



Fáilte Ireland

National Tourism Development Authority

Fin Barre A rural city A distinctive architecture Cultural patronage Cork Harbour A distinctive architecture -
Medieval City Trade - lifeblood of the city An Córcach Mór A city that speaks through its buildings
A European city with a cosmopolitan disposition The Great Marsh Strategic position
Local food movement Gael & Gall Embraced by the hills The river valley between two continents
Quakers & Huguenots Scale of the city contained by the landscape Verdant, fertile hinterland Tivoli & Montenotte Press gangs
The slaughterhouses and offal **RIVER CITY** The River - a rich seam of connection Great islands Trade links - Europe and beyond Sails and steeples
hills, fleeting views - a puzzling topography of curves, Limestone flagstones Oldest sailing club in the world - 300 yrs old in 2020
River channels became the streets a storied river A distinctive topography Deep water The city steps up
Cork walks on water 21 bridges A tradition Safe harbour **CORK CHARACTER** (the hills) Sailing for pleasure ... sport sailing
Monks, Vikings Port of Cork river of learning The British Military Transport - sail, steam, rail and steps down Exporting Butter & Beef Smugglers
& Normans Institutes of education Links with Europe The forts Haulbowline The provisioning port Emigrant trade thought Deep Harbour
A reputation for research UCC, CIT, Maritime College Coppingers Merchants, shopkeepers, Colonial power Cobh Commissioners -
- Tyndall, ERI, IMERC 1499 - rebel Cork A rich language Goulds soldiers, sailors, boat builders **Diaspora Innovation** Port of Cork
Contemporary Festivals Distinctive voices - the Cork accent Collaborative research and application
architecture Cork Caucus Humour **Maritime quarter of Europe** Technology of defence Harbour as outdoor laboratory
- Berlin/France Working artists and artists Wit Military and Naval Architecture Cutting edge
Growing collectives Collaborative useful knowledge Defending the Harbour thinking and Harnessing
a green Redefining the city port ... against the tide Military Landscape the ocean's wealth
economy Culture The People's Republic Spike and segregation the planet,
International colonising The continuum of dialogue Emigration & Exile Edgelands Independent self-reliance
disposition unlikely spaces - Douglas, MacCurtain, MacSwiney, Lynch and transportation Murphy's Stout Boat building
- global and told in the same breath **IMAGINED** Artists, musicians & performers Growing a green economy
Culinary innovation **IN CORK** Collaborative storytellers Hacketts Industrial port - from sails to steam
Vibrant street culture Harnessing the ocean's wealth Thinkers, writers, poets Lyonses Beamishes Boat building Ford Boxes, resourceful reuse
Woollen, cotton, linen production - sailcloth Renewable ocean energy Industry in the city - brewing, distilling **MADE IN CORK**
The marine resource - the blue revolution Independent thinking Resilient Fords, Dunlops, Sunbeam
Cultural innovation Gael & Gall **Enterprising** Growing a green economy Celebration and reflexive Independent shops
A tradition Humour A distinctive architecture... Vibrant venues river valley The continuum of dialogue Creative spaces Coppingers
of learning The butter road **Performance** Sculpture Haulbowline Literature boat builders Collaborative Colonial power
the Cork accent harbour **Art** Good food, locally produced, locally sold Craft - make it yourself Sound Art
CIT High-tech Music Pop-up Cork ... against the tide

CORK

city and harbour

AN INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK
FOR CREATING COMPELLING VISITOR EXPERIENCES
in summary

TAPPING INTO A GROWING MARKET

We believe that the destination of Cork City and Harbour is well placed to benefit from the growing interest that visitors have in the culture and heritage of places. The destination is extraordinarily diverse – a unique combination of a city both enclosed and released by its river channels, enveloped by hills, lapped by an expansive harbour, with a reach which embraces coast and countryside in equal measure.

The experience Cork offers has particular appeal to three of Ireland's key target groups - the 'culturally curious', the 'great escapers' and the 'social energisers'. The first, mostly older couples, want to truly 'do' a place, to get under its skin while appreciating the beauty and distinctiveness of the landscape. The second group favours unique cultural and energetic experiences in unspoiled, natural landscapes. The third group includes younger couples/adult groups looking for excitement, new experiences and fun, sociable holidays somewhere new and different. They like places that are 'cool' so Cork should be well placed to attract this very sociable city breaker.

