

Review of County Development Plan,
Forward Planning Department,
Áras An Chontae,
Great Water Street.
Longford,
N39 NH56.

22nd November 2019

Re: Public Consultation Issues Paper – Review of County Development Plan

By email: cdp@longfordcoco.ie

A Chara,

This submission has been prepared by Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority Fáilte Ireland, in response to the public notice seeking submissions in relation to the preparation of a new County Development Plan 2021-2027.

The Authority welcomes the publication of the Issues Paper and thanks the County Council for the opportunity to comment on this document and to facilitate engagement with the local authority during the course of the formulation of the new County Development Plan.

This submission seeks to ensure that the emerging County Development Plan is adequately informed and takes due consideration of tourism as one of the most important and indigenous economic sectors in the county, the region and nationally. We are particularly keen to see a cross sectoral approach between tourism and other sectors and the need for integrated planning policies and strategies.

Please see attached the Paper entitled Developing Tourism in Longford produced by Fáilte Ireland, which should be read in consultation with this submission.

The Significance of Tourism to the Irish Economy

Tourism is one of the largest and most important sectors of the national economy, providing employment for approximately 260,000 people. In 2018, out-of-state (Overseas and North Ireland) tourist expenditure amounted to €5.6 billion. With a further €1.7 billion spent by overseas visitors on fares to Irish carriers, foreign exchange earnings were €7.4 billion. Domestic tourism expenditure amounted to €2 billion, making tourism a €9.4 billion industry. Before allowing for receipts paid to Irish air and sea carriers by overseas tourists, the government earned estimated revenue of €1.8 billion through taxation of tourism. This grows to €2.2 billion when carrier receipts are factored into the analysis, of which €1.7 billion came from out-of-state tourism and the balance from domestic tourism. In 2018 the tourism industry accounted for 4.0% of all tax revenue.

With regard to County Longford, Fáilte Ireland's figures indicate that in 2017 24,000 overseas visited Longford generating revenue of €10m. Longford is part the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand.

A successful tourism sector also creates significant benefits for many other sectors such as agriculture, food and drinks, accommodation providers, transport and retail. For this reason tourism is a particularly important activity and spatial land use in its own right to be accommodated within the emerging County Development Plan notwithstanding its contribution to enhancement of Quality of Life and the enhancement of places of residence, work and play and can positively affect both physical and mental wellbeing which is a key principle of the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES).

Fáilte Ireland seek to ensure the following in the context of the emerging County Plan:

- To acknowledge and recognise tourism as a key economic driver for the county which supports job creation and sustains communities;
- To provide a dedicated tourism chapter including policies and objectives for tourism;

- Tourism should be planned for as a spatial land use. Tourism features should be mapped in the County Development Plan in a similar way that other functions and roles are presented.
- Key nodes of tourism activity in the County should be identified – both existing and proposed specific tourism centres (major tourism attractions, outdoor activities etc.);
- Existing transport links between nodes and identified trails – whether walking, cycling or road based including greenways and blueways should also be identified.
- Strategic tourism centres (principal towns containing tourist facilities) where key services such as accommodation providers etc. are located. Further guidance is available at: <http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/Failte-Ireland-Tourism-Destination-Towns-Guidelines.pdf?ext=.pdf>.
- Sensitive environments where the provision of services and development must be sensitive and appropriate to the robustness / sensitivity of the receiving environment and in particular its existing tourism significance;
- Areas of unrealised tourism potential where proactive policies will aim to encourage the development of this sector;
- Branding – reference and use of Fáilte Ireland Tourism Brand(s) logos (Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands) applicable to the county;
- Proactive planning policies including provision of supporting infrastructure such as visitor car parking, toilets, café or catering facilities – particularly in sensitive locations;
- Sustainable travel between sites with the promotion of public transport along key routes; Informed design and location guidelines for the development of tourism related facilities in sensitive amenities. Key to this would be the consideration of particularly special areas which may not normally be considered – such as the proposed views of proposed developments from riverside, prominent or elevated locations etc;
- Full realisation of the economic potential of increased visitor revenue and increased dwell time with high quality tourism infrastructure including accommodation providers, restaurants, holiday homes, etc.;
- Protection and enhancement of the tourism resource with information and interpretation provided and the actual resources carefully managed and protected.

