



STRATEGY STATEMENT 2008-2010



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority



FÁILTE IRELAND STRATEGY STATEMENT 2008 - 2010

"To guide and support the development of a sustainable tourism sector
as the largest indigenous component of the Irish economy"

A company which is successful tends to have a very sound business strategy underpinning its action plan. In simple terms, such a strategy will define clearly the goals and mission of a business (what it is setting out to achieve and why) and the means by which those goals will be attained (the how, where and when).

The same applies to State organisations, like Fáilte Ireland, where the 'why' is not about making profits but rather about investing limited taxpayer funding to help a sector like tourism to develop for the benefit of the country.

The purpose of this document is to outline and explain our corporate Strategy for the period 2008-2010. This Strategy builds on our solid performance as a young organisation over the period of our previous Strategy. It also takes into account recent trends and projected developments in tourism generally in a changing Ireland and in the ongoing evolution of Fáilte Ireland as the development Authority for tourism in Ireland.

Reviewing the period covered by our last Strategy Statement, it is clear that we have made considerable progress in terms of delivering to the industry. To highlight just a few areas, we have:

- Put in place a range of very successful programmes to improve the skills of those working in Irish tourism and provide training to those seeking a career in tourism
- Secured funding for a new seven-year programme of grant aid under the National Development Plan to help improve the range and quality of tourist attractions and activities
- Put in place new action plans to enhance the management and development of tourism products
- Placed a much greater focus on helping smaller tourism businesses to grow through our very successful programme of county networks
- Established a new Environment Unit and published a three-year action plan indicating how we will work harder to help protect the development of the natural and built environment
- Successfully completed new blueprints for the development of tourism within our regions
- Supported and co-ordinated the staging of large events with significant international appeal, including the Ryder Cup and the World Rally championship
- Designed and funded a new approach to sustaining growth in the very important home holiday market.

And, we've achieved all of this in a climate of substantial change within our own organisation. The process of bedding down the original merger from which Fáilte Ireland was formed is nearing completion following a long and at times fraught process of adjustment.

In parallel, the task of managing the integration of five of the former Regional Tourism Authorities within Fáilte Ireland - doubling staff numbers through an extensive regional network - and the effective reorganisation of Dublin Tourism has brought a much sharper focus to developing regional tourism and increased investment at regional level.

And underpinning all of this, we have collectively developed an organisation that is active across every county in Ireland: an achievement of which our boards and I believe the Government can be truly proud.

Yet, we cannot afford complacency in any area of our business. Irish tourism is arguably entering a much more difficult era. Internationally tourism continues to change. And Ireland itself is changing. Tourism enterprises must continue to refocus their strategies for competition in this changing world. Similarly, Fáilte Ireland as an organisation must continue to adapt and respond to these changes.

This Strategy sets out Fáilte Ireland's vision for Irish tourism and for Fáilte Ireland. It provides the basis and framework for the services that we in Fáilte Ireland will deliver over the period 2008-2010 to support the tourism sector through this next challenging phase of development.

Delivery of the strategies outlined in this document depends on the commitment of every member of staff right across Fáilte Ireland. I'd like to acknowledge all of your work, as well as the effort you have made in consistently delivering our services to industry, through the complications inherent in significant organisational change.

I look forward very much to working with you all and with all our stakeholders and clients to deliver on the challenging goals set out in this Strategy Statement and so to achieve results that will contribute to the success of the tourism sector and to Ireland's continuing economic growth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaun Quinn', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Shaun Quinn
Chief Executive





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Context

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest and most important indigenous industries in the Irish economy. The industry is a major contributor to generating foreign earnings and sustaining employment and it also plays an important role in developing rural economies and contributing to spatial balance. The benefits of tourism are felt right across the country.

1.2 TOURISM IN A CHANGING IRELAND

We live in a changing Ireland which in many ways is hardly recognisable from the Ireland of twenty years ago. For most of us, these developments have been positive. But things have changed considerably and most industries have felt the impact. We Irish now live busier lives, we have long and stressful commutes and we are surrounded by consumerism unimagined twenty years ago. Our society is more ethnically diverse and we have a workforce that increasingly reflects that ethnic and social diversity.

