



Ireland, Home of Halloween Destination Development (Pilot) Scheme Guidelines



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Fáilte Ireland is seeking Expressions of Interest **from Local Authorities** for a new pilot scheme focusing on delivering significant Culture and Heritage 'Seasonal' Halloween offerings, supporting destinations to enhance their existing festivals, events and experiences by adopting authentic Samhain and/or Halloween themes.

Background

A major feasibility study commissioned by Fáilte Ireland in 2018 identified that Ireland has a legitimate claim to the origin of modern-day Halloween citing a 'Significant opportunity to establish Ireland internationally as the original home of Samhain and Halloween traditions in the Western world.'

Halloween originates in the Irish and Celtic tradition of Samhain which is the old Irish for 'summer's end'. Samhain is the end of the harvest season, when all the crops have been picked and stored for the "New Year". The ancient Celtic New Year celebration involved gathering, lighting fires, feasting on the harvest, music, mischief and storytelling.

Ireland is in a unique position to harness the opportunity to be recognised as the original and authentic birthplace of Halloween, motivating visitors to choose Ireland not only for Halloween, but as a 'must do' cultural season generating economic impact and creating sustainable jobs.

Strategy Development

As a destination, Ireland has key strengths to offer for Home of Halloween including authentic historical roots, cultural heritage, rich folklore, tourism appeal, existing festivals/events, and local community. Representatives from Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland came together as part of a tri-agency project team to develop a 5-year Ireland, Home of Halloween Strategic Framework and Action Plan.

The Strategy will build out a unique selling proposition by establishing the authentic origins of Halloween in Ireland to differentiate from other global Halloween celebrations and achieve cultural tourism growth.

Ireland, Home of Halloween Strategic Vision

The vision for the Island of Ireland, Home of Halloween Strategy is that;

The Island of Ireland is internationally recognised as the authentic home of Halloween, motivating visitors to choose Ireland as a 'must do' cultural tourism experience in the off season, generating economic benefit, sustaining communities and creating employment across the island.

The strategy and action plan sets a target of 233k additional visitors, of which 70k will be overseas visitors across the Island of Ireland by 2030. This target is based on a tri-agency investment of €2.5 million per annum.

What is the scheme?

Fáilte Ireland was allocated a budget of €500,000 from the Department of Tourism to deliver a scheme with a priority focus on **developing a critical mass of Halloween themed assets and experiences** in 2025.

These experiences will increase the average length of stay by visitors across the Island of Ireland creating a new season incorporating the month of October and potentially into early November.



In recognition of the importance of community and to ensure they benefit directly from the Ireland, Home of Halloween opportunity, Fáilte Ireland is inviting **Local Authorities** (Republic of Ireland) to participate in a pilot scheme.

The pilot scheme is devised to support up to **five destination hubs** in creating and delivering a programme of authentic Samhain and Halloween themed festivals, events and experiences that will help to deliver a new 'Season' for Ireland.

Objectives of the scheme

- Deliver a new 'Season' for the island of Ireland, increasing occupancy levels and average length of stay by visitors across the Island of Ireland incorporating the month of October and into early November.
- Identify seasonal destination hubs that can deliver a critical mass of authentic Samhain and Halloween themed experiences.
- Raise awareness of Ireland's Cultural and Heritage as the original birthplace of Halloween to both domestic and overseas audiences.
- Increase visitor numbers and economic impact to destination hubs in the shoulder season.
- Ensure a greater regional spread of visitors (both domestic and overseas) through the provision of a range of Samhain and Halloween themed festivals/events and experiences across destination hubs.
- Engagement with local businesses and community groups in delivering themed festivals, events and experiences.

What does a Samhain/Halloween season look like?

The focus will be on existing county-based festivals, events and activities already taking place or being activated in destinations across the month of October and early November.

The scheme will support Local Authorities to coordinate tourism product in their counties to adopt a new Home of Halloween brand creative and Samhain themes as part of a 3–4-week programme of existing festivals, events and activities.

Although there will be natural in-county 'hubs' based on the volume of existing events, visitor attractions and activities in cities and/or towns, wider county tourism product activations can be incorporated into the programme once they take place in October and early November.

The new Home of Halloween brand toolkit is being developed by strategic partner Tourism Ireland and will be shared with destinations within the scheme.

Existing festivals, events and tourism product may adopt the following themes:

- Harvest celebrations around great food and local producers
- Local lore, through urban myths and legends.
- Fire which is synonymous with Samhain and Halloween celebrations.
- Samhain and Halloween traditions.

Examples:

- 'Town X Food Festival' could evolve to become 'Town X' Harvest Festival'.