While huge efforts are already underway to enhance the experience for visitors to Cork, we have some indication that international awareness of the destination is not as strong as we would like it to be. We need to address this. What is required is a clear, compelling and coordinated message about the destination that is informed and validated by the true depth of experience that Cork can provide – its substantial offer of value to visitors.

BRINGING STORIES TO LIFE

What is Cork's offer of value; what is special or different about this place; how is it best described; how is its significance revealed; how can we make the essence of the place more apparent? The framework charts a course for collectively presenting the city and harbour through the key characteristics that define and describe its unique sense and spirit of place.

With the help of many people in Cork, we captured the essence of the place, arranging its meaning into a series of anchor themes, sub themes, topics and story ideas. We explored where these stories might best be told and how they might be connected by creating interpretive journeys on foot, on wheels and on water - journeys that will bring visitors deeper into the place, discover more, stay longer and have a truly memorable time.



GUIDING EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION

Building on all the good work already underway, the framework endeavours to bring coherence and consistency to interpretive interventions throughout the city and harbour. It seeks to harness the energy of all those associated with developing, promoting and looking after the city and its harbour by aligning the collective impact of their endeavours to create a visitor experience of exceptional appeal. Guided by the emerging themes, the framework will inform the nature of the experiences that could be developed and messages conveyed that will compel visitors to come, explore and leave with a deeper appreciation of what Cork City and Harbour is all about. It is envisaged that the framework will inform and support a programme of work over the next 5 years, to include both capital and non-capital activities, all of which will be required to deliver a more coherent and compelling visitor experience.

The purpose of this Framework is to ensure that all those involved in the business of developing and promoting Cork take their bearings from the significance of this place, its people and its way of life both lived and anticipated. It draws together the many characteristics and disconnected sequences of Cork life into a coherent narrative about the place - a narrative from which we can build a proposition that will not only register with visitors but will also ring true with the people of Cork. For it is the people of Cork through which - like a prism - the story is refracted and given colour, depth, spontaneity and vibrancy.



The notion of Cork City and Harbour as a space charged with identity, structure and meaning sits at the core of the framework. The interpretive network we created orders the experience of this space by likening it to a journey – a flow of experience through time and place. Visitor movement is not always a reflection of the most direct route between places. Understanding and supporting people's natural wayfinding is more than an issue of signage. It requires a carefully considered destination wide network based on a system of progressive disclosure that is integrated, consistent and cohesive. It is only by moving through Cork City and Harbour and seeing the physical distillation of centuries of Cork life from multiple positions on land and from the water that its true significance can be appreciated. The articulation of an interpretive network in terms of gateways, interchanges, anchor points and vantage points creates new potential for the perception and navigation of the destination.

MAPPING THE INTERPRETIVE NETWORK CORK HARBOUR

Visitors enter Cork's "front door" at the *Gateway arrival points* and experience the best of Cork's offer on land and water routes. Easy and enjoyable transport *inter-changes* and clear *orientation* lead the visitor to *anchor points* where they can access the main themes and stories and continue on their journey, encountering the themes through *vantage points* around the harbour and its islands.

GATEWAYS – The key arrival points and arrival journeys; Cork Airport, Cork City approach roads and transport interchanges, Dunkettle interchange, Cobh and Ringaskiddy are the first opportunity to convey the themes. They must be inviting to the visitor and reflect the best of Cork's offer.

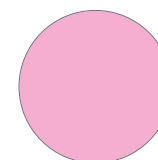
ROUTES – The routes offer a number of transport options to the visitor; cycle, walk, take public transport or travel by car. This by no means represents all possible interpretive journeys in the harbour area but focuses on the key routes that need to work for the visitor to engage with the themes.