Tourism cannot escape the effect of these changes which carry with them both challenges and opportunities. The challenges are typical of an economy at full employment which has been enjoying economic growth for a sustained period of time. They include skills shortages in key areas, increases in utility and other costs, the costs of re-training a changing workforce, urban congestion, threats to environmental quality and - of particular significance for tourism - an increasingly "time poor" culture which can undermine the traditional values associated with the "Irish Welcome".

The changing Ireland also presents opportunities. Our infrastructure is improving all the time, the quality of our hotel stock has improved very significantly and a more affluent and discerning Irish consumer has created a demand for a much improved dining experience. Irish consumers have also taken increasing numbers of short breaks in Ireland in recent years, thus contributing to the growth of domestic tourism. While this is a welcome development for the most part, tourism enterprises must take care not to lose focus on the international marketplace.

The increased ethnic diversity of Ireland's population also presents opportunities for tourism. The new entrants to the Irish labour market join the workforce with strong incentives to succeed in Ireland, to learn new skills and to contribute to building successful Irish businesses. Like other sectors of Irish industry, tourism can benefit from such developments.

Over the next three years, Fáilte Ireland will continue to work with the industry to ensure that these challenges are addressed and that the opportunities are fully realised.

1.3 A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

From an Irish perspective, continuing the tourism growth which we have seen in previous years into the future is likely to present a very significant challenge.

Increasing competition

The environment in which tourism businesses operate continues to be turbulent and challenging. Although Europe will remain the major destination in world tourism for some time, it has been losing market share steadily in recent years, and this trend is forecast to continue until at least 2020. Over this period, the competition between mature destinations, including Ireland, is expected to remain intense, while the fastest growing destinations are expected to be in Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.

Access

Access is a critical determinant of international demand for a tourist destination and this is particularly so in the case of an island destination. Low-cost access is becoming an increasingly important factor in decision-making on holiday destinations.

Ireland's growth targets require new access capacity from all markets offering competitive services, quality and convenience. We need a balanced development of new routes from our main source markets accompanied by expanded services to all airports outside the main cities.

Ferry ports will also play an important role in spreading additional business into the regions. Investment in facilities, including terminal and visitor facilities, will be important.

Costs and competitiveness

Affordability and value for money are important considerations for visitors. Holidaymakers will not come to Ireland if they find it expensive or believe it to be poor value for money. And, in recent years, tourists have continued to report concerns at declining value for money.

At the same time, increasing costs continue to be a problem for Irish tourism enterprises while revenues, while growing nominally, are declining in real terms. As a result, industry margins remain under pressure which makes reinvestment in the industry less and less attractive.

While, in many instances, those Irish businesses targeting overseas visitors continue to offer satisfactory value for money across all sectors – accommodation and car hire, for example - it is in areas outside the direct control of the tourism industry that dissatisfaction arises, particularly in relation to “cost of living” items such as food and drink prices. As far as US visitors in particular are concerned, in the context of a greater focus on costs, currency movements will increasingly affect the number of tourists who opt to come to Ireland.

One of the key challenges facing Irish tourism enterprises is to tackle those issues arising from an increasing cost base and a related perception of deteriorating value for money.

Tourism products

Tourism enterprises, if they are to survive and grow, will need to become increasingly competitive in key areas such as cost, quality and innovation.

In the future, there are likely to be more active older travellers, seeking quality experiences and with an interest in heritage, culture and environmentally-based tourism, and a growing awareness of value for money. Tourists will be increasingly “time poor”, resulting in greater demand for short breaks in nearby destinations, and a continuing decline in the popularity of car-brought and coach tours. There will be increased demand for customised holidays, tailored to personal leisure or activity interests and city breaks will become increasingly popular.

