



## **SUPPORTING FESTIVALS AND CULTURAL EVENTS TO ENHANCE THE TOURISM PRODUCT**



**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority



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# Foreword

This festivals & cultural events strategy document is intended to explain Fáilte Ireland's role, in its support of events during 2007 and beyond.

During the five year period 2002 – 2006, Fáilte Ireland has supported over 400 individual festivals, through investment of in excess of sixteen million euros. This investment has largely been application driven and responsive to requests for funding.

While continued support for the sector is necessary in order to sustain an attractive cultural offering for the tourist, it is now clear that a more strategic approach to Fáilte Ireland's investment is essential.

This review of the current Initiative and outlook to a future phase of investment in the festivals and cultural events sector is timely given the recommendations outlined in the recent report of the Cultural Tourism Task Force, Chaired by Lochlainn Quinn and the Strategy Development for Cultural Tourism carried out by strategic management consultants Genesis.<sup>1</sup> The key findings and recommendations from these two reports have been incorporated into this document.

## **1. Executive Summary & Recommendations**

- 1.1 Culture is a central ingredient in that which sets Ireland apart from competing destinations. As an important cultural tourism offering, festivals & cultural events play a key role in marketing Ireland, as a popular Destination for tourists. Fáilte Ireland therefore recognises the importance of investment in this vibrant and creative sector beyond 2006.
- 1.2 The need for sustainable and regionally balanced growth is a key challenge facing Irish Tourism. Hence, an important goal in the support of attractive and sustainable events is to encourage the spatial spread of visitors throughout the country. The Festivals & Cultural Events Initiative is one of the measures that Fáilte Ireland has committed to, which would both support regional enterprises and encourage the regional spread of tourism.

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<sup>1</sup> A key recommendation of this report was that the objectives and funding criteria associated with the Festivals & Cultural Events Initiative be reviewed and changed in line with the new Cultural Tourism Strategy.

- 1.3 The establishment of Fáilte Ireland, under the National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003, brought together a range of functions associated with the development of tourism. These functions include, research and enterprise development, tourism education and training, regional and product development. In addition to offering funding, Fáilte Ireland will continue to support festivals and cultural event enterprises throughout the country through some of the services it offers such as training, marketing and business support.
- 1.4 In light of recent consumer trends towards shorter stays and with urban destinations becoming more popular than rural locations it is more important than ever to invest in this growing cultural sector. Additionally, evidence would show that the cultural tourist has a higher level of education and spends more per day than most other types of holidaymakers.
- 1.5 Fáilte Ireland has a very clear remit in its development of tourism following on from the publication by the Tourism Policy Review Group of New Horizons for Irish Tourism 2003 – 2012. The New Horizons Strategy identified very clear drivers for success and it is thought that festivals and cultural events offer particular advantages under the 'product' and 'marketing' headings in terms of enabling the achievement of this success.
- 1.6 It is now the responsibility of Fáilte Ireland, to identify the changes needed by the sector, in order for it to supply a serious tourism product and to champion these changes through its own work and through the relevant representative channels and other interested partners and funders. As such a clearly defined and changed strategy will be implemented in its treatment of the sector under a new phase of investment.
- 1.7 Fáilte Ireland aims to deliver the next phase of the Festivals & Cultural Events Initiative in a way that underpins the development of the sector into the future. We look forward to continuing to support this developing sector as it meets and overcomes its own challenges and those facing regional tourism.

# Our Role



## The Role of Festivals & Cultural Events in Destination Marketing

Festivals and cultural events are an important element in the marketing of cultural tourism. They offer the tourist additional reasons to visit a place over and above the regular cultural product offered. Often because events are one-off and take place in a limited timeframe and because festivals offer a concentrated and often unique experience, they provide an additional reason for cultural tourists to visit a particular location. They can also be the key factor in the tourist's decision to choose one destination over another. As a result of the differential advantage they can offer, festivals and cultural events are effective instruments in attracting first time as well as repeat visitors. They provide enjoyable 'things to do' for visitors, allow informal and rewarding contact with the local population and allow tourists to discover new cultural experiences.