- Update of the county Wind Energy strategy 'Areas of Windfarm Potential', objectives and policies, whereby Fáilte Ireland recognises the value and necessity of strengthening, improving and expanding energy infrastructure in the county and region, and that this in turn supports the growth of the tourism sector. Whilst Fáilte Ireland is generally supportive of the development of transmission infrastructure and is supportive of the economic benefits associated with its growth and development, potential impacts on landscape and the natural environment (including those on tourism) must be considered and this must be clearly expressed in the emerging County Plan.

Key Issues for the Emerging Plan to Address

The Issues Paper identifies a number of questions or issues for the new plan to address. A number of these influence tourism development. In responding to these areas of interest, Fáilte Ireland would maintain that the appropriate consideration, planning and protection of tourism through forward planning and development management are keys to development of the tourism industry.

The questions relating or effecting tourism detailed in the Issues Paper and Fáilte Ireland's response are as follows:

How can we make our recreational infrastructure, including greenways, walking trails and waterways more user friendly and accessible for visitors?

Greenways are key tourism infrastructure and play an important role in Irish tourism. They boost the appeal of Ireland in the travel market, add value to the existing high tourism offering and support the development of rural communities and job creation in the rural economy, as well as the protection and promotion of natural assets and biodiversity.

It is our ambition for Ireland to be recognized internationally as a year-round activity destination. There has been significant growth in cycling tourism in Ireland in recent years. In 2018 it was the 2nd

largest activity with 450,000 overseas visitors participating in cycling while on holiday. A projected annual growth of 4% per annual is expected to 2028.

Research undertaken by Fáilte Ireland identified that visitors have particular preferences in relation to the types of trails and services which they require when cycling in particular. These expectations and preferences can be grouped under what Fáilte Ireland refers to as- The 4 S' for Cycling Tourism, and these are essentially what greenways provide;

Scenery - beautiful scenery and landscape which needs to be varied

Segregated – traffic free

Safe – flat surfaces and good services

See and do – lots of activities, attractions and interesting villages

Other key considerations include ensuring that there are linkages to towns, villages and communities; interpretation (telling of local interesting and engaging stories); animation (year round events, etc which are continuously being refreshed, new elements added); and engaged and proactive communities and industry who utilises the Greenway for their own recreational use but also take pride and encourage their Greenway being enjoyed by others.

A number of resources are available which provide guidance including the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways and publications by the National Trails Office relating to developing and maintaining recreational trails in Ireland.

How can we better link key tourism attractions with our towns and villages, so that greater economic benefit can be obtained from tourism?

Towns and villages in Longford should be a focus for tourism provision, as key towns act as a base or hub for a whole host of activities and attractions within their immediate environs and hinterlands.

From a transport perspective, a priority should be to provide a wider range of targeted public transport options for tourists who wish to travel from urban areas to rural based tourist attractions

and amenities. Possible delivery mechanisms to be explored would include the extension of the Rural Transport Network to include tourism objectives and key tourism sites. Enhanced walking and cycling facilities also have a key role to play in utilising our resources and moreover opening up access to the abundance of natural assets.

What policies could the County Development Plan include to facilitate and encourage multiday visits to Longford?

The key to unlocking the growth potential of an area is the development of experiences that will motivate potential tourists to firstly visit there and secondly to dwell in the area. These new experiences are less concerned with visitors passively seeing or doing things; they encourage tourists to immerse themselves actively in the locale, interacting with people, engaging the senses, and learning the history and stories of the places.

Fáilte Ireland's response to this challenge has been the creation of a framework to develop and deliver visitor experience development plans (VEDPs) along with strengthening destination towns. This approach identifies the key assets of an area and provides a framework to present the experiences and stories of that area in a way that tourists can readily and easily understand. It clearly identifies tangible actions and a process for businesses to shape their respective tourist experience(s) in line with the overall experience brand proposition and the key motivating themes for their area.

