

## **Minutes of the Tourism Strategic Policy Committee held on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2017, in the Walter Raleigh Hotel, Youghal**

### **In Attendance:**

Cllr Alan Coleman, Chairman of SPC

Cllrs: Canty, Carroll, Conway, Hayes, Hegarty, Hurley, S. McCarthy, O'Brien, A. O'Sullivan, C. O'Sullivan and Sheppard.

### **External Sectoral Representatives:**

Anne Finch, Public Participation Network

Vanessa Kiely O'Connor, Agricultural Sector

Clayton Love, Royal Cork Yacht Club

Valerie Murphy, Avondhu Blackwater Partnership

### **Cork County Council Staff:**

Sharon Corcoran, Director, Economic Development, Enterprise & Tourism

Rose Carroll, A/Senior Executive Officer, Tourism

Ailish Lee, LGMA Graduate, Tourism

### **Presentations given by the following:**

Mary Houlihan, Fáilte Ireland

Ursula Morrish, Visit Cork

### **Apologies:**

Cllr K. McCarthy, Aaron Mansworth, Derry Cronin, Ian Dempsey & Fiona Buckley

At the outset of the meeting the Chairman wished to extend his sincere sympathy on behalf of the Committee to the family of Cllr. Claire Cullinane on her recent passing. Cllr. Coleman as chairman of the SPC acknowledged Councillor Cullinane's significant contribution to the Tourism SPC, to the further development of Tourism in East Cork and the wider Cork area. He also added that her legacy would be her continued enthusiasm and positivity.

### **Item 1 – Confirmation of Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

The minutes of the meeting, having been circulated with the agenda, were approved and taken as read.

### **Item 2 – Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Matter arising from the minutes will be dealt with under other items on the agenda.

### **Item 3 – Update on Growing Tourism in Cork – A Collective Strategy**

Ursula Morrish, Destination Manager for Visit Cork, provided an update on the Tourism Strategy for Cork. The strategy will be implemented through Visit Cork which operates under Promoting Cork; a new entity established to oversee the actions contained in the Tourism Strategy. Promoting Cork has 15 board members; 9 members from the private sector, 4 members from the public sector and 2 councillors. Visit Cork is the marketing agency for Cork with the vision of making Cork a compelling destination in both leisure and business tourism through a cohesive and unifying strategy for Cork. The goal of Visit Cork is to implement the actions contained in the Tourism Strategy, increase the length of stay of visitors to Cork and enhance the local economy as a result.

Visit Cork will be launching an Ambassador Training Programme which will offer training to front line staff in tourism industries on local attractions.

Members welcomed the recent improvements in tourism figures and the cohesive approach to marketing and promoting Cork as a tourism destination. The need to recognise the work of volunteers in local tourist offices was noted. There was a call for improved tourism signs directing visitors to towns in Cork County. A discussion took place on the benefits of telling agricultural stories/rural stories to visitors as they pass through Cork, an initiative which could be applied to all areas of Cork County.

#### **Item 4 – Update on Ireland Ancient East & Plans for 2017**

Mary Houlihan, Ireland Ancient East Programme Manager provided members with an update on the initiative and plans for 2017. Cork County falls between two Fáilte Ireland brands: Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way.

#### **Visitor Experience**

Stories are at the heart of the Ireland's Ancient East experience. Fáilte Ireland has created a Story Tree with nine different Story Themes. These are:

- Ancient Ireland
- Big Houses & Hard Times
- Castles & Conquests
- Maritime Gateway
- High Kings & Heroes
- Sacred Ireland
- Vikings
- The Sport of Kings
- Ireland's Mystical Waterway

Fáilte Ireland has identified four themes which are most suited to Cork County: Maritime Gateway, The Sport of Kings, Big Houses & Hard Times and Castles & Conquests. It is intended that the Big Houses & Hard Times and Castles & Conquests themes will be fully developed in 2017.

Local tourism industries are vital to creating a 'Visitor Experience' once overseas visitors arrive in Cork. Fáilte Ireland will be working to build a Tourism Cluster including working with Cork County Council, relevant tourism trade industries and Leader groups. The Tourism Cluster will be responsible for developing the Visitor Experiences around the identified Ireland's Ancient East themes in Cork.

