

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands

Industry Update No.1

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Ireland's Hidden
HEARTLANDS



(l to r): Paul Kelly, Chief Executive, Fáilte Ireland; Kevin 'Boxer' Moran, T.D., Minister of State for the OPW and Flood Relief; Shane Ross, T.D., Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport; Fiona Monaghan, Head of Activities, Fáilte Ireland.

The story so far...

The newest regional experience brand, 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands', was unveiled to industry and media by Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross TD, in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone in April, 2018.

The new brand will complement Fáilte Ireland's other key regional experience brands - the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Dublin, completing the jigsaw for tourism in Ireland with all areas of the country now served by one or other of our regional experience brands.

Covering the 'heart' of the country, from Leitrim down to East Clare and extending through Longford, West Cavan, Roscommon, East Galway, as well as parts of Westmeath, Tipperary and Offaly. 'Ireland's Hidden Heartlands' will bring to life the Midland's rich natural assets including its many lakes, walkways and blueways, leveraging a growing tourism trend for soft activities by encouraging visitors to be **'active in nature'**.

The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand name and concept, was devised following months of detailed and extensive market research and testing with both domestic and overseas markets as well as industry and trade representatives in the region. Over 10,000 consumers were interviewed in the process giving Fáilte Ireland great insight and confidence that Ireland's Hidden Heartlands has the potential to be both appealing and motivating to visitors.



Where we're at...

Fáilte Ireland has now recruited a dedicated team to ensure a strong local presence to champion the brand's development. This team will work with industry and key stakeholders to ensure that the brand promise is delivered on the ground for our visitors.

An initial €2m has been allocated to start the development stage of the brand, with further funding and capital grants to follow. This first round of investment will help to establish the brand on the ground and raise awareness among the domestic market. Over the next few years, significant investment will be required to develop new (and boost existing) experiences in the region to realise the brand's full potential.

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands is considered to be at an early stage of development as a tourism destination. While some areas are already very well placed to receive visitors, Fáilte Ireland will work with a wide range of stakeholders, tourism groups and communities across the region to improve visitor orientation, visitor experiences and business networks. The region has very good natural and cultural assets upon which tourism can be developed, but these assets need to be protected and the visitor economy needs to grow in a sensitive and sustainable way.

While there has been a lift in visitor revenue in certain locations throughout the region in recent years, the visitor revenue figures for the region as a whole are below the national average. At present, the region has just a 2% share of overnight stays by overseas visitors and a 3% share of overnight stays by domestic visitors.

Fáilte Ireland has set a target to grow the visitor economy by **2% year on year**.

Achievements to date...

Major Domestic Campaign

Fáilte Ireland launched the first domestic consumer marketing campaign for the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand on Monday, July 2nd.

The multi-media brand awareness campaign worth €1m was rolled out on TV, outdoor, radio and digital channels, and revolved around the creative idea 'Yours to Uncover'. Our combined channel reach will see almost 95% of Irish adults exposed to some element of the campaign. Audiences across Ireland saw the new campaign which focused on themes of discovery and exploration, and encourages visitors to uncover their unique experience of the natural beauty and treasures of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

The key objectives of this campaign were to:

1. Drive AWARENESS AND FAMILIARITY of the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand proposition.
2. UNDERSTANDING of the geography of the region.
3. AWARENESS of the holiday offering experience.

The Ray D'Arcy Show on RTÉ Radio 1 was also broadcast live from key locations in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands every day for a week, from Monday 9th July.

Additional PR and Marketing activity that has taken place to date includes:

PR: Integrated activity included a media drop, press trips; Instagrammer partnerships; pitched features and media partnerships for both print and broadcast.





RTE Partnership: Our partnership with RTE encompasses native articles that feature prominently on the RTE website and channels across the campaign. RTE.ie have developed bespoke rich media content to create deeper, richer and more engaging articles showcasing the region.

Website Video Content: Fáilte Ireland has produced a series of video content. These videos focus on bringing the region to life through our 'active in nature' proposition. These four videos will work to establish and define the holiday offering that is true of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

Digital: A website has gone live on the Discover Ireland website. The website provides an overview of the region along with suggested itineraries and a list of things to see and do. Updates to this website with new content will be ongoing over the coming months.