'Visitor Experience Development Plans (VEDPs) will be continued to be prepared by Fáilte Ireland in association with a range of other stakeholders, including the Local Authorities, key stakeholders and members of the tourism industry. They are the vehicle through which Fáilte Ireland aligns its own resources with those of its key stakeholders to deliver a 3-5 year commercial development plan that builds capacity and capability, primes demand, and delivers world class visitor experiences within defined geographic areas or across unifying themes. The key focus of these plans is to unlock the economic growth potential of an area by progressing a range of key initiatives that will motivate and facilitate potential tourists to visit and stay in the local area'. Fáilte Ireland would like to see inclusion of a policy/objective to support the delivery of VEDP's.

Also, to come to an area, tourists need reassurance that there will be enough attractions to see and activities to do during the day, a sufficient range of accommodation options and a night-time economy to provide evening options. The most effective and efficient way to deliver this for tourists is through destination towns that cater for our tourists. Therefore, it is crucial that improvement and investment across a wide range of touch points – including transport links, accommodation supply, public realm attractions, restaurants, a vibrant night-time economy, tourist management etc are acknowledged and supported in the draft development plan.

How can we take advantage of the activity tourism potential of our lakes and waterways while protecting our valuable natural landscapes and habitats?

The forthcoming Shannon Tourism Masterplan currently being developed by Fáilte Ireland in partnership with Waterways Ireland seeks to drive tourism opportunities both on and off the water, and in the towns surrounding it. The priorities emanating from the masterplan should inform and be embedded in the review of the development plan in particular the facilitation by the Council on opportunities for waterside dining or water-view dining in terms of planning policy.

How can we develop international tourism destinations of excellence based around Longford and other settlement towns?

Longford has an array of natural and cultural assets including the River Shannon, Lough Ree, the Royal Canal, Granard Motte, Corlea Trackway, woodlands and picturesque villages. It is vitally important that these assets are invested in in order to meet the needs and expectations of our domestic and overseas visitors.

The Norman Heritage Park in Granard is an example of a unique attraction that has the capacity to be a game-changer for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and which will stand out in the international marketplace. Projects like this, and many others in our capital investment programme, are vital not only for regional growth but for reinforcing Ireland's reputation as a high-quality visitor destination.

The recent investment in the heritage park at Granard and the Maria Edgeworth Centre in 2018 should act as a catalyst for the further tourism development and potential of these towns.

Center Parcs which has recently opened can accommodate 2,500 visitors and directly employs 1000 people. This investment will have an immediate and direct benefit to the county but equally important it will grow the wider visitor economy of Longford over time. Center Parcs has the potential to be a key hub for tourism in the county and wider Hidden Heartlands.

How can we enhance the public realm of our towns and villages to make them more appealing to visitors and encourage visitors to stay for longer?

Fáilte Ireland has published 'Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns' to provide a framework to support communities and Local Authorities and set out the key drivers of what makes a town appealing to the international tourist. These guidelines are intended as a practical aid to Local Authorities, Chambers of Commerce, LEADER Programme Local Action Groups and other business and community groups who consider their town to either be a tourism destination town or have the potential to develop as one. They can also be used by smaller towns and villages with the potential to further develop as day trip destinations.

With Fáilte Ireland research consistently showing that attractive towns are key motivators for overseas holidaymakers coming to Ireland, the guidelines aim to enhance public spaces such as squares, streetscapes and markets in a way that will engage tourists and enhance their experience in key towns. This could include spaces for food and craft markets, areas for town centre events, public art displays as well as orientation and signage to help visitors explore a town's local heritage.

<http://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/Failte-Ireland-Tourism-Destination-Towns-Guidelines.pdf?ext=.pdf>

How can we better interpret, animate and develop our heritage assets to strengthen their contribution to the tourism economy, while protecting them for future generations?

The relationship between tourism and heritage has potential synergistic benefits. The preservation of heritage to improve tourism can in turn support that preservation. This is not restricted to heritage sites and should also include elements such as urban design (e.g. shop frontage restrictions in heritage towns).