- Historical walking tours and boat trips/tours could be rebranded as Samhain/local lore walking tours and boat trips factoring in localised urban myths and legends as part of the storytelling.
- Pumpkin Farms could introduce carved turnip and other root vegetables as exhibits and tell the origin story of how pumpkin carving first started in Ireland.
- Local visitor attractions could adapt their family Halloween events to incorporate traditional games and local lore storytelling.

What is on offer?

Fáilte Ireland will provide direct funding of up to an expected **€100,000 per destination hub** for 2025, subject to budget approval. Further Fáilte Ireland supports will include marketing/digital, research, capability building and access to Fáilte Ireland Festivals and local regional representatives for project management and planning and development support.

Benefits for Destinations

- To participate in a 5-year Ireland, Home of Halloween Strategy to reclaim our heritage and to play a part in a nationwide platform of celebration.
- Destination awareness through both Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland international and domestic Home of Halloween marketing and publicity activity. In 2025 Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland will continue to invest in domestic and international marketing and publicity campaigns to increase awareness and drive visitors to Home of Halloween destinations.
- Opportunities for local engagement and participation, and to create local Samhain ambassadors and education programmes.
- Access to visitor profile data and economic impact figures.
- Support from Fáilte Ireland Festivals and local regional representative for planning and development.
- New Home of Halloween Brand Toolkit.
- Support delivery of Night-Time Economy objectives.
- Support the implementation of DEDP action plans where relevant to the destination(s).

Evaluation Process

This is a competitive application process open to Local Authorities only. A maximum of 5 destinations will be selected following the evaluation of Local Authority expression of interest applications.

The application process for this scheme is split into **two stages**.

Stage 1: Fáilte Ireland invites Local Authorities to complete a short expression of interest application. (EOI) Form. The EOI Form is the 1st document that will be assessed to determine the proposed destination(s) eligibility to progress to Stage 2 of the application process,

Stage 2: Successful applicants from the first stage will advance to the second stage, where they will complete a detailed Application Form.

An evaluation team will be in place to review and evaluate all applications.

A maximum of **5 county destinations** will be selected following the evaluation of Local Authority expression of interest applications.

Should a Local Authority be unsuccessful in its application, they will be placed on a wait list in order of score for consideration for possible future destination hub expansion (budget dependent). There may also be opportunities to join the Ireland, Home of Halloween initiative based on strategic deliverables in future years.

Who is this scheme open to?

Local Authorities (Republic of Ireland).

For applications, Local Authorities are permitted to partner with:

- A maximum of one neighbouring county ¹
- Local Chambers of Commerce and or Junior Chambers of Commerce
- Local BID and Marketing Groups
- Food Networks and Agencies

Local Authorities are required to engage any key stakeholders that may be proposed as part of their programme for the new scheme and agree to partner before submitting an application.

Note: Fáilte Ireland will only accept one application per Local Authority.

Key Criteria for Destinations

- Commitment to the project 2025 – 2027.
- A minimum match funding of 25% of total Fáilte Ireland investment per annum is required. If two Local Authorities are partnering together to apply for this scheme, a minimum of 25% match funding will be required.
- A dedicated destination co-ordinator (either in-house or outsourced, with a proven track record).
- A dedicated Arts/Culture/Tourism Officer for local community engagement and participation (existing resource).
- A dedicated marketing/digital marketing resource (either in-house or outsourced, with a proven track record).
- Ability to leverage Night-Time Economy team/funds where applicable.
- A commitment to work in partnership with Fáilte Ireland representatives to deliver the project.
- Accommodation stock of a minimum of 4,000 beds within the proposed destination(s). Please see the [link](#) to Fáilte Ireland's interactive dashboard displaying registered and approved accommodation stock in the Republic of Ireland
- Have a minimum of 25 existing tourism product e.g. attractions, venues and activities within the proposed destination(s).
- Have a minimum of 2 existing festivals plus a minimum of 8 ticketed events that will form the programming, incorporating the month of October and into early November. Please note existing festivals or events do not have to be authentic Samhain or Halloween themed, but that they would have the ability to be adapted to the Home of Halloween themes.

¹ Up to a maximum of two neighbouring counties may choose to partner on the new Ireland, Home of Halloween Destination Development Pilot Scheme, combining resources to deliver on the project objectives, and will be classed as **one destination**.



- Sufficient transportation links (at a minimum National train/bus links).
- Dedicated methodologies and resources for data capture to measure and report on attendee numbers, visitor profiles (local, domestic, international), duration of visit and motivation to attend.
- Alignment with organisational climate action goals.

