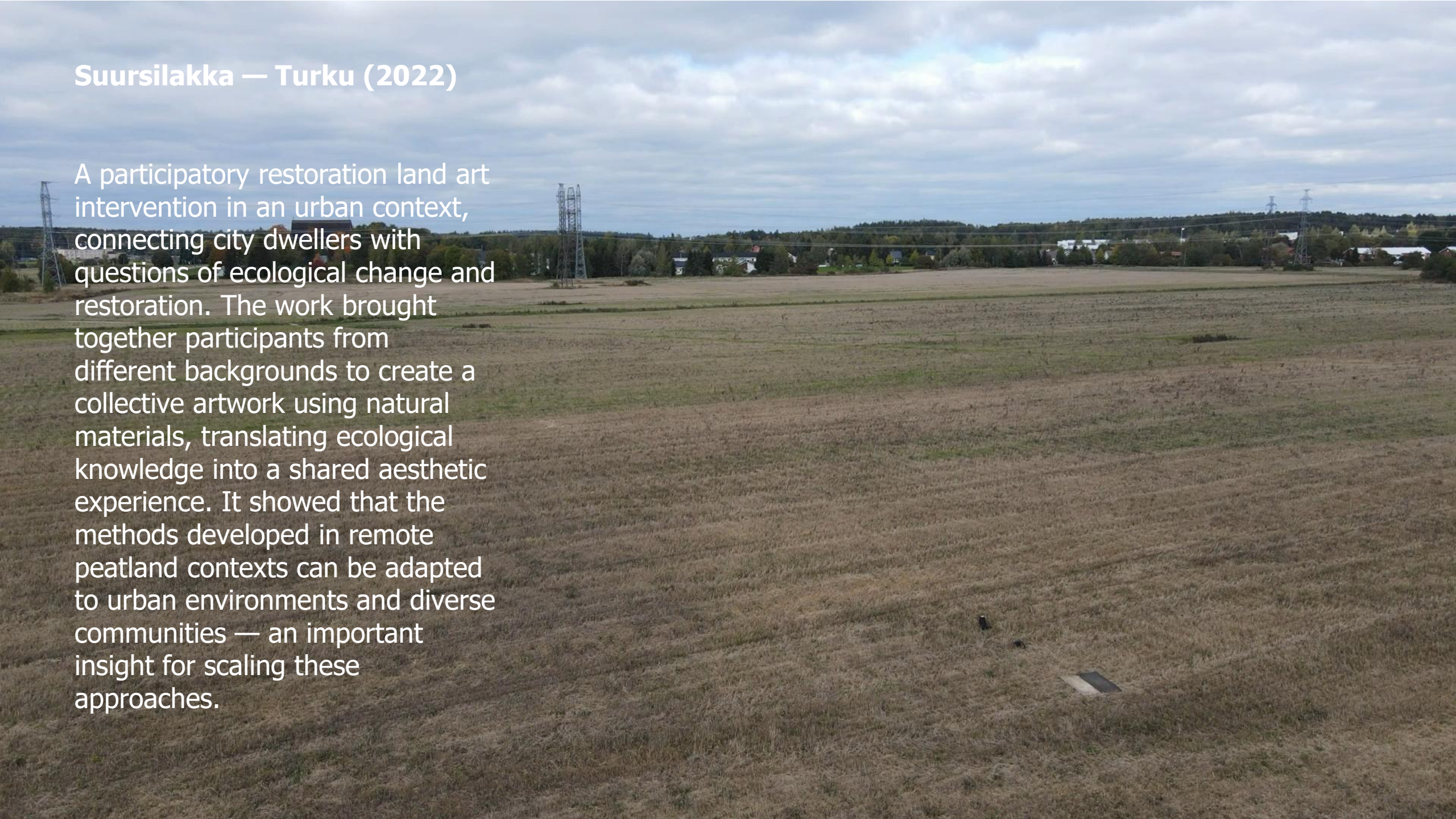
An aerial photograph of a land art installation in a forest. The ground is covered with a mix of green moss, brown leaves, and twigs. Several people are lying on the ground in various positions, some facing up and some facing down. They are wearing winter clothing, including jackets, hats, and boots. The overall scene is a collaborative artistic intervention in a natural setting.

**Liro / Wood Sandpiper —  
Sierijärvi, Rovaniemi (2021)**

A large-scale participatory land art work created on a restored peatland near the Arctic Circle. The piece depicted the *Tringa glareola* (wood sandpiper) — a bird species connected to wetland habitats. Created collaboratively with local community members and researchers, the work made visible the ecological recovery of the landscape and the return of species following restoration. The process demonstrated how artistic interventions can serve as catalysts for community engagement in environmental restoration, and how new narratives of renewal can be written into landscapes often perceived only through loss.

## Suursilakka — Turku (2022)

A participatory restoration land art intervention in an urban context, connecting city dwellers with questions of ecological change and restoration. The work brought together participants from different backgrounds to create a collective artwork using natural materials, translating ecological knowledge into a shared aesthetic experience. It showed that the methods developed in remote peatland contexts can be adapted to urban environments and diverse communities — an important insight for scaling these approaches.





