

PLANS FOR 2020

VISITOR EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Tales of Two Worlds

- ▶ Develop and implement events strategy and programming for houses and gardens
- ▶ Devise commercial sales plan to support growth for clusters of visitor attractions
- ▶ Initiate business planning for Gateway Garden Event
- ▶ Deliver a capability and experience development programme in Carlow to increase the number of saleable experiences in the county which will appeal to overseas markets



Sport of Kings

- ▶ Complete a shared plan for the Sport of Kings theme and initiate implementation plan

Castles and Conquests

- ▶ Roll out plan for Castle and Norman Experiences Development Programme
- ▶ Continue to work on New Ross and Hook Peninsula Norman Activation Plan
- ▶ Partner with the OPW to deliver a visitor engagement and event strategy at key sites
- ▶ Implement the Market Diversification Plan for Kilkenny to drive overseas growth in the city and county
- ▶ Continue to roll out an evening economy plan in Kilkenny
- ▶ Implement the Cashel Development Plan with an industry capability action plan which will focus on developing the day and evening economy

Vikings

- ▶ Roll out Viking Development Activation Programme
- ▶ Work with industry in Waterford and Wexford to deliver clusters of new Viking experiences
- ▶ Launch programme of supports to enhance economic impact for activity providers, industry, food and drink providers as well as a range of services delivered on the Waterford Greenway
- ▶ Implement the Market Diversification Programme for Waterford and Wexford to drive overseas growth
- ▶ Initiate plan to deliver a Viking Festival in Waterford



Ancient

- ▶ Identify projects to establish the Boyne Valley Drive as a best-in-class visitor experience
- ▶ Deliver a series of business supports to enhance the capacity of the region's food and activity sectors
- ▶ Partner with Meath and Louth County Councils, OPW and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht to advance the *Boyne Greenway and Navigation Process*
- ▶ Work with Meath and Louth County Councils to develop the Púca festival as an international event of scale
- ▶ Work with Louth County Council to develop a masterplan for Drogheda as a gateway to the Boyne Valley
- ▶ Complete accommodation capacity study for Boyne Valley
- ▶ Scope out the Irish food story in the region

Maritime

- ▶ Initiate and develop a three-year Maritime Visitor Experience Development Plan
- ▶ Deliver workshops to key stakeholders and industry to identify and agree new and enhanced experiences for the 'Maritime' signature story theme
- ▶ Implement Market Diversification Programme to drive growth in overseas visitors in Cork City and County



Food, Craft & Festivals

- ▶ Deliver a study into the development of food and drink experiences across Ireland's Ancient East
- ▶ Deliver a development programme for cookery schools, farm tours and immersive food and drink experiences and create new saleable experiences which will appeal to overseas markets
- ▶ Taste the Island – build on the 2019 programme and campaign to drive economic return, increase bed nights and extend the season across Ireland's Ancient East

Historic Towns

- ▶ Phase 4 of updating interpretation and visitor orientation signage in 4 Historic Towns, bringing the total number to 48 signs

PLANS FOR 2020 CONTINUED

Capital Investment

- ▶ 2 new and improved visitor experiences will open at attractions through the Ireland's Ancient East Storytelling and Interpretation investment scheme
- ▶ 2 new large-scale experiences opening through Fáilte Ireland's Large Capital Grants Scheme
- ▶ Supporting 5 projects under the Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

Business Supports

- ▶ Visitor Experience Development Plans – deliver supports which help businesses to create new experiences, extend the season and enhance sales skills to drive growth in visitor numbers and revenue
- ▶ Deliver saleable experience training to industry across Ireland's Ancient East
- ▶ Work with visitor attractions to improve storytelling and audience engagement
- ▶ Work with industry to improve sales skills and revenue and distribution management capability
- ▶ Craft – Training businesses in how to create saleable experiences and optimise sales from in-market platforms



Commercial Development

- ▶ Continue to work with our Commercial Development unit to drive new travel trade business to Ireland's Ancient East through the delivery of a B2B strategy
- ▶ Support the increase of incremental bed nights into Ireland's Ancient East including spend on activities and attractions and ancillary spend on food, beverage and transport

Marketing

- ▶ Ireland's Ancient East will feature in Fáilte Ireland's new domestic marketing campaign **Keep Discovering**, launching in early 2020
- ▶ Continue to market and promote Ireland's Ancient East overseas through international channels
- ▶ Streamline our digital activities and online presence by making it easier for visitors to access the information they need to visit Ireland's Ancient East

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IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

INDUSTRY UPDATE NO. 6 NOVEMBER 2019

Ireland's Ancient East is now a well-established brand and is making a significant impact on tourism across the east of the country. It is delivering increased visitor numbers and spend, as well as lengthening the tourism season and, critically – it is creating jobs and revenue.