The Irish holidaymaker

The domestic market is vital for most tourism enterprises, particularly regional enterprises, and will continue to be a key source of business. However, the predicted ‘softening’ in the economy over the short to medium term is likely to put pressure on the Irish short-break market.

There is also greater choice now for the Irish holidaymaker: low-cost access, which has benefited the Irish industry in recent years, has also opened up other markets for Irish people who traditionally might have holidayed in Ireland.

The natural environment

Emerging environmental concerns are likely to grow and to present opportunities for destinations like Ireland, provided that the industry can respond with environmentally-friendly sustainable tourism products.

Looking and booking

The growing use of the internet by people deciding where to go on holiday will continue to place increasing importance on the development of attractive, user-friendly websites. Enterprises which do not have such websites will be at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis their competitors. Moreover, we can expect that distribution channels will continue to change as new technologies emerge.

1.4 SOME FORECASTS

The World Tourism Organisation predicts that international tourist arrivals will grow by almost 6% in 2007 to over 880 million arrivals and that growth will continue into 2008 at around 5%. Based on current forecasts, 2007 is set to be the fourth year of growth above the long-term average of 4.1% with growth coming mainly from emerging destinations in Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East.

Ireland has performed well against this global background. Overseas visitor numbers are expected to reach almost 7.8 million in 2007, an increase of 5%, resulting in foreign exchange earnings of €5 billion.

International arrivals are targeted to grow by a further 5% in 2008, resulting in a revenue increase of 7.7%.

Much of the international growth has come from Mainland Europe, both the traditional tourism markets (such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Nordic countries) and the emerging markets in Eastern Europe (such as the new EU accession states, including Poland). Britain remains a critical market for Ireland.

The domestic tourism market is currently worth about €1.7 billion. Looking to the future, domestic holidays are also expected to build on a strong performance in 2007 and to achieve further growth of 4% in 2008.

1.5 POLICY CONTEXT

A number of recent Government policy documents provide the context for Fáilte Ireland's strategies over the next three years. The main documents, copies of which are available on the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and/or the Fáilte Ireland website are:

- The report of the Tourism Policy Review Group, *New Horizons for Irish Tourism*, which was published in 2003 and which set targets for visitor numbers and revenue for both 2006 and 2012. A recent review of progress since 2003 indicated that, whereas overall overseas visitor number targets were being achieved, there was a significant shortfall in overseas revenue due to changes in the visitor mix and shortening length of stay, increased comparative expensiveness vis-à-vis our major source markets and loss of competitiveness due to changing exchange rates. As far as domestic holiday numbers and revenue are concerned, these have exceeded the revised targets to 2006 by 13% and 20%, respectively.
- The Government's *National Development Plan, 2007 – 2013* which was launched in January 2007. The Tourism Development Programme element of the Plan set out the largest-ever Government investment programme for the development of Irish tourism with a total Exchequer investment of €800 million over the seven years to 2013. The Tourism Investment Programme includes three sub-programmes covering international marketing, product development and training.
- *The Programme for Government*, which was published in June 2007, contains a strong commitment to providing sustained support and investment to develop the tourism industry. The Programme contains commitments in regard to tourism product development, including the establishment of an innovation fund to promote and support the development of tourism products, greater emphasis on Ireland's natural and built heritage, the development of rural-based package-style holidays, the development of a rolling programme of national culture, musical and literary festivals to enhance the Irish tourism product, and the promotion of Ireland as a healthy activity holiday destination. The Programme contains specific commitments in relation to the promotion of the new National Convention Centre in Dublin, the promotion of our national games and the development and promotion of ecotourism.

1.6 CONCLUSION

The environment in which Fáilte Ireland and Irish tourism operate is complex and challenging. Achieving our goals and targets in this environment has considerable implications for investing in product, people and infrastructure, for quality and efficiency, for public policy making and for marketing. It is clear that Fáilte Ireland must play a central role in all of these areas.

A key objective of this document, therefore, is to outline a set of strategies through which Fáilte Ireland can make an effective contribution towards securing the continued sustainable development of tourism.