## MULTIPLE RETURNS FROM A SINGLE INTERVENTION

In technology, "dual use" is a constant topic — the same innovation serving both civilian and military purposes. In cultural resilience work, the returns are manifold.

A single intervention — such as a land art workshop — simultaneously strengthens:

**Ecological awareness** of restoration processes

**Social bonds** across sectors and disciplines

**Local identity** and pride

**Tourism potential** and place branding

**New skills:** facilitation, ecological literacy, cross-sector collaboration, creative entrepreneurship

And something harder to measure: **hope.**



## INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD — WHAT THE PARTICIPANTS TAUGHT US

In January 2025 facilitated a World Café

**Physical making drops professional roles.** On the bog, everyone is equal. In an office, people perform competence and expertise. In physical, creative work on a peatland, those roles fall away. This creates the conditions for genuine cross-sector innovation — the kind of boundary-crossing collaboration that LinkedIn posts and business breakfasts never achieve.

**Don't sell restoration — sell togetherness.** The most effective way to engage communities is not to promote ecological goals, but to invite people to reclaim a shared space together. Place empathy follows from presence, not from information.

**Multi-use is the key.** A single former extraction site can simultaneously serve as a wetland, a land art site, a citizen science station, an outdoor classroom, and a recreational area. The same landscape, multiple livelihoods and learning opportunities.

**New livelihood pathways emerged:**

**Green care and rehabilitation services** — long-term creative projects on peatlands can support employment processes, mental health recovery, and rehabilitative work. Completing something visible and meaningful rebuilds self-belief.

**Phenomenon-based learning for schools** — peatland visits combining geography, biology, physical education, and art. Students creating works across multiple sites, visible from aerial photographs — a new kind of cultural chain.

**GPS art and digital layering** — using GPS tracking to draw patterns on the landscape, creating QR codes from wetland island plantings or solar panel arrays, combining artistic vision with restoration planning.

**Cultural events as restoration catalysts** — concerts, sauna events, recurring festivals that draw people to the sites and build lasting relationships with the landscape.

- Just transition requires not only economic and technical solutions but a fundamental shift in how we perceive the landscapes and communities we are transforming.
- Like the dragonfly, these landscapes are not stuck — they are in metamorphosis.



# PERSPECTIVE SHIFT AS A PRECONDITION FOR TRANSFORMATION

- Before we can develop a landscape, we need to **see it differently**.
- Before we can build just transition, we need to imagine what else the landscape can become. We need to ask: **just for whom?**
- Restoration land art is a method for developing **place empathy** — learning to perceive landscapes not only as sites of loss, but as spaces of potential and renewal, as living, multi-voiced communities.
- **Metamorphosis thinking:** transformation begins when we allow new identities, collaborations, and ideas to emerge.
  - Think of Lapland: an entire tourism industry grew from one person's determination to build a compelling narrative around Santa Claus. That narrative did not replace the existing economy — it created something alongside it, something distinctive and impossible to replicate elsewhere.
- **Former peatlands hold the same potential for unique, place-specific identity creation.**

Now it is your turn to imagine

# WORKSHOP — VOICES OF TRANSITION

You will receive coloured cards.

Write on each card — one idea per card:

***"What new opportunities could emerge in restored peatlands — and what skills or collaborations would make them possible?"***

Think concretely — not just "tourism," but for example: an eco-tourism trail with observation points, a peatland carbon farming apprenticeship, an outdoor classroom for schools, a land art residency programme, a community sauna event series.

## Possible directions to consider:

- Wetland re-skilling and ecological entrepreneurship (paludiculture, bio-materials, carbon farming)
- Digital and field monitoring (drones, sensors, citizen science stations)
- Cooperative hubs and cross-sector partnerships
- Experiential education and outdoor tourism
- Creative storytelling and place branding (land art, VR, eco-tourism exhibits)
- Resilience, wellbeing and social innovation (nature-based retreats, community circles)

# WORKSHOP — VOICES OF TRANSITION

## Building the dragonfly together

We will now create a collective dragonfly on the floor — using your idea cards, moss, reed, cattail.

Why a dragonfly?

It undergoes one of nature's most dramatic metamorphoses: from a hidden aquatic larva to a free-flying creature. It depends on healthy wetlands — its presence is a direct indicator of successful restoration.

**These landscapes are in a larval stage, waiting to transform.**

# WORKSHOP — VOICES OF TRANSITION

The dragonfly's body is our shared canvas:

**The head** — vision and direction: place here the ideas about new narratives, place branding, and identity

**The body** — the engine: place here the skills, training, and education ideas that drive the transition, place here the concrete livelihoods, enterprises, and economic opportunities

**The wings** — reach and connection: place here the collaborations, partnerships, and cross-sector networks

**The tail** — legacy: place here the ideas about ecological restoration, long-term monitoring, and what we leave behind

Use the natural materials to give the dragonfly its shape on the floor. Weave your idea cards into its body. Let the creature take form — it does not need to be perfect, it needs to be alive.



**Thank you!**

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