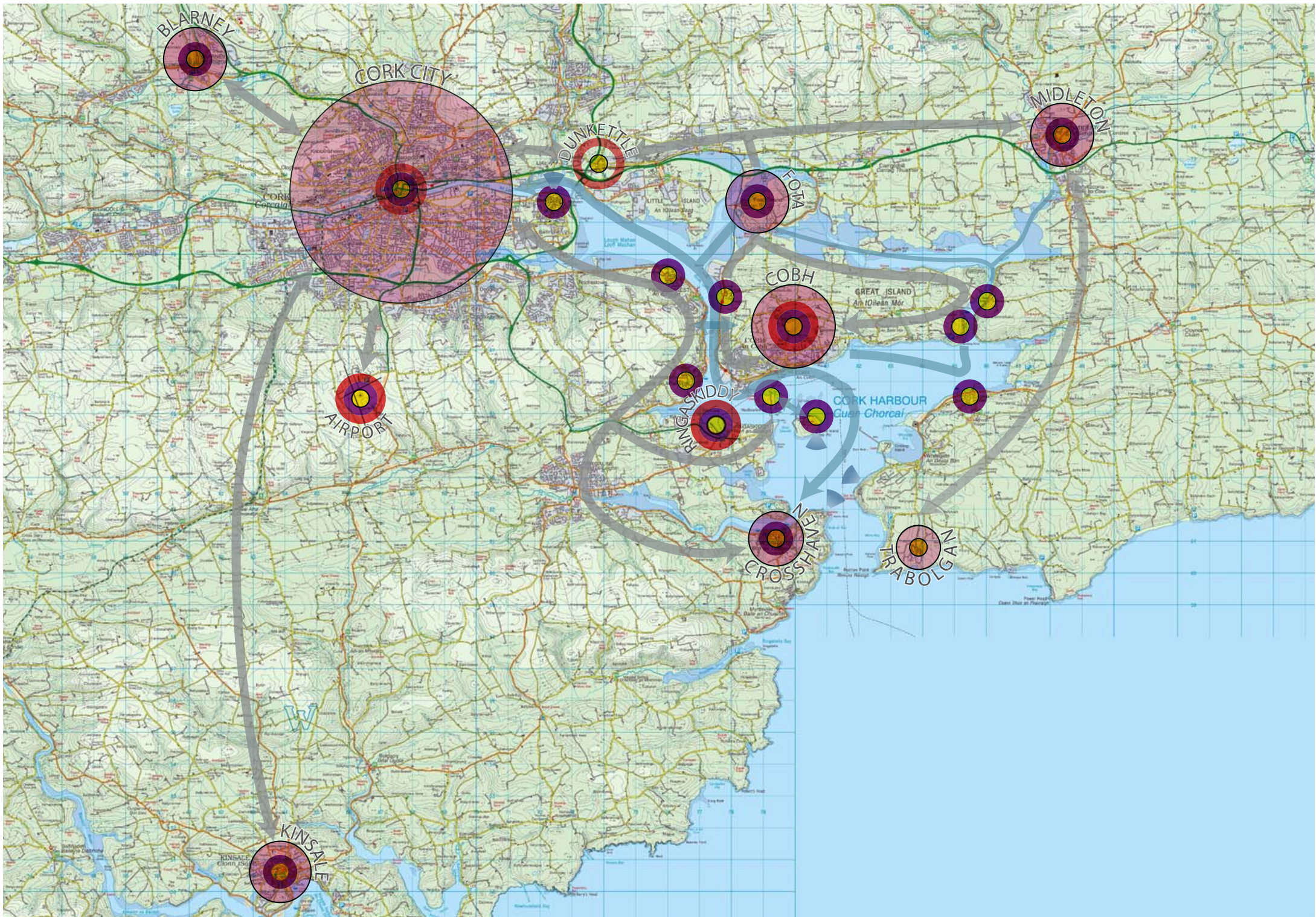
INTERCHANGE – The key interchange locations need to provide a seamless and comfortable travel experience for the visitor. Changing modes of transport should be easy; rail, bus, cycle, boat, foot, car and coach.

ORIENTATION – These are the key locations where the visitor is in most need of orientation. Orientation should, where possible, be intuitive, making full use of vantage points, key routes and landmarks.

ANCHOR POINTS – The places of central importance to the visitor. These clusters of key features and landmarks resonate with the essence of Cork City and Harbour. They are places where much of the story is told by the built environment or landscape.

VANTAGE POINTS – The key vantage points are identified but there are many more throughout the city and harbour. It is no coincidence that many of these correlate with defence structures, as the locations were selected for their strategic defensive position.





MAPPING THE INTERPRETIVE NETWORK CORK CITY

The *city island* is contained by the two river channels in this River City.

GATEWAY AND INTERCHANGE POINTS – These are the first impressions of Cork City, the train and bus stations, the landing places, the approach roads. Many are also the places where interchange happens; wheels to feet, land to water. This is the first opportunity for a place to tell its story to the visitor. What story is it telling at present and how can this be improved? The key interchanges need to provide a seamless travel experience for the visitor.