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Our vision, mission and strategic goals

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2.1 VISION

Fáilte Ireland's vision is of a tourism sector that is dynamic, innovative, sustainable and highly regarded, and that offers international and domestic visitors a positive and memorable experience beyond their expectations.

As the National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland must play a key role in bringing about this vision for the tourism sector, working in partnership with the industry in the range of areas for which we have particular responsibility and helping to sustain and increase the levels of activity in the sector. Our emphasis is on supporting the industry in its efforts to be more competitive and more profitable, by working together in strategic partnership with tourism interests at national and regional levels, towards a common goal.

2.2 MISSION

In this context, Fáilte Ireland's mission is:

To guide and support the development of a sustainable tourism sector as the largest indigenous component of the Irish economy by:

- *Providing strategic leadership to private enterprise and public sector organisations and agencies engaged in tourism*
- *Delivering world-class tourism management and investment development supports*
- *Advocating for a public policy environment conducive to tourism growth.*

2.3 STRATEGIC GOALS

In addressing the challenges set out in Chapter 1 and in responding to the needs of our stakeholders, a concerted effort will be required on a number of fronts. In this context we will:

- Seek to improve the competitive position of individual tourism enterprises with a particular emphasis on the more vulnerable but invaluable population of smaller enterprises
- Stimulate private and public sector investment in market-led development to expand and enhance the range of tourism products and services available to consumers
- Support the spatial development of tourism through implementation of regional tourism development strategies
- Support the sensitive development of the natural and built environment as a cornerstone of Ireland's appeal as a tourist destination
- Influence the shaping of public policies impacting on tourism nationally and regionally for the benefit of tourism
- Expand co-operation in tourism development on a cross-border basis to support the promotion of the island of Ireland as a tourist destination.



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Our strategy

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Fáilte Ireland's role and functions are set out in the National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003, which provides generally for the promotion of tourism and the development of tourism facilities and services. The main functions of Fáilte Ireland as set out in the Act are:

- To encourage, promote and support the development and marketing of tourism
- To encourage, promote, support and provide funding for the recruitment, training, education and development of people recruited to or employed in tourism enterprises
- To establish and maintain registers of accommodation
- To promote and engage in research and planning
- To support tourism enterprises and projects
- To engage in advertising, sponsorship and publicity
- To provide financial aid and advisory/consultancy services for tourism enterprises.

This is a very broad and all-encompassing mandate. The specific details of implementation change from time to time in response to the changing needs of the tourism sector. In light of the context outlined in the previous chapter, the following are the key strategic areas on which we will focus over the next three years:

- Product development
- Enterprise development
- Education and training
- Regional development
- Environment
- Advocacy.

The strategies set out in this Strategy Statement are complemented by the regional strategies prepared by the five Regional Tourism Development Boards. Each regional strategy sets out a three-year plan for the development of tourism in the region.

3.2 PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

As an indigenous industry with the ability to continue to grow, tourism plays a unique role in the Irish economy. The rationale for continued investment in tourism is very strong. Our analysis of the existing portfolio of tourism products and services indicates that, with selective investment in new product development and in upgrading existing tourism products, Irish tourism has the potential substantially to expand market share.

This view is underscored in the Tourism Product Development Strategy, 2007-2013. The national audit of tourism accommodation, activities and attractions which was undertaken as part of that Strategy outlined shortcomings in terms of things to do, places of interest to see, infrastructure (for example, roads), road signage and tourist information. The audit highlighted, in particular, the scarcity of “must see” attractions and the relatively small number of family attractions. This view was echoed in the Brand Review conducted recently by Tourism Ireland. Under the National Development Plan launched in early 2007, Fáilte Ireland secured funding of €137 million specifically for supporting capital investment in product development and improvement.

A greater focus on attracting or establishing and promoting cultural and sporting events of significant scale is also widely recognised as an effective way of attracting significant visitors to a region – often in the low season – as evidenced by the staging of the Ryder Cup in 2006 and the World Rally in 2007. Increased investment in this area would pay dividends.