Many of the festivals and cultural events that received funding during 2002 -2006 through the Festivals & Cultural Events Initiative have become quite successful at destination marketing through this support. Examples include the Galway Arts Festival which attracts over 125,000 festival goers, 40,000 of whom are visitors to Galway. Similarly the Kilkenny Arts Festival attracts up to 100,000 festival participants and generates more than 30,000 bednights for the locality. Spraoi -Street Theatre Festival in Waterford follows suit and attracts approximately 80,000 participants while generating 25,000 staying visitors in the area who fill the local accommodation bank. It is thought that the combined economic benefit of festivals and cultural events such as these is worth almost €200m to the Irish economy through both festival expenditure and visitor spend.

Apart from events taking place in cities and towns which might already attract cultural tourists (Galway or Kilkenny Arts Festivals, for example) many festivals and cultural events take place in both large towns and small villages which might not of themselves feature as cultural tourism destinations for many visitors. Examples are West Cork Chamber Music Festival which takes place each June-July in Bantry, Co Cork, the Listowel Writer's Week Festival taking place each June in Co Kerry or the Johnny Keenan Banjo Festival which will happen for the 5<sup>th</sup> year this September in Co Longford.

Other cities have experienced the benefits of attracting one-off events such as Cork which was designated European Capital City of Culture during 2005. The attraction for many cities of the designation as Cultural Capital of Europe lies in the publicity and profile that comes with the title, as well as the opportunity to upgrade and develop the cultural life and infrastructure of the chosen cities. Many festivals & cultural events taking place during 2005 in Cork benefited considerably from the profile and additional visitor numbers it received during its year as Cultural Capital. One such event was Cork Midsummer Festival which increased its box office turnover by 87%, sponsorship by 78% and turnover by 100%.

## Our remit from Government – New Horizons for Irish Tourism

The Irish tourism industry experienced a rapid growth in the 1990s and although this growth is continuing it is now happening at a slower pace. Most of the product is now at a mature stage of its life cycle and it is now generally agreed that Ireland as a destination is in need of rejuvenation.<sup>2</sup>

New Horizons 2003-2012 set out a strategy for Irish Tourism in which the following future drivers of success were identified:

- Competitiveness and Value for Money
- Product
- People
- Marketing
- Technology
- Access, Transport & Business Environment

Festivals and Cultural Events offer particular advantages under the 'product' and 'marketing' headings. The changing profile of visitors to Ireland indicates that an increasing number are better educated and more mature, have more leisure time and have a growing interest in cultural experiences. International research conducted by ATLAS<sup>3</sup> has shown that cultural tourists have higher incomes and spend more than most other tourists. This has a particular relevance for Ireland at the moment, as the industry endeavours to maximise the yield per visitor.

Ireland's cultural offering is increasingly important, therefore, with festivals and cultural events playing a significant part in the cultural experience available to these visitors. As a marketing tool, events can act as a motivator or a hook to attract target audiences on a year round basis and to areas that would otherwise not have an attractive tourism product offering. Additionally, innovative events can raise the profile of a destination through the media and audience attention they can attract.

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<sup>2</sup> Securing the Potential of Cultural Tourism, Cultural Tourism Task Force, April 2006.

<sup>3</sup> The Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) in Barcelona developed its Cultural Tourism Research Programme in 1991. Since then, the programme has undertaken more than 30,000 interviews with visitors to cultural attractions, with the express aim of understanding more about the motivations, profile, behaviour and attitudes of cultural tourists.

## Perspectives on our Role

Our experience of five years of the Festivals & Cultural Events Initiative 2002-2006 points to the need for a more strategic approach to Fáilte Ireland's support of festivals and cultural events. Our investment so far has in the main been in response to requests for funds. While these have been carefully assessed and every attempt made to support festivals and cultural events with the potential to succeed, it is now clear that certain kinds of events have a better capacity to grow to a level where they can attract overseas tourists as well as national audiences, while others would be best advised to concentrate on meeting the needs of their own immediate communities. This latter group has an important role to play in attracting tourists as well, since a community that can support a vibrant local festival is likely to be a place where tourism will grow.