Over the course of 2019, 16 new interactive experiences opened across the region following funding of over €2.1million as part of our Storytelling and Interpretation investment scheme, with 2 more due to open in 2020.

This year we also announced the Destination Towns Capital Investment Programme which allowed every Local Authority to apply for funding of up to €500,000 to develop towns across the country. The successful applicants will be announced in January 2020.

This kind of investment in tourism is critical for Ireland's Ancient East to stand out in the international marketplace, particularly when tourism trends are evolving rapidly.

Throughout 2019, the Ireland's Ancient East team worked hand-in-glove with tourism businesses to progress Visitor Experience Development Plans for the region. These are 3-5 year commercial development plans, which will drive visitors and revenue on a sustainable basis across Ireland's Ancient East, especially in the off-peak season and in a way that will appeal to our core overseas markets.

While tourism figures in Ireland are at their highest, it's clear that the rate of growth is beginning to soften with some operators in Ireland's Ancient East telling us that they are expecting business to be down on 2018.

Times like these, when there are a number of complex external factors at play, as well as rising operational costs, remind us of how important it is for the tourism industry to be as competitive as possible and ready to diversify into a wider range of international markets. Supporting the industry to do this will be a core focus of our work in 2020.

There are also many opportunities for growth in new markets and, at Fáilte Ireland, we are redoubling our efforts through training and mentoring to prepare businesses for the uncertainties that lie ahead.

Paul Keeley
Director of Regional Development



Meitheal familiarisation trip at Rock of Cashel

A BUOYANT YEAR KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019

Capital Investment Programme

- ▶ Over **€29m** invested in attractions to date
- ▶ Working on projects with potential to deliver over **€35m** in value over the next **3 years**
- ▶ 10 projects with Strategic Partners Office of Public Works (OPW) and Coillte - **€13.9m**
- ▶ **16** new and improved visitor experiences across the region through the Ireland's Ancient East Storytelling and Interpretation investment scheme
- ▶ Match funding for 3 projects under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
- ▶ Historic Towns signage - 5 towns completed with **85** Visitor Orientation map and story boards installed



Lismore Opening

Driving Performance – Industry and Stakeholder Engagement

The Ireland's Ancient East team is working with industry and stakeholders to drive performance. 2019 has been another great year for our attractions and hotels in terms of economic growth.

Total industry engagements: **1055**
370 industry meetings
89 stakeholder meetings
596 industry engaged through workshops

Attractions

Key account performance
6% year-on-year growth in visitor numbers
4% year-on-year revenue growth
38% attractions have increased employment
40% attractions have extended their season

Accommodation

71% average room occupancy
€108 average room rate
3% year-on-year revenue growth
28% hotels have increased employment

* Performance metrics based on meetings with 161 key accounts - data up to 30th September 2019

Domestic Promotion

€350,000 has been invested in domestic marketing, reaching **94%** of all adults.

NEW PROJECTS

Taste the Island

- ▶ New all-island food and drink initiative to drive economic growth, grow bed nights and drive greater regionality and seasonality
- ▶ **€1.5m** marketing campaign
- ▶ **730** events nationwide, including over 100 events and over 200 businesses signed up to the Taste The Island Charter in Ireland's Ancient East
- ▶ Selection of hero events in Ireland's Ancient East:
 - Carlow Big Houses Festival
 - Murphy's Cork Oyster & Seafood Festival
 - Savour Kilkenny Food Festival
 - Samhain – 5,000 years of Food & Culture
 - Feast of Samhain @ Púca
 - Waterford Harvest Festival/Greenway Grazing the Waterford Way
 - Johnstown Castle Festival of Honey



Destination Towns

- ▶ Fáilte Ireland will invest up to **€7m** through the local authorities located in Ireland's Ancient East to boost the attractiveness and tourism appeal of towns across the region. This scheme is part of the National Tourism Development Authority's work to drive a better regional spread of overseas and domestic visitors and spend.