The adaptive reuse of existing historic buildings is one of the best ways a community can improve the economic, social and environmental sustainability of its village or a town. According to the Heritage Council *“The connection between reuse and economic vitality is strong. In the Irish Times’ 2016 list of best shops, 57/100 were located in historic structures. Similarly, of the top 100 restaurants in Ireland as chosen by the McKenna Guides in 2018, 74 were located in historic structures. Finally, many of the higher profile co-working spaces in Ireland are in old structures (e.g. The Digital Hub, Dogpatch, Fumbally Exchange Waterford, Ludgate Hub).* Proactive planning policies and objectives which support the reuse and refurbishment of protected structures and older buildings of architectural, cultural, historic and aesthetic merit which, make a positive contribution to the character, appearance and quality of local streetscapes and the sustainable development of the county should be included in the plan.

Are there any areas / attractions in Longford that you think have been overlooked but have the potential to be developed for tourism and recreational purposes?

While not overlooked the Corlea Bog Iron Age Trackway situated 3km from Kennagh has the potential to become Ireland’s Iron Age Centre. It is one of a number of priority projects that have been identified as part of our strategic partnership with the OPW.

What policies and objectives can be implemented to ensure the protection of the countryside from overdevelopment?

Fáilte Ireland welcomed the inclusion of a growth strategy for the region in the EMRA RSES which is both asset and evidenced based to ensure sustainable growth across the region, having regard to the parameters as defined by the National Planning Framework. The general theme of sustainable

compact growth of both urban and rural areas is welcomed. It is vital that this is implemented and supported through the development plan core strategy.

Tourism services and facilities should be clustered within established settlements as this will serve to protect the quality of the Irish environment; foster strong links to a whole range of other economic and commercial sectors and sustain the host communities; and utilise existing ancillary services and facilities such as water and wastewater infrastructure, power supply etc, rather than creating a requirement for further development in the Irish landscape.

The pathway to sustainable rural development outlined in the 2017 Action Plan for Rural Development and supported through key objectives of the National Planning Framework and EMRA RSES provided guidance on achieving protection of the environment and balancing development. Consolidated growth to support rural towns and villages while protecting natural landscapes will contribute to economic and environmental sustainability while promoting sustainable tourism as a contributor to the rural quality of life.

How can this Council best promote and support a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport?

Tourism and transport go hand-in-hand and tourism displays a very high dependency on public transport in particular for its successful operation. It is an objective of Fáilte Ireland to continue to shift our visitors onto sustainable modes of transport which will also result in a significantly improved visitor experience. Transport in existing strong tourism areas needs to be supported and consolidated. A priority should be to provide a wider range of targeted public transport options for tourists who wish to travel from urban areas to rural based tourist attractions and amenities. Possible delivery mechanisms to be explored would include the extension of the Rural Transport Network to include tourism objectives and key tourism sites. Enhanced walking and cycling facilities also have a key role to play in utilising our resources and moreover opening up access to the abundance of natural assets.

A number of state agencies are responsible for the delivery of public transport services in Ireland with the work of Transport for Ireland being of particular significance from a tourism perspective particularly with integrating the various modes of transport and aiming to bring together information and services to help make public transport a little easier for you to use.

The importance of integration of all forms of public transport is highlighted above. Outside of the main urban areas such as Dublin, Galway and Cork, tourism in Ireland for the most part takes place in rural areas. As a result, it is vitally important that public transport connect seamlessly with other modes of transport for the last link of the visitor's journey (the so called "last mile") to their accommodation or a visitor attraction etc. At present in many areas the interchange of services at train and bus stations can be haphazard. Greater collaboration between all transport providers including bus, rail, taxi is required to ensure this "last mile" is travelled in a sustainable manner.

What do you think of the Greenways and cycleways in the county?

