

LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY CITY STRATEGY

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Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority



**WILD ATLANTIC WAY
GATEWAY CITY**

TAIRSEACH SHLÍ AN ATLANTAIGH FHIÁIN

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This document is currently being prepared for Environmental Assessment and Public Consultation. Once this process has been completed and compliance with legal requirement is satisfied, a finalised document will be issued.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE

Limerick is a city of character, full of stories and heritage. It blends a rich cultural base with an ever-evolving contemporary narrative against the backdrop of a waterfront University City. Limerick has undergone significant transformation in its approach to economic development, leveraging its indigenous talent and city assets to deliver sustained growth across a variety of sectors. This collaborative approach must now be applied to tourism to realise its abundant potential to become an international, urban tourism, destination of significance.

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy provides a five-year focus to deliver a collective ambition to transform Limerick into a compelling visitor destination and a base for exploring the Wild Atlantic Way. The strategy reflects a new destination focus required in the short- and medium-term to address the 'new normal' operational environment and how domestic and overseas visitors are welcomed back to the destination after the COVID-19 pandemic.

It will combine the Limerick City experience with the rich countywide experiences to support short-term tourism recovery and growth. By adopting this co-ordinated approach, Limerick will increase the range of day and evening experience options for visitors delivered in a continuously improving visitor environment. It will promote continuous tourism innovation aligned with the city's new 'Atlantic Edge, European Embrace' destination brand, supported by its resilient character that has propelled the city into becoming an acclaimed, international economic destination.

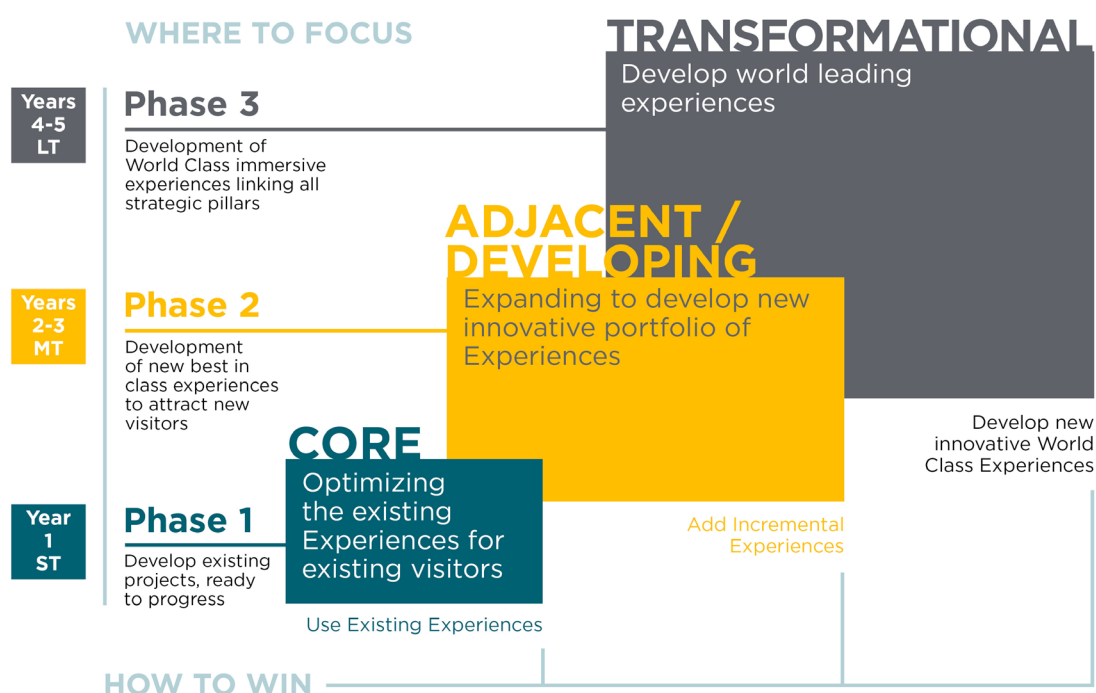
In 2020, Fáilte Ireland consumer tested 'Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City' in domestic and overseas tourism markets. The consumer testing showed that those surveyed strongly agreed that Limerick was a more attractive tourism destination with the 'Wild Atlantic Way, Gateway City' designation. Consumers understood that by 'Gateway City' the destination is not on the route itself but rather has a unique offering of its own and also acts as a perfect touring base for the region.