However, by themselves, investment incentives do not provide a sustainable means to continuous market-led development. Such initiatives are only part of a broader solution. Practical measures to support innovation within the industry and to leverage institutional investment in tourism research are required.

Finally, effective communication with customers – describing the attractiveness of Ireland as a holiday destination – either through state-of-the-art visitor information services or through direct promotion – is critical.

The key elements of the Fáilte Ireland Strategy Statement as it relates to product development include:

1. The provision of effective programmes of **capital investment support** across heritage and cultural attractions, sport and soft adventure activities and relevant tourism infrastructure
2. The creation and provision of an **Innovation Fund** to encourage and support new product development/service improvement within the industry as well as the accessing, capture and dissemination of insightful consumer and competitor data and information to inform and influence investment decisions within tourism enterprises
3. The provision of specific funding for attracting and promoting a calendar of **sports, cultural or other large events** of significant visitor or international media appeal
4. The establishing and nurturing of **co-operative trade networks** to foster collaboration to shape bigger, better, more holistic tourism experiences for both overseas and domestic visitors alike; this will include the establishment of strong relationships with key public and private sector partners to address areas of product or service weakness
5. Supporting business development through **a range of marketing and promotional measures** for specific segments with international growth potential including business tourism, golf, language and selected activity pursuits
6. Facilitating customer decision making by providing rich, accurate and timely information at every stage of the ‘customer journey’ and tracking satisfaction levels through a state-of-the-art **visitor servicing** strategy.

3.3 ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Growing Ireland's share of the international and domestic tourism markets will depend critically on the capacity of the industry to present a competitive and compelling tourism product to the consumer. Tourism must represent a more attractive option than competing leisure activities.

Those operating in the industry recognise the significant challenges associated with maintaining and indeed improving international competitiveness. In some cases, business costs are determined within the wider external economy and may not fall under the direct influence of owner/managers at enterprise level. In other cases, the costs are under the direct control of the enterprise.

Competitive enterprises recognise that they must work to eliminate unavoidable costs right across the enterprise.

International competitiveness is also determined by the perceived quality of the product or service on offer. Tourism enterprises therefore need to work continuously to improve the quality of their service. And all improvements in quality must be fully focussed on the needs and preferences of consumers. In practice, this means that individual operators must continuously review every process and sub-process in their total business model to see whether these processes are actually adding value to the customer experience or whether they are destroying value by incurring costs without creating any matching value.

Profile and positioning within the marketplace is also important. Smart enterprises recognise that they need to act smartly in bringing their products to market and in the way in which they cultivate and develop working relationships with their customers. Taking time to get these elements right can pay dividends. Increasingly, however, the most effective profile and positioning will be achieved in the web space.

For a number of years now, browsing on the internet has been the key way in which consumers research and plan their holiday. More recently, however, consumers have moved beyond simply browsing, and now use websites to book and pay for all aspects of their holidays. Any tourism business that fails to develop skills and profile in an on-line environment will most likely fail to sell.

While there are enterprises of significant scale in the tourism sector, most are SMEs and many might be considered micro-enterprises. For smaller tourism businesses, trying to meet these challenges can be a very daunting prospect, particularly so when such small businesses seek to compete in international markets. Fáilte Ireland's strategy for enterprise support will focus particularly on helping these small and medium-sized enterprises. The key elements in this strategy will include:

1. Support for tourism enterprises in developing an effective **e-business capability** and a functioning capacity to present and trade their services on the web
2. A focus on strengthening **business and management capability** at the level of the individual enterprise
3. Specific interventions to support **service quality and continuous improvement** at enterprise level
4. The expansion of **benchmarking and mentoring** services to assist owner/managers recognise and improve their relative competitive positioning
5. The provision of peer **learning networks** where small tourism enterprises can consider and develop a strategy for medium-term business growth
6. Support services to improve the "**market readiness**" of tourism enterprises and to raise their visibility in appropriate trade and media contexts
7. Market interventions designed to **broker opportunities** for tourism enterprises to interact with targeted and potential buyers.

