

Case Study

Mulranny Stone Wall Festival

Rebuilding heritage the regenerative way

Rebuilding Heritage,
Restoring Nature: Mulranny's
Stone Wall Festival for
regenerative tourism.



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Status

Active (2015–present)



Overview — Key Info

- **Start Date:** 2015.
- **Lead Organisation:** Mulranny Environmental Group.
- **Location:** Along the **Great Western Greenway**, Mulranny, Co. Mayo.
- **Focus Areas:** Heritage craft (dry stone walling); habitat value of dry-stone walls; community engagement; regenerative tourism.
- **Key actions (at a glance).** Talks & demos; **guided wall-building** with the Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland (DSWAI); **children’s stone-art** totems at the strand; **max 30 participants**; people-powered “gentle construction” (no heavy machinery).
- **Recognitions / Profile:** Action of the **Mayo Heritage Plan**; profiled by **Munster Technical University** (Royal Irish Academy-funded).
- **Funding & Partnerships:** **Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland** – DSWAI (technical delivery); **Mayo County Council – Heritage Office** (support); local businesses; **Royal Irish Academy** (supported research partners profiling the festival; MTU + University of the Highlands and Islands).
- **Climate Action Link:** Nature-/place-positive outcomes; low-impact visitation; skill transfer, community capacity building.

Origins and Context

Local walls had fallen into disrepair, and the craft was fading. The community chose a **hands-on** festival so visitors could work with locals (*meitheal*), learn the method, and **leave a visible legacy**—with support from the Heritage Office.

Key Actions and Interventions

- **On-site delivery.** Small crews led by master masons; **people, not machinery** —a safe, hands-on learning set-up that suits mixed abilities.
- **Evidence & learning.** A simple **dated Before/After photo strip** each year (prep → build days → closing stone) plus a short **habitat note** for the rebuilt section.
- **Community hospitality.** Evenings with local hosts (*meitheal*) deepen the learning and visitor–community connection; high repeat rates follow.
- **Synergies.** Complements other Mulranny heritage/environment strands (*Old Irish Goat Centre, Dark Skies, Greenway*), strengthening the overall offer.

Program Lifecycle (Mulranny model)

Select the annual wall section and secure permissions → plan a people-powered, DSWAI-led build (see *Key Actions* for delivery style) → deliver over 2-3 days → capture dated before/after photos and a short habitat note → announce next year's section → keep partner/funding support in place for continuity.

New-Site Rollout (Scale & Replication)

1. Confirm landowner permissions for a realistic 2–3-day section.
2. Secure a craft partner (e.g., DSWAI) and agree on a participant limit, usually 5 to 1 participant-to-tutor ratio.
3. Co-design schedule, risk assessment and insurance with the authority (people-powered; no heavy machinery).
4. Prepare the site, remove trip hazards, prepare the foundation, grade and segregate stone (eg capping stones are stored at the site periphery as they are last to be used) (cordon/signage, water, tool station).
5. Deliver with master masons and mixed-ability teams; add a children's strand.
6. Record and share metres rebuilt plus a short habitat note; publish dates for the next section.

Results and Impact

- **Tangible repair.** 15 m × 2.25 m rebuilt in 2025 ($\approx 67.5 \text{ m}^2$ two faces).
- **Biodiversity.** Dry-stone walls function as micro-habitats; rebuilding enhances habitat value, dry-stone wall creates a microclimate.
- **Community & visitor outcomes.** High authenticity, strong repeat rates, and a clear “give-back” legacy or regenerative tourism. The community is enlisting tourism volunteers to support landscape management.
- **External validation.** Cited as a **best-practice** example in peer-reviewed regenerative-tourism research.



Metrics / KPIs

- **Participants (cap):** 30 / edition.
- **Physical legacy (2025):** 15 m × 2.25 m rebuilt ($\approx 67.5 \text{ m}^2$).
- **Long-term yardstick:** ~28 years to fully mend this stretch at current pace.

Insights and Lessons Learned

- **Small is powerful.** A strict cap creates quality learning and authentic contact.
- **Design for legacy.** Measurable repair each year aligns motivation, funding and story.
- **Four-positive lens.** Plan and report through **Community / Place / Nature / Visitor-positive** outcomes.



THE GLOBAL GOALS

Link to Climate Action and SDGs

Contributes to **SDG 11** (community), **SDG 12** (responsible consumption), **SDG 15** (life on land) and **SDG 4** (education) by pairing craft restoration with habitat benefits and low-impact visitation.

Legacy and Future Relevance

At today's pace, the legacy is visible and trackable. The format is portable to other wall sections and communities using the same capped, gentle-construction model.

Endnotes / Sources

- **Mulranny Stone Wall Festival Report 2025.**
- **Regenerative Community Tourism Case Study: Mulranny Stone Wall Festival** (MTU/UHI, 2023).
- **A Regenerative Approach to Tourism: Learnings from Community Enterprises** (JORT, 2025).
- **The Mulranny Stonewall Festival** (Seán Carolan, 2020).

Photo credits: <https://mulrannystonewallfestival.ie/>



Get Involved. Take action.

If you're inspired to contribute to this initiative—or to start something similar—use the contacts below to get started:



Mulranny Community Futures - Mulranny, Co. Mayo



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This case study, highlighting Irish community-driven solutions to environmental challenges, was developed through Connected—a project funded by the **Community Climate Action Programme: Climate Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing** (CCAP – Strand 2), supported by the Government of Ireland through the **Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications**, and coordinated by the **University of Galway**.

For more details, visit climateconnected.ie or contact a.alexandrov1@universityofgalway.ie