Eligible Spend

Fáilte Ireland and Local Authority investment is to be put towards the following:

- To support the coordination of 'hub' and county-wide existing festivals, events, experiences and activities to adopt the new Home of Halloween brand and Samhain themes as part of a 3–4-week programme across the month of October and early November.
- Outsourced or third-party programme co-ordination and/or marketing or digital marketing resource.
- Should outsourcing be required, a maximum of 25% of total Fáilte Ireland investment per annum can be allocated to outsourcing a third-party programme co-ordinator and/or marketing or digital marketing resources and are seen as eligible costs.
- International and domestic marketing activity to deliver on visitor KPIs.
- Independent research for data capture for attendee numbers, visitor profiles (local, domestic, international), duration of visit and motivation to attend. May be a requirement from year 2.

Applicants should note that all eligible costs incurred above the maximum investment fund offered by Fáilte Ireland and all ineligible project costs, will be the responsibility of the applicant.

Note: This is a separate investment funding scheme to any existing grants or funding from Fáilte Ireland.

Terms and Conditions of Investment Funding

Festival Attendance Figures

Successful applicants will be required to submit attendee numbers with a post event report for both ticketed and non-ticketed events. This should be broken down into Local, Domestic and International visitors. Evidence of how these figures are calculated will also be required.

Public Spending Code:

All public bodies, including Fáilte Ireland, who are in receipt of public funding, are obliged to comply with the requirements of the Public Spending Code to ensure best value is achieved from state resources. Fáilte Ireland and its investment grantees are also subject to the rules of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 13/2014. For more information [click here](#).

EU State Aid and Undertakings in Difficulty

LEGAL AND STATE AID BASIS

Fáilte Ireland is the grant-aiding Authority for this Scheme. The legal basis of the Scheme is Section 8 (1) (e) of the National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003. Investment grants are provided in accordance with the criteria set out in these Guidelines, subject to EU State aid law. State aid rules apply to this Scheme and determine what types of projects are eligible and what support can be provided by Fáilte Ireland. This Scheme is operating under the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) rules.



General Block Exemption Regulations (GBER) is an EU measure that provides exemptions from the State aid rules in certain situations. Fáilte Ireland has identified the exemptions that are relevant to project proposals under this Scheme as follows:

Aid for culture and heritage conservation (Article 53 of the GBER). This is the primary exemption for this Scheme and in addition to being eligible and meeting the Heritage and Culture Criteria set out in Article 53, all projects will have to meet the requirements of this exemption. Therefore, the subject of an application must be a bona fides culture or heritage conservation project.

Applicants should also be mindful of the rules on cumulation, also referred to as ‘double-funding’. Those rules are set out in Article 8 of the GBER and concern situations in which aid of different types may be combined. As part of the applications process, applicants will be required to advise at an early stage the basis for other funding for the same project. To fall within the GBER, its provisions must be complied with in all cases and in all respects in so far as they apply to State aid for a particular project.

While Fáilte Ireland has a primary responsibility to comply with those requirements and other State aid rules, compliance also depends on the co-operation of applicants, including their adherence to these guidelines, their candour in making applications to us and ultimately, their compliance with the Investment Grant Agreement, including the requirements under GBER.

Applicants should ensure that they seek their own independent, professional advice regarding State Aid and procurement matters in particular. Fáilte Ireland may call on applicants to provide clarity or confirmation (including by means of professional opinion) in respect of any State Aid related query in relation to the project or the wider funding context. That may include provision of information as to any other forms of public funding or assistance obtained, or in the course of being sought, or that is likely to be applied for.

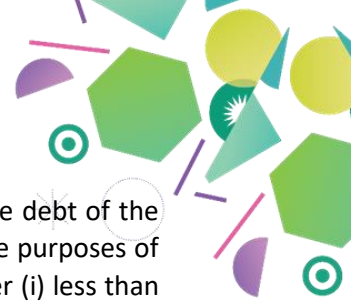
A State Aid test will be undertaken on a project-by-project basis as set out in the Fáilte Ireland State Aid Handbook. Please note this scheme is only funded through GBER Article 53

<https://cdn.failteireland.ie/failteireland/F%c3%a1lte-Ireland-State-Aid-Handbook.pdf>

Undertakings in Difficulty

An undertaking in difficulty is defined as follows and will be ineligible:

In the case of a limited liability company (other than an SME that has been in existence for less than 3 years or, for the purposes of eligibility for risk finance aid, an SME which has been operating in the market for either (i) less than 10 years following their registration or (ii) less than 7 years from its first commercial sale^[1] and qualifies for risk finance investments following due diligence by the selected financial intermediary), where more than half of its subscribed share capital has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses. This is the case when deduction of accumulated losses from reserves (and all other elements generally considered as part of the own funds of the company) leads to a negative cumulative amount that exceeds half of the subscribed share capital. For the purposes of this provision, ‘limited liability company’ refers in particular to the types of company mentioned in Annex I of Directive 2013/34/EU and ‘share capital’ includes, where relevant, any share premium.