3.4 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Tourism is a skilled industry and its continued success depends upon recruiting and employing sufficient numbers of skilled staff to deliver a premium service. In this context, providing appropriate education and training services will remain a fundamental part of our Strategy over the next three years. In particular:

- People with core craft skills in areas such as bar, culinary and restaurant service are essential to the success of tourism and hospitality operations. Without these skills, the quality of service delivery at a routine operational level will fall.
- More recently, the importance of business management skills has been recognised, particularly in relation to the successful operation of SMEs.
- Customer care and a capacity to engage with customers in a professional, friendly and knowledgeable manner should be a defining feature of all front-line staff, irrespective of their function. Recent evidence however suggests that more needs to be done in developing and supporting these skills.

Over the period 2008 to 2010, Fáilte Ireland will continue to provide and support training and education services both through its own permanent training centres as well as through the continuation of valued links with the established countrywide network of Institutes of Technology.

However we need to continue to develop our programmes to meet the changing needs of the industry. Many people today have competing responsibilities which mean they cannot avail easily of full-time education and training.

Increasingly, these workers need an "earn and learn" model where they can remain in full-time employment while accessing education on a part-time basis. Fortunately this model of education and training fits well with tourism where the best professional development will always be achieved through a careful mix of on-the-job training and college-based education.

Over the next three years we will work with our colleagues in the higher education institutions to strengthen tourism education and to find innovative ways to refine and improve existing models of provision.

Most immediately, we will endeavour to respond to skills gaps in the industry by expanding the channels through which we deliver training and education and by accelerating, where possible, programmes of skills development.


In so doing, we will aim to achieve the most effective return for the resources we put into this area. The key elements in this strategy will include:

1. A focus on leveraging the potential of **employer-led skills and work-based learning**
2. A focus on **customer service and inter-personal skills** as a recognised and core element of the required skill-set in the hospitality sector
3. **Accelerated and total immersion programmes** of skills training
4. A focus on the significant contribution to be secured through the development of **Accreditation of Prior Learning**
5. A movement from Fáilte Ireland-led to **Fáilte Ireland-facilitated** training and education
6. A determination to support and improve **craft-based education** at FETAC Level 6 and an active programme to promote and deliver education at this level
7. An expanded involvement in **advanced craft and management education** at HETAC Level 7
8. The further development of the range of training, support and other **industry-facing services** provided through Fáilte Ireland's own Training Centres in Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Waterford.

3.5 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Irish tourism industry has experienced impressive growth in recent years with total spend increasing from €4.3 billion to €6.1 billion (+40%) in the period 2000 to 2006. However, this growth has been far from uniform across the country, with the majority of the growth taking place in a number of the larger urban centres: the regions outside of Dublin suffered a decline of 1% in international holiday bednights between 1999 and 2006 while Dublin experienced an average annual increase of 9% over the same period.

The growth of tourism business in the larger urban centres, which is replicated throughout tourist destinations internationally, has been due in part to the emergence of convenient, frequent and affordable air access to these centres. This in turn has resulted in a fundamental shift in consumer preferences towards short city breaks at the expense of more long-stay rural-based holidays.



Tourism growth throughout the rest of the country has been largely the result of a strong home holiday market. This has resulted in a heavy reliance by some sectors and many businesses, particularly in rural areas, on the Irish market. This over-reliance on a single market is of concern, particularly given the economic slowdown which is forecast for the short to medium term. In this context, it is important that enterprises are encouraged and facilitated to diversify their businesses and to focus increasingly on the international market.

This will be a significant challenge both for the industry itself and for the tourism agencies, requiring a sustained and coordinated effort over several seasons. In the interim, it is critical that effort continues to be focussed on the domestic market, although this is widely recognised to be a tough challenge as economic conditions become more difficult.