It is considered that the Royal Canal delivers on all of these and could provide a key piece of cycling and walking infrastructure for both overseas and domestic visitors. The Royal Canal Greenway which traverses the county is a strategic asset and the proposed investment of phase 2 of the 130km long greenway from Clondra to Spenser Dock in Dublin is a huge boost and opportunity for the county. The increase in economic activity that a greenway brings creates opportunities for new employment including cycle hire services, accommodation, food and beverage and construction sectors, resulting in sustainable employment which is sustained throughout the year. The greenway would be well positioned to extend to nearby towns and villages connecting both rural and urban environments and connecting a wider regional recreational network which will provide significant local economic value as well as providing an excellent visitor experience. Examples include the Kenagh to Mostown link, walkway and cycleway link from Lanesboro to Clondra and construction of a link from the Royal Canal to Newcastle Woods in Ballymahon.

Tourism Strategy for Longford

Longford forms part of Ireland's Hidden Heathlands Regional Experience Brand. Although relatively new the brand is tapping into a growing tourism trend for soft activities by encouraging visitors to be 'active in nature' and to explore the region by going off the beaten track. The brand's appeal also very much lies in its offer for visitors to get away from the stresses and pressures of modern life and to experience the tranquillity of rural Ireland. The brand aims to make a significant impact on tourism across the midlands delivering increased visitor numbers and spend, season extension and creating jobs.

Longford is well placed to optimise the potential for tourism through proper planning and development. The consideration of natural and heritage resources, strategic planning for accommodation and promotion of inter-agency tourism strategies in the upcoming development plan will build on the previous success of strong tourism consideration in Development Plans.

Longford as a largely rural county is important for tourism as tourism in Ireland, for the most part, takes place in rural areas. These areas are home to rich heritage and immense natural beauty that support a varied tourism offering. These assets should be acknowledged and explicitly referenced as a growth enabler for Longford.

Towns and villages in Longford should be a focus for tourism provision, as key towns act as a base or hub for a whole host of activities and attractions within their immediate environs and hinterlands.

Fáilte Ireland would reinforce that it is vitally important to ensure provision is made for the expansion in accommodation and facilities within towns and along with supporting infrastructural investment including transport links, public realm etc.

The cruising industry is very important for tourism in Co. Longford. Facilitation of the development of navigation infrastructure is very important, as is the adaptation of navigation infrastructure for tourism, e.g. development of on-shore facilities for boat users, etc.

Fáilte Ireland supports the use of peatlands in providing recreation, access to nature and the use of peatlands in forming a connected network of green infrastructure for leisure as indicated in the EMRA RSES. The Bord na Mona peatlands provide opportunities for tourism development including joined-up walking and cycling trails, re-wetting / re-wilding of abandoned cutaway bog to create new amenities. The role of Bord na Mona in particular in the development of tourism, using the work done in the midland's region including Lough Boora in County Offaly should be developed further.

The Mid Shannon Wilderness Park project would provide for Significant rehabilitation of cutaway bogs allowing for the re- establishment of wildlife populations and bring benefits for people, communities and businesses through facilities at key points, the combination with archaeological and cultural heritage, a network of natural and restored wetlands linked to each other by walkways and cycle routes. Communities will also benefit from the opportunity to use the Wetland Wilderness Park for lifelong learning, recreation and to increase health, well-being and quality of life. The project should be supported by way of policy/objectives in the draft plan which would facilitate its delivery.

Conclusion

Fáilte Ireland welcomes the review of the Longford County Development Plan and recommend that the consideration of tourism in the Eastern Midland Region RSES and our comments are addressed in the published Draft Development Plan in order to take due consideration of tourism as one of the most important and indigenous economic sectors in the region and Ireland.

Should you have any queries on this please do not hesitate to contact me.



Environment & Planning Manager, Fáilte Ireland

Appendix A – Fáilte Ireland’s Guidance on Sustainable Tourism

Fáilte Ireland promotes the incorporation of the principles of sustainability in the tourism policy section of the County Development Plan. Fáilte Ireland has developed five key principles that ensure developments achieve a balance between appropriate tourism development and economic, environmental and social sustainability. Developments will be assessed having regard to compliance with these and the associated policies.

Principle 1: Tourism, when it is well managed and properly located, should be recognised as a positive activity which has potential to benefit the host community, the place itself and the visitor alike. Sustainable tourism planning requires a balance to be struck between the needs of the visitor, the place and the host community.