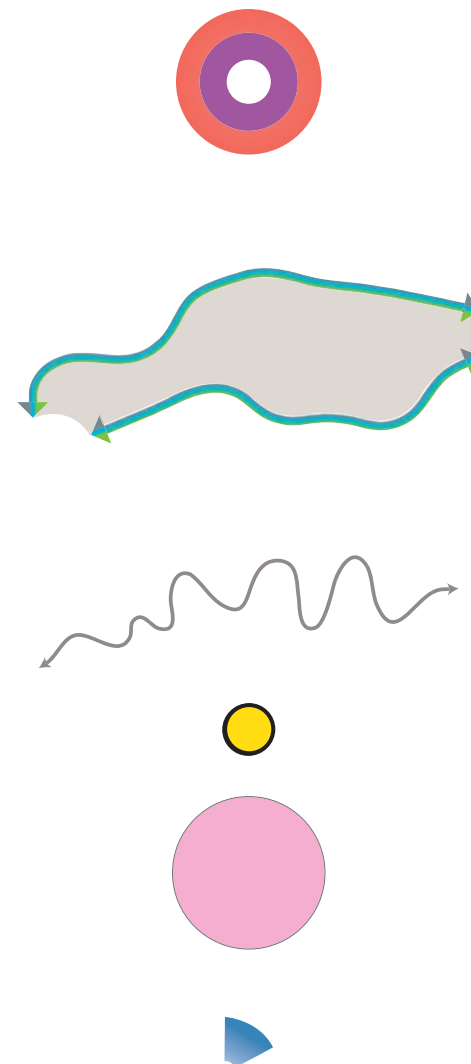
CITY ISLAND – There are several reasons for focusing on the city river corridors when thinking about visitor experience. The river channels form the city island, providing a containing function, thus allowing the visitor to wander and get “a little pleasantly lost” within the island. They also link the four main anchor points, and provide an orientation function when moving between the areas of interest to the visitor. The green, blue and grey infrastructure of the river channel corridors provide opportunities for the key themes to be conveyed through visitor journeys on land and water, and indeed on land that used to be water. The city island and river channel corridors are, in the main, walkable, but the walking experience can be made more pleasurable by removing any barriers (physical and psychological) and enrichment of the urban environment along key visitor routes.

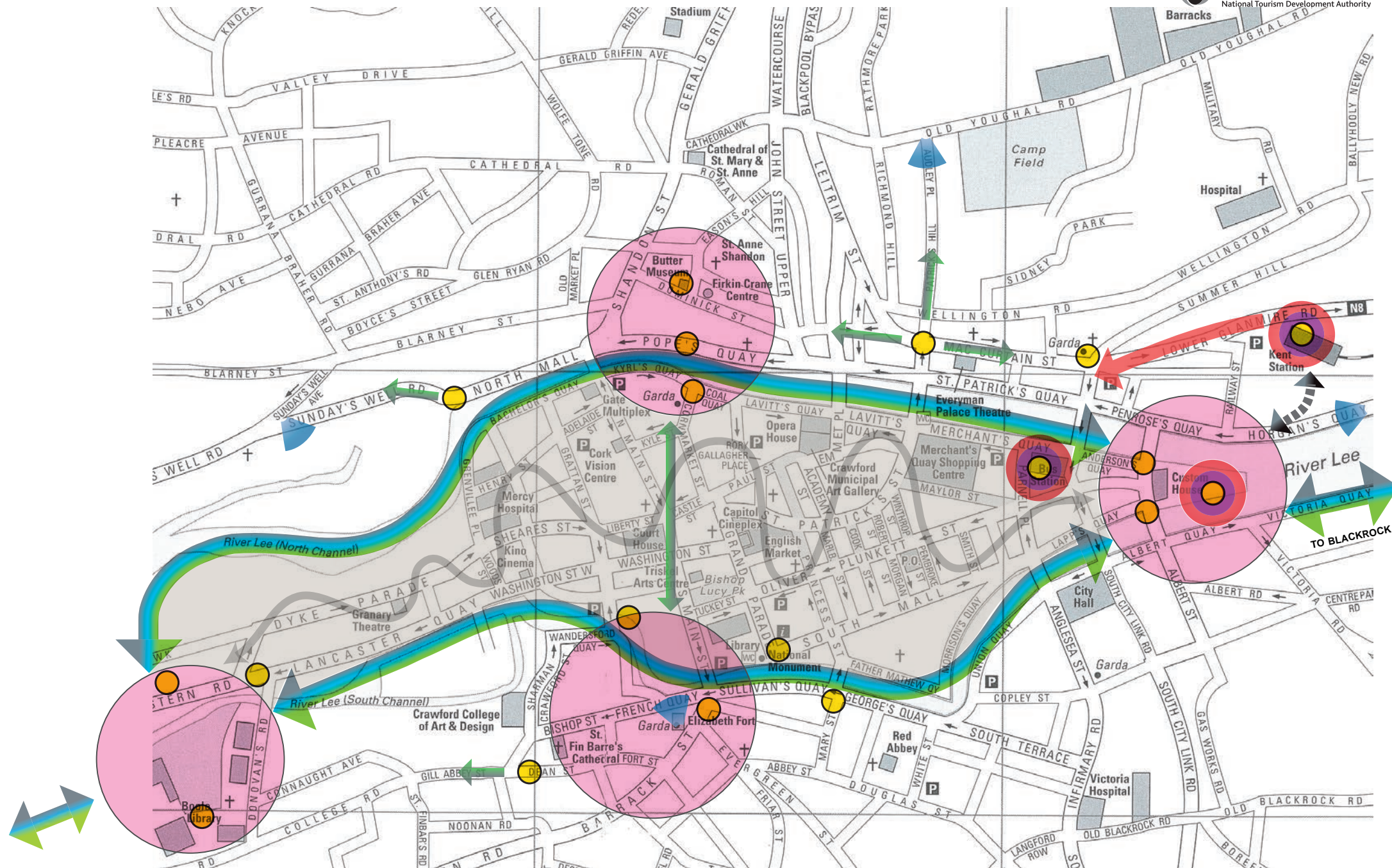
GETTING A LITTLE LOST – The island nature of the city centre makes the concept of getting a little lost an enjoyable prospect. Safely confined within the two river channels, the visitor can engage and explore the complex pattern of streets.