Púca Festival

Celebrating the origins of Halloween in Ireland

- ▶ 1st October - 2nd November in Trim, Athboy and Drogheda
- ▶ **€650,000** investment in 2019 (Fáilte Ireland, Co. Meath, Co. Louth)
- ▶ **€610,000** marketing spend in 2019
- ▶ Visitor Numbers: **20,000** (Year 1 – Domestic Market)
- ▶ Engaged with **191** businesses - Tourism organisations, businesses, arts/creative groups and community groups



Business Supports 2019

The Ireland's Ancient East team continues to support the building of industry and stakeholder capability through a suite of training supports including Fáilte Ireland's Get Brexit Ready programme, Revenue Management, Market Diversification, Customer Service, improving interpretation and delivery of visitor experience workshops.

- ▶ **595** businesses supported
- ▶ **1680** individuals engaged in supports

ECONOMIC IMPACT RESEARCH

The Ireland's Ancient East brand is having an impact on the region

Based on Fáilte Ireland's national performance estimates 2019

2.7M
Overseas
tourists

1.5BN
Total spend
(overseas +
domestic)

42,000
Jobs
supported

DELIVERING BRILLIANT VISITOR EXPERIENCES – VISITOR EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Tales of Two Worlds

- ▶ **40** industry contacts and stakeholders engaged in delivering the plan
- ▶ Bespoke 15-month **Great Houses & Gardens Experience Development Programme** delivered
- ▶ **22** industry commitments to enhance visitor experiences
- ▶ **23** new and improved saleable experiences for leisure and incentive markets
- ▶ **16 head tour guides trained** through Abbey Theatre programme to improve audience engagement skills
- ▶ **20** attractions attended best practice benchmarking learning journey to the UK
- ▶ **International garden festival** concepts developed and planning initiated



Castles and Conquests

- ▶ **50** industry and stakeholders engaged in delivering the plan
- ▶ **20** businesses committed to delivering an evening economy plan in Kilkenny, with **5** new saleable experiences delivered
- ▶ Market Diversification Plan complete for **Kilkenny** to drive overseas growth in the city and county
- ▶ **Cashel Development Plan** complete following research and engagement with **60** key stakeholders and members of the industry – implementation plan rollout scheduled for 2020
- ▶ Experience Development Programme in **Laois** delivered business plans for **12** businesses to enable them to plan for growth and seek funding opportunities. Emo Court received bespoke supports to develop its capacity as Laois' hero product
- ▶ **€2m** investment from Wexford County Council to bring the Norman story to life in New Ross
- ▶ **25** industry contacts and stakeholders in **New Ross and Hook Peninsula** committed to working together to deliver Norman experiences
- ▶ Improved access for visitors from Wexford and New Ross to the Hook Peninsula via the new Summer Local Link service



Vikings

- ▶ **40** industry and stakeholders engaged in delivering the plan
- ▶ **Viking Visitor Product Development Plan** feasibility study and consumer and trade research carried out
- ▶ Viking Visitor Experience Development Plan Activation Workshop planned for Q4
- ▶ Full programme of supports for Viking Visitor Experience Development Plan industry to be rolled out in 2020
- ▶ First annual **Viking Fire Festival** took place on 28th September 2019 which brought Wexford quayside to life

Ancient

- ▶ Carried out international benchmarking against **4** comparable destinations
- ▶ **64** industry and stakeholders engaged in developing the plan
- ▶ 4 strategic pillars **Unlocking the Heritage, Revealing the Natural Assets, Introducing the Ancient Legends and Developing the Industry Base** were identified to underpin development and growth
- ▶ **29** projects/initiatives identified across the 4 strategic pillars
- ▶ Identified partners for delivery of action plans
- ▶ **5** businesses supported to develop new **saleable experiences**

Craft

- ▶ **6** craft businesses supported to develop new saleable experiences
- ▶ Roll out of **Craft Toolkit: Tapping into Tourism** which was developed for craftspeople and craft businesses who want to get more out of tourism
- ▶ Delivery of **Craft Workshop 'Developing Craft Visitor Experiences'** to **20** crafts people and craft businesses to help them develop new craft visitor experiences



Festivals

- ▶ **€359,000** invested in 10 national festivals
- ▶ **€650,000** (2019) invested in **'Púca'**, new national festival in Athboy, Trim and Drogheda, celebrating the origins of Halloween in Ireland
- ▶ **€1.3m** investment planned for **Púca** for 2020 and 2021