



EPA funded PhD Scholarship on Heritage Opportunities in Unique Offshore Island Environments

Applications are invited from suitably qualified candidates for a 4 year, full-time, PhD scholarship in the Discipline of Geography at Mary Immaculate College (MIC). This position is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

This is an exciting opportunity to undertake a PhD as part of larger research project examining natural heritage and dynamic transformation of heritage assets in offshore island settings. This EPA project, entitled LIGHTHOUSE (EPA Project #2025-NE-1297) is a collaboration of academics based at MIC, Queens Belfast (QUB), University College Dublin (UCD), working in partnership with the Commissioners of Irish Lights and National Parks and Wildlife Service, with additional external advice from colleagues in University College London and University of Exeter.

The PhD candidate will be based at MIC and will additionally spend a portion of their time based with the Commissioners of Irish Lights in Dublin. The candidate will work with a second PhD student based at UCD and a postdoctoral researcher at QUB, and there will be training, fieldwork, optional teaching experience and travel opportunities. The supervisory team will consist of Dr Catherine Dalton (PI) and external advisor Professor Caitlin DeSilvey (University of Exeter).

Living allowance (Stipend): €25,000 per annum [tax-exempt scholarship award].

University fees: EU rate funding support is in place for 4 years of fees.

Other funds: Additional funds are available for a project laptop, open access publications as well as T&S for project meetings, fieldwork and conferences.

Closing date for applications: **16th June 2025**

Online Interviews: Will take place in the **week of June 23rd or 30th 2025**

Start date: **September 1st 2025** (or asap thereafter)

Project Description: This doctoral project will examine natural and cultural heritage challenges and opportunities in unique offshore island environments, with a focus on six island properties owned by the Commissioners of Irish Lights—five located in the Republic of Ireland and one in Northern Ireland. A central research question guiding this study is: How can we effectively curate or manage the process of natural and cultural heritage transformation in extreme settings while addressing the pressures of climate change and biodiversity decline? The project will track the withdrawal of obsolete infrastructure, specifically the removal of hazardous and polluting materials, from selected Irish Lights properties with recognised heritage value. The physical transformation of natural and cultural heritage assets is a sensitive issue. Decommissioning can yield net gains for natural heritage and create opportunities for collection of scientific data, but research is needed to explore

implications for tangible and intangible cultural heritage values and alignment with existing environmental policy. This research will examine the past and current state of island heritage through the analysis of archival materials and relevant assessment data. It will review models for creative conservation, including adaptive release, and assess enhancements to existing infrastructure aimed at supporting biodiversity. The study will also assess the applicability of biodiversity and ecosystem services metrics, such as natural capital, natural and cultural heritage co-benefits and biodiversity net gain.

Applications are invited for the above EPA funded Doctoral Scholarship. For additional project details please contact Dr. Catherine Dalton (catherine.dalton@mic.ul.ie).

Candidates must have a First (1:1) or strong Upper Second class (2:1) BSc/BA degree in Geography, Environmental Sciences, Media and Communications (or equivalent international qualification in a relevant area) with Ecology and/or Heritage specialisms. A relevant MSc/MA degree and experience with videography and photography would be advantageous. Other evidence that signifies suitability for the doctoral project will also be considered.

Essential Selection Criteria

- BSc/BA degree with Upper Second class (2:1), in Geography, Environmental Sciences, Media and Communications (or equivalent international qualification in a relevant area) with Ecology and/or Heritage specialisms.
- Evidence of an ability to carry out independent research
- Highly self-motivated
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- High level of spoken and written English

Desirable Selection Criteria

- Relevant MSc/MA degree
- Experience with videography and photography
- Experience in environmental/heritage/communication studies
- Experience of working as part of a research team
- Full, clean driving license

To Apply for the PhD Scholarship

Email a cover letter and curriculum vitae with the names of two referees in one PDF File with your name to catherine.dalton@mic.ul.ie. References can be included with the application or sent by email by **June 16th**.

The cover letter should include the following information:

- i) Academic Awards or Scholarships received (max 300 words)
- ii) Details of your previous research/work experience (max 500 words)
- iii) Personal statement on your motivation for pursuing a PhD on this research topic and why you are particularly suited to this doctoral research project (max 750 words).
- iv) Please provide any other relevant information (e.g. technical, communication, and analytical skills) (max 500 words).
- v) TWO academic references with full contact details.