ORIENTATION – These form an integral part of the landscape and are located at pivot points where the visitor can make choices about their next destination. Orientation should, where possible, be intuitive, making full use of vantage points, key routes, landmarks, and cues in the design of the environment such as width of footpath and surface materials.

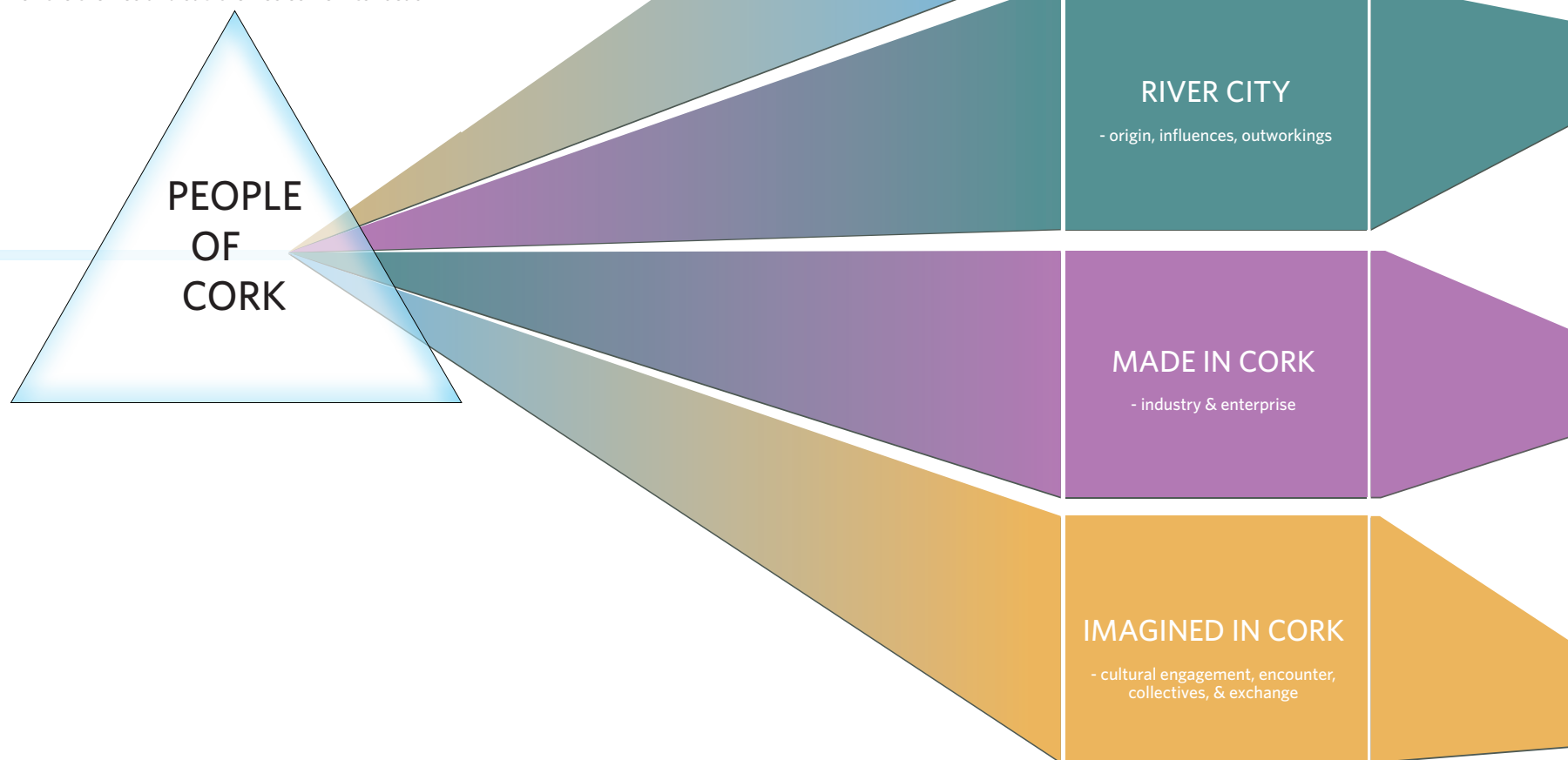
ANCHOR POINTS – These are the places of central importance to the visitor – the city landmarks and discovery points that provide the best opportunities to communicate the essence of Cork City and Harbour. These are places where much of Cork’s story is told by the built environment, view or landscape.