Principle 2: Our landscapes, our cultural heritage, our environment and our linguistic heritage all have an intrinsic value which outweighs their value simply as a tourism asset. However, sustainable tourism planning makes sure that they can continue to be enjoyed and cherished by future generations and not prejudiced simply by short term considerations.

Principle 3: Built development and other activities associated with tourism should in all respects be appropriate to the character of the place in which they are situated. This applies to the scale, design and nature of the place as well as to the particular land use, economic and social requirements of the place and the surroundings.

Principle 4: Strategic tourism assets – including special landscapes, important views, the setting of historic buildings and monuments, areas of cultural significance and access points to the open countryside, should be safeguarded from encroachment by inappropriate development.

Principle 5: Visitor accommodation, interpretation centres and commercial / retail facilities serving the tourism sector should generally be located within established settlements thereby fostering strong links to a whole range of other economic and commercial sectors and sustaining the host

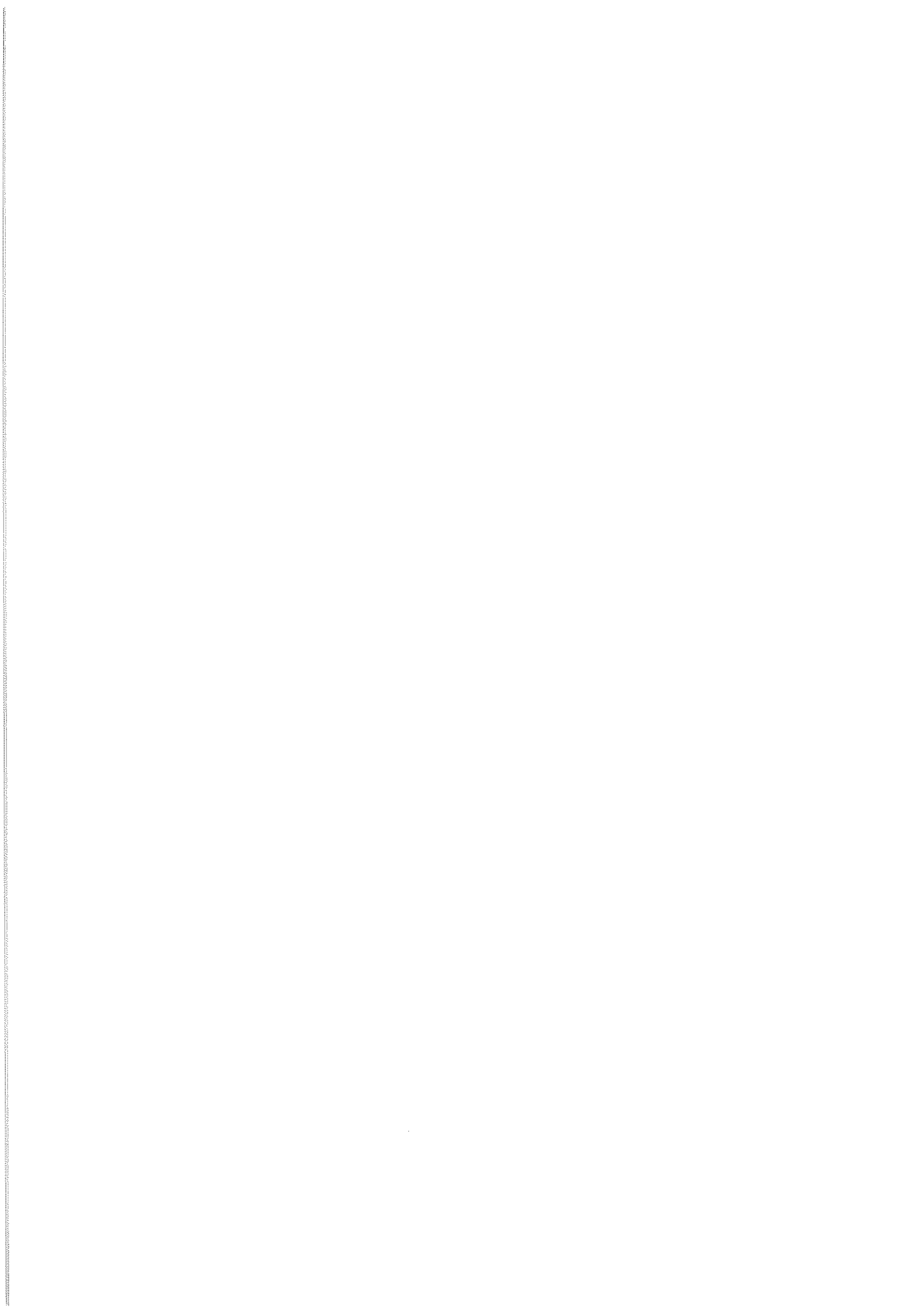
communities. Sustainable tourism facilities, when properly located and managed can, especially if accessible by a range of transport modes, encourage longer visitor stays, help to extend the tourism season and add to the vitality of settlements throughout the year.