In the case of a company where at least some members have unlimited liability for the debt of the company (other than an SME that has been in existence for less than 3 years or, for the purposes of eligibility for risk finance aid, an SME which has been operating in the market for either (i) less than 10 years following their registration or (ii) less than 7 years from its first commercial sale and or less than 10 years following their registration and qualifies for risk finance investments following due diligence by the selected financial intermediary), where more than half of its capital as shown in the company accounts has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses. For the purposes of this provision, 'a company where at least some members have unlimited liability for the debt of the company' refers in particular to the types of company mentioned in Annex II of Directive 2013/34/EU.

Where the undertaking is subject to collective insolvency proceedings or fulfils the criteria under its domestic law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of its creditors.

Where the undertaking has received rescue aid and has not yet reimbursed the loan or terminated the guarantee or has received restructuring aid and is still subject to a restructuring plan.

In the case of an undertaking that is not an SME, where, for the past two years: the undertaking's book debt to equity ratio has been greater than 7.5 and the undertakings EBITDA interest coverage ratio has been below 1.0.

Applicants Who Are Not Undertakings

These State Aid rules only apply to undertakings. An undertaking is an entity, however structured from a legal perspective, that engages in economic activity. Applicants that are not undertakings for the purpose of the project may also apply and must satisfy Fáilte Ireland that they are not undertakings.

Disclaimer:

While this information is provided for information purposes only, no duty of care arises as to whether funding is or is not State aid, is exempted or not, or is otherwise unlawful or not under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Under no circumstances whatsoever should Fáilte Ireland be regarded as representing or warranting (including by way of any implied term) that any funding is lawful under the State aid rules. Moreover, Fáilte Ireland does not accept any liability for loss of any kind that is claimed to be suffered by any applicant or any interested party by reason of the treatment of funding under State aid law and any attendant processes including recovery or claw-back.

Terms of Investment:

In accordance with Section 8 of the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003, Fáilte Ireland has discretion to provide investment in the form of grants to such projects as it considers appropriate. There is no guarantee of funding for applications that achieve the minimum eligibility requirements. At all times during this process, Fáilte Ireland has complete discretion not to award an investment grant. In addition, Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to restrict a funding offer to certain elements of a project proposal only.

Retention of records

Successful applicants are required to maintain a claim file, including all invoices and bank statements, for a minimum of seven years and six months from final claim payment.

Fáilte Ireland, The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport or any other nominated individual may request, at any time up to seven years and six months from the date of payment of the final claim

to see claim file. If the Grantee fails to provide material requested during this period, the Grantee may be required to repay the Investment Grant Funding in full.

Public Procurement

Successful applicants shall comply with EU and National public procurement law and associated procedures, the core principles of which are that procurement policy and practice should be accountable, competitive, fair and transparent, non-discriminatory, provide for equality of treatment and be conducted with probity and integrity. In particular, the Grantee must comply with the “Public Procurement Guidelines - Competitive Process”, available at www.etenders.gov.ie and all other applicable regulations, statutory instruments and EU Directives.

Children First Act

Successful applicants must be compliant with the requirements of the Children First Act, 2015.

Accessibility and Inclusion

All festivals and events should aim to be universally accessible and create barrier-free experiences, this means ensuring destinations, venues, products and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age.

This funding Scheme aims to enhance accessible and inclusive experiences across Irish festivals and events. All projects must be designed and implemented in accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Accessibility Act (EAA). The EAA introduces accessibility requirements for different products and services and will apply from 28th June 2025.

Call for Expressions of Interest Please note:

Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to amend the terms and conditions of the Scheme.

Process and Indicative Timelines 2025

The deadline for completion and return of Expression of Interest Application Forms is Noon, Wednesday, 26th March 2025.

13th March	Expression of Interest (EOI) Form issued Thursday, 13 th March. 2-week turnaround.
19th March	Closing date for clarification questions to be received by 12 noon. (Stage 1)
21st March	All answered clarification questions to be issued to all interested parties. (Stage 1)
26th March	Deadline for completed EOI forms Wednesday, 26th March.
31st March	Application Form will be issued to successful applicants following EOI. (Stage 2)
7th April	Closing date for clarification questions to be received. (Stage 2)
10th April	All answered clarification questions to be issued to all interested parties. (Stage 2)
30th April	Deadline for completion of application forms.
May	Application Evaluation. Notification of successful applicants end mid-May.

May	Project commencement.
October	Project Delivery.

The Expression of Interest Application form and FAQ Sheet are contained in separate attachments.