VANTAGE POINTS – The key vantage points are identified, but there are many more throughout the city. These are the places where the dramatic topography of the city is best revealed and where there are great opportunities for revealing the stories within the view.





The best stories always come from those who know a place well – its citizens – and it is the texture and depth that these hidden stories offer that will make Cork’s interpretation stand out. Story ideas were harvested from the many conversations had with the people of Cork during the course of our work. These conversations culminated in the Interpretive Workshop which was held on the 16th May 2013 where everyone involved was encouraged to start thinking about the nature of Cork City and Harbour and begin to identify the opportunities for enhancing the experience of the place through story telling. We distilled all the outputs into a series of anchor themes, sub themes and a range of interpretive possibilities. These have been configured so as to allow for the multi-layering of several themes in one place thereby enabling local themes to be linked to each other and to regional, national, and (where relevant) international contexts. The people of Cork, resourceful, resilient, independent and creative, are critical to the understanding, animation and communication of the essential character of Cork. They are the prism through which the themes and sub themes come into focus.



SUB THEMES

INTERPRETIVE POSSIBILITIES

- TRADE & TRANSPORT - RAIL, SAIL & STEAM
- DEFENDED LANDSCAPE - MILITARY STRONGHOLD
- LIFE PASSAGES, MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE - EMIGRATION & EXILE
- FUN ON THE WATER

- ORIGIN & INFLUENCES
- STEPPED & STEELED
- RIVER - A RICH SEAM OF CONNECTION - INTIMATE BUT COMPLEX
- GREEN PLACES & SPACES - WOODED ISLAND - VERDANT VALLEY, EDIBLE CITY

- FOOD & DRINK CULTURE - BUTTER & BEEF, BREWING & DISTILLING
- IRON & STEEL, SILVER & GLASS, WOOL & LINEN
- HIGH TECH HARBOUR - GREEN, BLUE, NEW
- THE WORLD COMES TO WORK

- CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT - FESTIVALS & EVENTS
- CULTURAL ENCOUNTER - HUBS & VENUES
- CREATIVE CAUCUS - ARTISTS, MUSICIANS, PERFORMERS
- CULTURAL EXCHANGE - RESPONSIVE, REFLEXIVE, RESILIENT