Underlying these principles for Sustainable Tourism, the definitions of economic, environmental and social sustainability against which any tourism project assessed are defined as follows:

Economic sustainability must be considered to ensure that the tourism sector is managed. The key strengths of the County include landscape, heritage, natural environment, lifestyle and amenity pursuits. The sector is highly affected by seasonality and there are extremes in visitor numbers as key attractions contrasted with smaller attractions which struggle to maintain visitor numbers. These ‘peaks and troughs’ should be carefully managed to ensure the protection of natural resources. Tourism innovation should also be encouraged – particularly where it brings about environmental benefits. Finally, for projects to be economically sustainable they should meet the needs of the permanent and also visitor population alike, so the preparation of robust business plans for all such developments will ensure proposals are viable and sustainable.

Environmental sustainability will be central to the development and protection of a viable tourism sector and this is a key consideration in the County where tourism attractions are located in environmentally sensitive areas and close to historic areas where the quality of the built heritage and environment must be protected from inappropriate development – whether tourism related or not. The ‘mainstreaming’ of policy guidance tools such as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will undoubtedly address any deficits in relation to many of these key policy areas.

Social sustainability is arguably more difficult to assess. Many of the potentially negative impacts of tourism development can however be addressed through careful consideration of the social and cultural nature of the receiving environment. The impacts that large-scale developments can have on existing local communities’ policies can be assessed having regard to the impact of visitor numbers on local quality of life, culture and heritage – with a particular emphasis placed on unique areas such as culturally sensitive areas where small impacts over time may have a significant cumulative effect.



Fáilte Ireland Support for FESTIVALS

Fáilte Ireland has identified festivals as a key driver for tourism growth, particularly during off-season times. Investment in and business development support for festivals is helping to drive growth in the regions and entice both domestic and overseas visitors to different parts of the country in the off-peak season.

Fáilte Ireland also provides funding for local festivals through its Regional Festivals and Participative Events Programme, which has been managed by Local Authorities since 2018.

New Festival IDEAS

As well as the range of major national festivals Fáilte Ireland supports, the 'Festival Innovation Programme' was launched in 2018 to support unique and high tourism impact festivals and events which will stand out internationally. Festivals are encouraged to apply on our website: www.faitelreland.ie/festivalsandevents

Fáilte Ireland Support for NATIONAL SCHEMES

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Fund 2018

Fáilte Ireland has partnered with the Department of Rural and Community Development to provide funding of almost €11 million for 78 projects across 24 counties – including Longford – under Measure 2 of the 2018 Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme.

The scheme is part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and provides funding for new outdoor recreational infrastructure and ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are spread regionally across the country. It also supports the maintenance, enhancement and promotion of existing outdoor recreational infrastructure

Upcoming Fáilte Ireland Initiatives for LONGFORD

SHANNON MASTERPLAN

The River Shannon, its bays and inland waterways are an integral part of the tourism offering in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Fáilte Ireland has provided funding to Waterways Ireland to lead on the preparation of a Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon River, including the Shannon-Erne Waterway. The Tourism Masterplan will assess the strengths and weaknesses of this key tourism asset in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, and will bring forward proposals on how to grow a sustainable international tourism destination in the Shannon Corridor which respects the nature and diversity of the environment and its people. Longford County Council is part of the steering group to help guide the process. This Tourism Masterplan is expected to be completed by the end of June 2019 and will include product development and investment recommendations.