### **Investment**

The €16m+ in funding that has been provided to approximately 400 individual festivals and cultural events during the past five years has been warmly welcomed. It has enabled the sector to market itself better to visitors and it has helped them to fulfil their aspiration of interacting with tangible Irish cultural activity. However, it has been difficult to quantify the value of this investment due to the absence of any significant data with which to measure its impact and the apparent lack of cohesion between the tourism industry and festivals and cultural events.

### **Support**

The festivals and events supported by the scheme expect Fáilte Ireland to understand their organisations and to provide expertise, advice and guidance based on its understanding of the context in which they work. After 5 years, the Festival & Cultural Events Initiative staff has built up a considerable level of expertise in this area. The use on an occasional basis of the skills of an external expert advisor with considerable experience of the sector has added value to the service offered. Additionally, the service of an independent auditor who has advised on best financial practice has been of much benefit to the Initiative.

### **Advocacy**

Fáilte Ireland's Festivals & Cultural Events Initiative has a responsibility to take an overview of the needs of the sector, to identify the changes needed in order for it to supply a serious tourism product and to champion these changes through its own work and through the relevant representative channels such as AOIFE and Theatre Forum Ireland and other interested partners and funders such as the Arts Council and local authorities.

### **Communication**

A considerable amount of staff time is spent in communication with applicant festivals explaining procedure and requesting information and documentation which has not been included with applications already submitted. Indeed the voluntary structures of many of the organisations applying means that administrative processes within festivals often move slowly. While understandable, given the limited time and resources available to voluntary festival organisers, it can be frustrating for the executive staff. In the next phase of the Festivals & Cultural Events initiative, Fáilte Ireland needs to further explain its decision-making processes and to state clearly what will and will not be eligible for support, as well as explaining the rationale for that support.

## Our Strategy

In this next phase of the Festivals and Cultural Events Initiative, it is our intention to create a paradigm shift from dispensing a reactive grants programme to implementing a clearly expressed strategy which meets the needs of tourism growth. The table below illustrates our intentions in this regard

**Table 1**

<b>From:</b>		<b>To:</b>
1. Current grants scheme	➔	<b>Strategic investment</b>
2. Annual perspective	➔	<b>Multi-annual support</b>
3. Equal attention to all festivals	➔	<b>Identifying and supporting festivals and cultural events which can best assist in achieving Fáilte Ireland's objectives <sup>4</sup></b>
4. Community events	➔	<b>Events capable of attracting wider audiences <sup>5</sup></b>
5. Well-established, mature festivals and cultural events	➔	<b>Major International Attractions</b>
6. Voluntary, untrained staff	➔	<b>Public Private Partnership Initiatives &amp; Skilled Legacy Volunteer Networks</b>
7. Ad hoc audience research initiated by individual events	➔	<b>Agreed research templates to allow for benchmarking and pooling of information <sup>6</sup></b>

<sup>4</sup> Fáilte Ireland Statement of Strategy 2005 - 2007

<sup>5</sup> 'Cultural' offerings, designed solely with visitors in mind are likely to lack integrity and authenticity, and ultimately, therefore, are not likely to be sustainable. It is important that Festivals & Cultural Events are also enjoyed by residents from within their local market. (Securing the potential of Cultural Tourism, April 2006)

<sup>6</sup> Effective market information and research is essential to ensure the appropriate strategies are implemented and to ensure that investment in marketing provides an economic return (Task Force, 2006)

# Our Goals

## Our Goals

### **To link the future Festival & Cultural Events Initiative to the new Cultural Tourism Strategy.**

*To achieve this goal we will:*

- Lead the development and promotion of cultural festivals & event offerings that deliver Tourism Brand Ireland's promise that
  - The core brand values used to communicate the Ireland promise are centred on authenticity, real interaction, a living culture and a relaxed pace of life.<sup>7</sup>
- Equip Festivals and Cultural Events to respond to and utilise new marketing opportunities as they arise.
- Support an environment for the development of festivals & cultural events through forums/networks and appropriate training supports.
- Encourage the creation of a 'desired portfolio' – bundling festivals with other active/passive experience-based products while exploring options for building upon shared themes and concepts.