Water taxi	
City & harbour ferry stops	
Landing pontoons	
Regatta venues - sail & row	
Mapping the waterways - past & present	
Water activity exhibitions on leisure walkways	
Dive centre, kayaking school	
Boat tours of coves	
Lough Mahon - access for small boat/dinghies/windsurf/paddleboard	
Blackrock Harbour - New Dock - wakeboarding & waterskiing	
Trabolgan	
Drake's Pool, Crosshaven	
Quayside walks, places to pause, sit out	
The Glen River Park	
The Weir - wilderness in the city where the sound of water drowns out the noise	
The Marina - access for small boats	
Wooded walks	
Pocket parks, places to pause, sit down in the city	
Expand east Cork bird trail west of the harbour	
Wildlife observation areas	
St Patrick's Hill - make it part of the experience - "San Francisco Tram"	
North Main Street - the medieval city	
South Mall - tell the story of Cork's waterways through the streets & existing building fabric	
Repair & restore the historic urban streetscape, maintain the historic public realm	
Barrack Street - restore its vibrancy	
Bring the city archives to life	
Food information on the streets	
The Custom House & bonded warehouses at Port of Cork - tell the story of Cork City Harbour & the movement of people, get onto the water	
Contemporary architecture - School of Music, Glucksman Gallery, Maritime College	
Capitol Cinema, Grand Parade - food tourism hub linked to English Market	
Beamish & Crawford site - food hub	
The Buttermarket & Shandon - places to eat	
The Opera House, Everyman Palace Theatre, Triskel - cultural hubs forging partnerships between history & culture	
UCC Green Campus - open arms	
National Sculpture Factory	
Barryscourt Castle	
Belvelly Castle - gateway to Great island	
Create a 'fort complex cluster': Elizabeth Fort, Collins Barracks, Cove, Spike, Camden, Carlisle, Westmoreland, Martello Towers	
Midleton Distillery - Paddy, Powers, Redbreast	
Dismantled railway - leading right out to the mouth of the harbour	
Dockland - railway heritage	
Music trails - across the city and harbour	
Artists, writers, poets, thinkers, storytellers, performers, improve access to cultural activity / what's on	
City island	
Great island and Cobh	
Foaty island	
Haulbowline island	
Spike island	
Midleton	
Blarney	
Kinsale	
Ballymaloe	

COMPELLING JOURNEYS

Interpretive journeys, whether on foot, on wheels or on water, will bring visitors deeper into the place - both geographically and interpretively. To work for visitors, these journeys will not only need to be convenient but they will also need to be emotionally appealing. We need to have some way of establishing which interpretive interventions will truly deliver differentiated visitor experiences and exceptional visitor journeys whilst reinforcing the framework themes. To deliver great experiences, interpretive journeys should satisfy a range of criteria such as;

- being able to embrace several sites which are capable of interpreting a given anchor theme / sub theme;
- being linked to gateways;
- being emotionally compelling;
- being able to promote the desire to explore on foot, with no barriers; on wheels, with great views; on the water, with many choices; and with seamless interchanges
- having a certain level of readiness;
- having committed collaborators, willing to participate



MEMORABLE ENCOUNTERS

Locations and sites - the spaces - are important building blocks of the network of interpretive journeys across the destination. While no single location can convey the entire significance of what the destination offers, it will be important to ensure that in selecting such locations attention is paid to their capacity to;

- **Harness the community catalysts**
- **Influence the place-making agenda**
- **Stimulate creative collaborations**
- **Reward imagination**
- **Fulfill visitor needs**

WHERE TO NEXT?

BUILDING A COALITION OF SUPPORT FOR DELIVERY

The framework needs to build on achievements to date - both in terms of the policy drive and actual projects that are underway and planned, across both the public and private sector in Cork. The interpretive framework is designed to be flexible; to allow everyone with a role to play in the delivery of a visitor experience to identify the contribution they can make, the benefit they can take and their most logical entry point into the framework. One of the desired key functions of the framework is in aiding alignment of the multitude of initiatives that overlap with tourism under a unified strategic direction. Fáilte Ireland is also in the process of rolling out a new corporate strategy 2014 - 2016, wherein Experience Development will be a key pillar. Due consideration is being given to international good practice in this area and a national strategic approach to Experience Development is being devised, which can add great value to the implementation phase of this framework.

The framework must also start to deliver on the aspirations and expectations of those engaged in the process to date and, importantly, bind others into the process, notably the wider visitor economy and, of course, visitors themselves.

In addition we need to build on the links established in the course of preparation of this framework with those who possess the wherewithal to influence the appeal, connectivity, vitality and experiential possibilities of the city and harbour.