Over the period of this Strategy Statement, Fáilte Ireland will continue to work collaboratively and proactively with all relevant public and private stakeholders to develop the tourism potential of all of Ireland's regions. Specifically, we will focus on:

1. **Leading the tourism agenda** by building on the new regional structures and advocating for the development of a sustainable and profitable tourism industry in each region
2. Collaborating with the industry, local authorities and other relevant partners to improve **the range and quality of tourism products and services on offer in each region** and actively seek initiatives and exploit opportunities to further the tourism performance of individual regions
3. Working in partnership with tourism enterprises in the various regions continuously and systemically to identify specific developmental needs and deliver **practical business support solutions**
4. Working locally with industry in each region to put in place **tailored and effective marketing and promotional supports** which will highlight the unique and compelling experiences available in the region to both domestic and (working with Tourism Ireland) international visitors.

3.6 ENVIRONMENT

The tourism industry should and must realise its potential as a leader in the application of clean technology and the principles of sustainable development, building upon initiatives already taken, particularly in the accommodation sector.

Over the next three years, therefore, Fáilte Ireland will work towards positioning tourism as a 'clean' industry which seeks to protect and enhance the environmental assets upon which it depends.

Fáilte Ireland will work with the Environmental Protection Agency, Sustainable Energy Ireland, Comhar, and other relevant environmental partners to quantify the "environmental footprint" of the tourism industry. This will then serve as a benchmark against which performance on environmental issues can be monitored and measured.

With an emphasis on scenic landscapes, water quality and historic towns, Fáilte Ireland will advocate for the protection and enhancement of the fragile environmental assets on which tourism depends. Initiatives will also be taken to assist local authorities in combating litter and improving the environmental management of tourist destinations to ensure they retain their essential character, quality and distinctiveness. Through the development of supports for ecotourism, Fáilte Ireland will demonstrate the mutual benefits that can be derived for both tourism and conservation.

Over the period of this Strategy Statement, Fáilte Ireland will continue to evaluate the environmental attitudes and expectations of our visitors in order to ensure that those expectations are met. Through support for the introduction of a system of standards and eco-labels across the sector, Fáilte Ireland will ensure that consumers have access to the best available information to support them in making environmentally sound choices. As a part of this system, Fáilte Ireland will promote the uptake of the EU Flower eco-label by tourist accommodation providers and will provide guidance and support to those providers pursuing this accreditation. The key elements in this strategy will include:


1. The placing of environmental issues at the core of **sustainable tourism policy** at national, regional and local levels
2. Advocating for the protection of **key environmental and tourism assets**
3. Undertaking research leading to a clearer understanding of **the relationship between tourism and the environment**
4. Promoting **good environmental practice** and demonstrating its consistency with good business practice within the tourism sector
5. Providing advice on the **development of ecotourism**.

3.7 ADVOCACY

The decisions and actions of a great many agencies, both public and private, can have a significant impact on the tourism sector. Tourism exists in a busy cross-cutting policy and agency environment where the legitimate pursuit of business objectives by others can have unforeseen effects on the long-term well-being of the tourism industry. Where these effects are positive, it is in the interests of tourism that Fáilte Ireland should champion such activities. If, on the other hand, the actions of others are likely to result in negative outcomes for tourism, then it is our responsibility to point up these negative effects, to quantify their impacts where possible and to advocate for an end to such actions.

Quite apart from the significance of any immediate impacts on the tourism sector, the scope and range of these cross-cutting issues is extensive. They include decisions taken in relation to fiscal and taxation policies, the regulatory environment, rail transport, road transport and signage, aviation policy, environmental management, labour market policies, rural development and country-side access, education and training policy, and a range of other areas.

In any of these areas, decisions may be taken which may impact on tourism and where the authority to take those decisions rests with agencies other than Fáilte Ireland.



Addressing these issues and setting out a pro-tourism point of view requires a capacity to evaluate complex business and public policy issues. Most importantly, it requires the development of a well-informed and evidence-based approach to case-making. The simple assertion of a pro-tourism point of view, unsupported by a full assessment of economic impacts, will not command the attention of decision-takers elsewhere.