Support audience development and customer care initiatives through;

- Assistance towards the provision of enhanced ticketing services
- Events information provision (Calendar of Events, [www.ireland.ie](http://www.ireland.ie) etc)
- Provision of market intelligence for promoters (Supply/Demand –relevant product & consumer statistics)
- Support for customised training for promoters (e.g. Druidstone Arts Marketing programme, AOIFE & Fáilte Ireland and other training opportunities)

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<sup>7</sup> Fáilte Ireland's Development Strategy for Cultural Tourism, Genesis, May 2006

### **To adopt a tiered approach to future investment in festivals & cultural events in order to establish more clearly the tourism value of the events and to better cater for their varying needs**

*To achieve this goal we will:*

**Tier 1** will identify and support a number of professionally run festivals and cultural events that are already attracting domestic audiences and that have the capacity to attract international audiences in a meaningful way. Provide three-year funding commitments to marketing and certain programme development activities in exchange for a commitment to co-operate actively with the relevant Fáilte Ireland tourism promotion initiatives. Provide heavyweight support both financially and in terms of applying Fáilte Ireland personnel to support the development effort. Retain a certain portion of funding for new opportunities that arise during the year. Festivals and events should be invited to apply for consideration at this level by demonstrating their capacity and willingness to promote themselves as tourism products <sup>8</sup>.

**Tier 2** will support a number of professionally run festivals and cultural events with the potential to develop to the level of Tier 1 festivals, again with a three year commitment to marketing and certain programme development. Agreed targets must be set and if these have not been achieved over a three year period, the funding commitment will be reviewed. Festivals and events which have not been able to deliver the agreed targets and are unlikely to do so may then join those in Tier 3.

**Tier 3** will offer a lower level of support on an annual basis to community-based events which enhance the local tourism offer. Some of these may be professionally run but the majority will have a strong voluntary involvement.

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<sup>8</sup> This does not imply that they should be designed specifically for a tourist market, but that what they offer is attractive and accessible to tourists, as well as to a local audience.

**To establish separate funding for Ireland’s National Festival, the Dublin St Patrick’s Festival.**

*To achieve this goal we will:*

Although this is a national rather than a regional event, it is currently funded from the Festival & Cultural Events initiative. This means that a disproportionate percentage of the funds designed to drive regional development is being allocated to a national event. St Patrick’s Festival is Ireland’s biggest festival and has the highest international profile and impact.<sup>9</sup>

The festival is a reflection of a new and confident Ireland and has boosted the image of Ireland abroad as a colourful, friendly and culturally vibrant country.

The economic impact study carried out by Fáilte Ireland during the 2005 festival showed that the event is worth a total of €58.3m to the economy, €37m from domestic participants and €21.3m from overseas participants.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The press service, Google Zeitgeist, reported St. Patrick’s Day as the biggest gainer in web-based searches worldwide during the week ending 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006. (Securing the Potential of Cultural Tourism, April 2006)

<sup>10</sup> St. Patrick’s Festival Research, Fáilte Ireland, March 2005

**Ensure enhancement of the tourism product in addition to long term results for the sector through the Initiative going forward.**

*To achieve this goal we will:*

- Adhere to Fáilte Ireland's organisational Strategy Statement 2005-2007
- Put into operation the relevant recommendations from Fáilte Ireland's Cultural Tourism Strategy
- Publish detailed guidelines which clearly outline eligibility & non-eligibility to investment applicants.
- Strengthen our relationship with the festival & cultural events sector.
- Measure the tourism value of investment client applicants through an agreed research template so as to allow for benchmarking.



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