WEB IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Fáilte Ireland is launching a pilot Web Improvement Programme this summer for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. This new programme will help successful applicants improve the quality of their website, the user experience and drive additional traffic to their website with the objective of increasing visitor numbers from domestic and overseas markets. Funding will be available to successful applicants to implement the required improvements to their websites. Further information will be available on www.faitelreland.ie

DESTINATION TOWNS – OPEN FOR APPLICATIONS

Through Fáilte Ireland's Destination Towns initiative, every Local Authority in the country – including Longford County Council – will be able to bid for funding of between €250,000 and €500,000 to develop up to two towns in their area that have the potential to become a tourism hub.

The new scheme, which is now open for applications, will provide funding for the Local Authority to enhance public spaces and attract more overseas visitors. The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands team is working closely with the council on its funding submission. The closing date for applications is 5 September 2019.

PLATFORMS FOR GROWTH INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

Platforms for Growth is Fáilte Ireland's new four-year capital investment programme worth €350 million. The programme specifically targets product themes and types known as 'platforms', which have the greatest potential to grow tourism in Ireland. The list of the platforms to be launched is Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attractions, which will focus on developing world-class attractions that appeal to overseas visitors who are looking for hands-on experiences.

The programme will fund projects of scale (greater than €2.5 million) and falls under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy, which supports sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector to drive higher revenue and job creation across Ireland. Platforms for Growth is now open for applications until 17th July 2019 and a series of workshops will be held around the country. Find out more: www.faitelreland.ie/platformsforgrowth



National Tourism Development Authority

Your local Fáilte Ireland representative in Longford is Sarah McCarthy: sarah.mccarthy@faitelreland.ie

Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority's Irish Tourist Development Board, funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Developing Tourism in LONGFORD



National Tourism Development Authority



Tourism JOBS & REVENUE

Every
€1 million
of tourist expenditure
helps to support
27 tourism jobs

Tourism
generates
€1.8bn
in exchequer revenue –
the equivalent of
€1,000
per household

Tourism
supports
260,000
jobs
nationally

Regions Visited By KEY OVERSEAS MARKETS



*Holidays are more than one region, therefore the sum of regions adds up to more than 100%
Countries which make up regions: DUBLIN – MIDLANDS Longford, Westmeath, Galway, Leitrim,
Midland West, Wick, Sligo, Roscommon, Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan,
MIDLANDS EAST Westmeath, Wick, Sligo, Roscommon, Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan,
MID-WEST Clare, Tipperary, Limerick, WEST Galway, Mayo, Roscommon,
BORDER Carlow, Wick, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan.

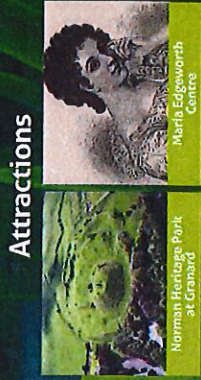
2018 Accommodation Supply in Longford

- 1 Hotels with 155 beds
- 2 Self-Catering units with 12 beds
- 2 Guesthouses with 39 beds
- 1 Irish Welcome Staybed with 16 beds
- 2 Bed & Breakfasts with 22 beds

UK licensed registered approved accommodations: Saine Crupa

In general, holidaymakers spend the largest portion of holiday nights staying in hotels (58%). Guesthouses/B&Bs are most popular for overnight stays (21%). American and British holidaymakers favour hotels, while the French and Germans prefer Guesthouse and B&Bs.

Projects funded through Fáilte Ireland CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN LONGFORD (2015-2019)**



Fáilte Ireland funding to date

€10,500

€67,035

Total project amount

Stage 1
Development
Grant – project
in development
phase

€117,756

**Total project cost may vary.
*Funded by Fáilte Ireland in partnership with the Local Enterprise Office, the Office of Public Works, Culture and the National Endowment for the Arts.