Over the next three years Fáilte Ireland will strengthen its capacity and involvement in this area. Our existing research function provides a solid platform for this work. This will be augmented by the introduction of related skills in policy analysis and advocacy. We will build stronger connections between the conduct of research, the development of policy analysis and the support of an advocacy position as a contribution to the work of Fáilte Ireland.

This work will in turn help build an industry intelligence function within Fáilte Ireland which will support case-making and position-taking by the organisation and other partners as circumstances require.

The key elements in this strategy will include:

1. Carrying out **research into developments impacting on tourism**, both on the supply side (in relation to the capability and positioning of tourism enterprises) and on the demand side (in relation to anticipating and monitoring consumer attitudes and preferences)
2. The development and contribution of a pro-tourism perspective to **public policy commentary**
3. An evaluation of the **economic and business implications** of developments in related industry sectors
4. **Liaison with decision-makers** elsewhere in the cross-cutting agency environment.



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Our organisation

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Implementing this Strategy presents a significant challenge for Fáilte Ireland given the resource constraints applying generally to public sector organisations. Obviously, a key priority must be to improve our capacity by investing in staff development and putting in place supportive human resource policies and practices. In parallel, we must adopt constantly changing and developing information and communications technologies while simultaneously and seamlessly providing an excellent service to our customers.

4.2 PRINCIPLES

A number of key principles underpin everything we do. We will:

- Promote **excellence and continuous improvement**
- Set and implement high standards of **integrity and professionalism**
- Deal **fairly and equitably** with all our staff and with our customers
- Foster **innovation and creativity** and be proactive in designing and implementing initiatives which address unmet needs
- Encourage and facilitate **learning** for people at all levels
- Foster **new ways of working** to meet the needs of our staff and our customers
- Provide a high-quality modern **work environment**
- Promote **efficiency and good value** in everything we do
- **Celebrate our successes.**

And, underpinning all of this, we are committed to promoting an ethos of partnership in all aspects of our work and our dealings with each other.

4.3 PRIORITIES

Fáilte Ireland's role as set out earlier is essentially to support the development of the tourism industry in Ireland. Ultimately, responsibility for delivering on this rests with every member of staff. Within the organisation, we are all also committed to building a high-performing team and to ensuring that every member of the team is supported to achieve his or her full potential.

The priority for all of us for 2008 is to continue to build an organisation of which we can all be proud and which can legitimately aspire to be one of the leading Irish employers. Specifically, we will:

- Ensure that our **staff policies and practices** support every member of Fáilte Ireland to develop to his/her potential and, in particular:
 - provide rewarding job and career development opportunities for all staff
 - actively promote the involvement of staff in the development of their own jobs and careers
 - place a particular emphasis on the promotion of a learning environment and create opportunities to promote the sharing of information
 - increase our investment in staff development and training
 - provide strong leadership and management at all levels in Fáilte Ireland
- Supplementing the formal management **structures**, provide development opportunities for staff to participate in cross-functional teams and informal networks and in a job rotation system, to develop their own skills and enhance their readiness for promotion
- Enhance **communications** and, in particular:
 - ensure that our communications are open, clear, relevant, appropriate to the needs of a regionally-distributed organisation and, above all, frequent
 - provide formal and informal opportunities for exchanging information on issues and developments across the organisation
 - continuously review and update our information and communications technologies to support our information needs and capabilities
- Notwithstanding the constraints of a public sector body, explore and put in place a mechanism to **acknowledge and reward** the efforts of individual members of staff or teams who make exceptional contributions to the work of Fáilte Ireland
- Provide a safe, modern and pleasant **work environment** for staff and for our customers
- Continue to plan for and implement the **decentralisation** of Fáilte Ireland's operations to Mallow, County Cork, in accordance with Government policy.

4.4 ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

The structure of Fáilte Ireland is currently being reviewed in line with this Strategy Statement and will continue to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it supports the implementation of the Strategy. The aim is to achieve optimal deployment of resources and, in doing so, to concentrate resources where they are most effective in supporting tourism development.



Fáilte Ireland

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