<https://irelandshiddenheartlands.discoverireland.ie/>

The Visual Story: Fáilte Ireland has commissioned still photography to capture Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, which will continue to be supplemented as we develop the region. Imagery is available for download and use on www.irelandscontentpool.com. Simply register and accept the Terms & Conditions of use, and we encourage you to use this imagery to promote your business in association with Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

We would also ask that you share any strong images that you have of your tourism product with us so we can put that on the content pool or to help promote your business.



Fáilte Ireland at the Ray D'Arcy Show outside broadcast in Dromineer
(l to r): Fiona Henshaw; Paddy Mathews; Danielle Favier; Tony Dawson; Helen Brady.

The Road Ahead...

Unlocking the potential of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands

The focus in the region in the short to medium term will be on raising awareness of the brand, orientating the visitor, developing the visitor experience, and building effective industry networks and a strong tourism organisation structure.

The key to **unlocking** the region's potential are **two** transformational 'signature' products of scale:

1. The **River Shannon and lakes** as a corridor for water-based and land-based activity; and
2. **The Beara Breifne Way** as Ireland's longest inland Way-Marked Way which spans the whole region.

These products would be supported by a range of **catalyst** projects in identified clusters across the region and by a range of **practical initiatives** that can be delivered by local communities and businesses to achieve early wins.

This work is already underway. A **Shannon Master Plan** is currently being developed by Waterways Ireland in partnership with Fáilte Ireland, with input from the Local Authorities and other stakeholders, to drive tourism opportunities both on and off the water, and in the towns surrounding it.

An Activation Master Plan is about to be commissioned for the **Beara Breifne Way**, which will see a number of towns along the route identified as walking hubs to support the ambition identified for this route and drive visitors into nearby areas.

Over the coming months, a series of audits will be undertaken, including the food offering, visitor orientation and foreign language provision.

Moving Forward Together

Training & Support: The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Team will be reaching out in due course with training opportunities for your staff. All invitations, notifications and workshop invites will be sent from Fáilte Ireland so please keep an eye out for any updates!

Using the Brand: We will be hosting a series of workshops over the coming months on how to best use the brand to maximum effect for your business. These workshops will also be an opportunity to network with other providers in your area.

Building Demand

The success of every tourist destination is built upon the domestic market first before it becomes attractive to the international visitor. It is the domestic market that provides the primary demand for accommodation, facilities and attractions. It is important, therefore, to establish Ireland's Hidden Heartlands as a successful destination for domestic visitors first. That is not to say that we will not also focus on drawing the attention of the international visitor to this region - we will and we will work with Tourism Ireland in doing so, but our primary focus will be on the domestic visitor over the first five years.



Meitheal 2019: Ireland's Hidden Heartlands will be represented at this key travel trade event early in 2019 and we would ask you to reach out to a representative of the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands team if you are interested in attending.

Measuring Success

While tourism success is generally expressed in terms of visitor numbers and revenue, it doesn't always reveal the wider impact, either positively or negatively. Success in regional tourism is not as straightforward as one number continually moving upwards.

We will set targets and measure success against the four categories of the VICE model, Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment, to ensure that our success is sustainable and equitable and that it benefits the widest range of stakeholders and communities.

We will also measure the extent to which the visitor economy contributes to the wider economy of the region.



Meet the Team



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Working with the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands team

The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands team will be active on the ground, engaging with local businesses and stakeholders on development plans and promoting local offerings as part of the brand.

There are parts of the new brand footprint which crossover with Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way, in areas where the region complements both brands, and businesses in this area can choose which brand works best for their needs and offer.

In the meantime, if you have any queries, contact the relevant Programme Officer.

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Brand Logo

Fáilte Ireland welcomes your use of the official brand logo within your business for tourism promotion. It is important that tourism businesses in Ireland's Hidden Heartlands embrace the brand, present it consistently and deliver on its promise. The purpose of the brand guidelines is to help you produce communications material that is consistent in look and feel and ensures we present Ireland's Hidden Heartlands in an engaging and motivating way collectively.

We would encourage all our tourism partners to use the new logo on their websites and other marketing materials to help build brand awareness among our domestic and international visitors.

To request a copy of the Brand Guidelines and logos, please log onto the Fáilte Ireland website:

<http://www.failteireland.ie/IrelandsHiddenHeartlands>