#### **Ireland's Ancient East Targets:**

- By 2020: Increase of 21% in Overseas Visitors; Increase of 28% in Revenue
- In 2017: Increase of 6-7% in Overseas Visitors; Increase 6-9% in Revenue

#### **Fáilte Ireland Investment**

€18 million was invested in Ireland's Ancient East in 2016. This included the erection of County Boundary Signs and Orientation Signs. Phase One signage is complete with four Orientation Signs erected in Cork County at Youghal, The Jameson Distillery, Fota House and Camden Fort Meagher. Cobh and Blarney have been identified as locations for Orientation Signs for Phase Two.

The New Ideas in Ancient Spaces Capital Grants Scheme for Small Projects was also launched in 2016. €2.3 million was allocated to 25 projects that were approved funding under the scheme. Five of these projects are in Cork. These are:

- Titanic Connections, Cobh
- Cobh Heritage Centre
- The Clockgate Tower, Youghal
- Journeys of Exploration at Blackrock Castle, Cork City
- Lifetime Lab, Cork City

**Marketing & Brand Development**

- A new Ireland's Ancient East website was developed and launched in 2016. This is the first tourism website to use digital storytelling.
- Stakeholder briefings took place throughout the Ireland Ancient East locations to build and develop the brand capacity.
- Tourism Ireland is promoting the brand internationally to Ireland's four main tourist markets: Britain, France, Germany and North America. The response to this campaign has been very positive.
- A domestic marketing campaign was launched in 2016 which included T.V. and print advertisements to raise awareness of the brand locally.
- Branding signs were erected in Cork Airport to let Overseas Visitors know they are arriving in a Destination worth exploring.

**Large Capital Grants Scheme Update**

Fáilte Ireland received 116 applications. Final evaluations of applications are currently taking place. Papers are being prepared for approval at the Authority Meeting taking place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2017. Letters of Offer and Refusal will be sent following the meeting.

In the second quarter of 2017, a second Small Scale Capital Grants Scheme for projects up to €199,000 will be launched.

**Item 5 – Update on Trails for Tourism – A policy to maximise the economic benefit to the County**

R Carroll provided an update on the Trails for Tourism Policy. The Sheep's Head community has prepared a comprehensive report based on the assessment criteria developed by the Tourism Section. Avondhu Blackwater Partnership are currently finalising a report on the entirety of the Blackwater Way, which is expected to be finished in the coming weeks. The report will be similar to the process piloted by the Sheep's Head Co-operative and will also make recommendations on areas for improvement. The Tourism Section will commence discussions with the five remaining pilot trails on future potential audits of the trails.

**Item 6 – Update on the Draft Motorhome Policy & Next Steps**

R Carroll advised that due to concerns raised by the Irish Caravan and Camping Council (ICC) with regard to draft overnight parking bye laws for the Five Foot Way car park in Cobh, legal advice was sought by the Cobh Municipal District from the County Solicitor's Department and external barristers. The external barrister advised that the issues raised by the ICC were unfounded based on the current legislation. As the draft Cobh bye laws with minor amendments made to them are now again going through the public consultation process, it was decided by members of the SPC to await the outcome of the public consultation period and to discuss the Draft Policy again at the April SPC Meeting.

A meeting was also recently held with Fáilte Ireland regarding the Draft Policy, they have suggested some minor amendments to reflect changes in the national context surrounding motor home based tourism. It is expected that the final version of the draft policy will be brought to the SPC in April.

**Item 7 – Update on the Draft Licensing of Street Furniture Policy & Next Steps**

R. Carroll advised that both internal and external legal advice was sought on the issue of licensing fees for tables, chairs and street advertising structures outside business owner's premises.

Local Authorities can impose fees for street furniture licences under Section 254 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and the Planning & Development Regulations Act 2001. Under this Act there is an extensive schedule of fees for street furniture which is set at national level.

According to legal clarifications, local authorities are tied to the fees set at national level. However, business owners can apply for street furniture licences for set portions of a year and therefore only pay a portion of the set fee.

Other local authorities charge an administration fee of €100 per application in addition to the set rate for the space. The content of the draft policy is recommending that an administration fee in addition to a set rate for the use of the space will not be applied.

R. Carroll outlined the content of the draft policy following which it was agreed by members to forward the draft policy for further consideration to the Municipal Districts through the office of Mary Ryan, Director of Services.

Whilst members of the SPC expressed reservations about the licencing regime and fee associated with street furniture, all members agreed that a uniform approach across all eight Municipal Districts was necessary to ensure a fair and transparent licencing process throughout the county.

#### **Item 7 – Any Other Business**

There were no further items raised under this heading.

***This concluded the business of the meeting.***