PRIORITISATION

From this point forward, decision making as to what is truly priority and identification of what is possible needs to happen in close collaboration with local partners, harnessing the collective intellect and viewpoint of the wider 'coalition of local support' referred to above.

Collaborative development of certain priority projects are already underway, notably Spike Island in the harbour and Elizabeth Fort in the city. Both of these experiences will take their interpretive lead from the theme of 'Maritime Harbour'/'Defended Landscape', deepening their experiential connections with each other and associated sites over time.

Once Cork decides what parallel development interventions it would like to see, Fáilte Ireland will endeavour to work alongside local partners in the joint prioritisation, phasing and realisation of these projects, guided by the Framework's themes and spatial recommendations. This will be achieved ideally through a highly collaborative approach similar to that referred to in the 'Steps Towards Implementation' outlined on page 12.

It is hoped that this very practical phase will begin quite quickly following publication of this framework, and indeed, the channels of communication have already been opened.

COLLABORATIVE DELIVERY

Equipping Cork to better tell its story to visitors will require the support and participation of many players. It is clear that the first step will be to put an effective and coordinated 'Delivery Mechanism' in place, engaging necessary partners from both public and private sectors on terms that will not only coincide with their particular area of expertise / responsibility, but that are also in line with their capacity - in terms of time, resource and inclination - to deliver.

The team in Fáilte Ireland look forward to working with you, our partners, to effect positive and sustainable change for the visitor economy in Cork City and Harbour.

EXAMPLES OF THE FRAMEWORK IN ACTION

The Framework seeks to integrate the meaning of Cork City & Harbour into a hierarchy of themes, sub themes and storylines. By adopting those themes, sub themes and storylines of most relevance to their area of interest, anyone involved in the business of enhancing the visitor's experience of Cork City & Harbour can develop experiences that tap into the Framework's interpretive possibilities.

As a demonstration of how the Framework can be used to join the dots of this diverse geography, and generate interpretive possibilities, we have drawn up two examples that are shown in the following pages. These are merely examples, and we encourage people to use the Framework to generate their own ideas.

"Getting under the skin of Cork's Cultural Scene" shows how the **Interpretive Network** on pg 7 and the **Interpretive Structure** of pgs 8 and 9 can inspire a "whole place" approach to thinking about visitor journey and experience. This particular example starts to generate a series of collaborative projects including, for example, interventions at transport interchange points, tips from local arts heads, attention to key elevated viewing positions, the riverside experience, celebrating architectural detail and artistic urbanism, and enjoyable links between the four key visitor anchor points in the city.

"Exploring Cork's Architecture of Defence" uses the Interpretive Network for the wider area as shown on pg 5 and demonstrates how the sum is far greater than the parts when starting to generate a visitor experience around the sub-themes of Defended Landscape/ Military Stronghold. The graphic shows the importance of the links between the various sites, physically and thematically. It also shows how the city and harbour have to be seen as intrinsically connected when telling this particular story.

STEPS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION

The visitor experience is influenced by a range of factors under the control of many agencies, businesses, institutions, groups and local people. Therefore the progression of any particular interpretive possibility is a collaborative affair. We suggest the following steps:

1. Create the **team** - a self-managing cluster of enabling strategy partners and willing players
2. Be clear about the **objectives** of the visitor experience - why, what, for whom?
3. Do the **groundwork** - proof the concept against current initiatives, plans, projects - identify the gaps and fill them
4. Define the interpretive response - **co-create** the interpretive plan - what, where, how?
5. Agree the **action plan** - who does what, when and with whom?



GETTING UNDER THE SKIN OF CORK'S CULTURAL SCENE

RIVERS EDGE/CITY STREETS ...

Interpretive Structure:

Anchor theme: River City/Imagined in Cork/Made in Cork

Sub-theme: Stepped and Steeped/Creative Caucus/Food and Drink Culture

Interpretive Possibility: Rivers edge, city streets - hack Cork

Interpretive Experience: Walk, boat, cycle and eat your way to understanding the culture of this intriguing city.



"Life is an exploration of self and surroundings"
Conal Creedon
Cork City Arts Strategy 2011-2015

EXPLORING CORK'S ARCHITECTURE OF DEFENCE

GREAT ISLANDS ...

Interpretive Structure:

Anchor theme: Maritime Harbour / River City

Sub-theme: Defended Landscape / Military Stronghold

Interpretive Possibility: Great Islands

Interpretive Experience: Exploring Cork's Architecture of Defence