Success for Limerick will be a new city profile as an attractive, leisure and business tourism destination. It will offer a range of visitor experiences that will motivate domestic and international visitors to base themselves in a city with access to a portfolio of world-class experiences across Limerick. New, iconic, hero experiences will be developed, while existing venues will adopt a continuous improvement approach to growing their international visitor experience appeal. The critical success factors for the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy will include;

- Continuous development of new visitor experiences across the day and evening economy.
- Development of the city as a coherent visitor destination, orientating visitors to explore new areas of the city.
- Creation of an ambitious industry group to collectively advance tourism development with all stakeholders.
- Development of globally significant attractions and activities that provide compelling reasons to visit Limerick.
- Capitalising on the cultural and urban edge of Limerick to build a global tourism positioning.

- Maximise the opportunity provided by the river and the growth of activities for visitors in an urban setting.
- Sustained, economic success, achieved through domestic and international visitor numbers growth, increased dwell time and bednights, new levels of employment, supported through an extended tourism season.
- Creating linkages to the extended tourism product base across the county to attract and retain visitors for longer in Limerick.
- Provide a short-to-medium-term focus for post COVID-19 recovery while building resilience in the long-term through a new strategic destination development approach.

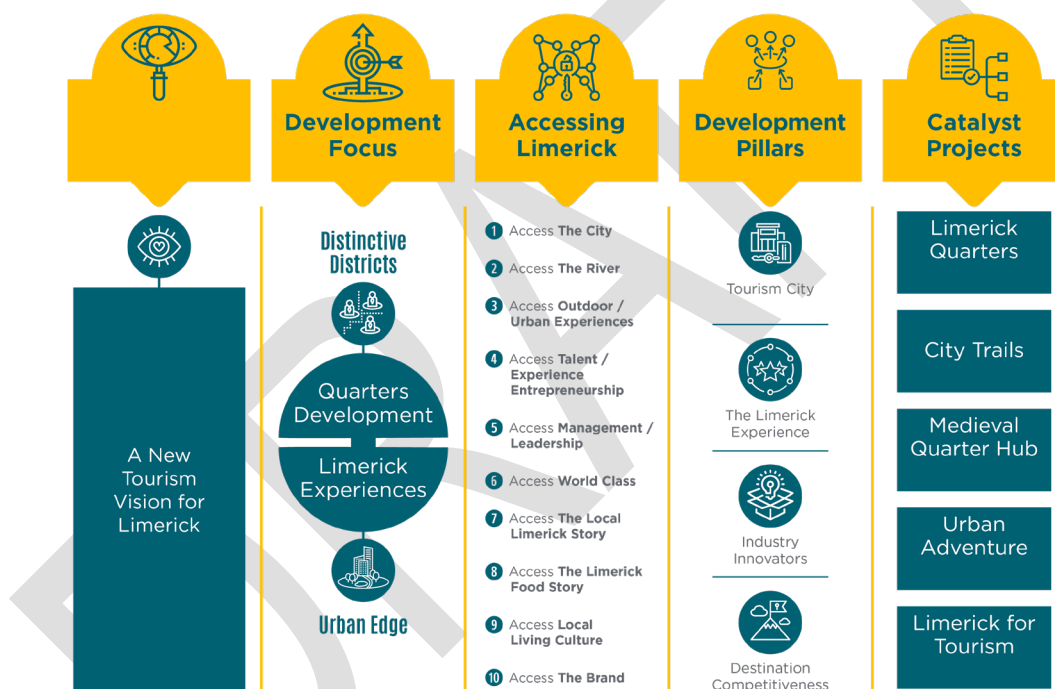
The strategy reflects existing tourism plans and examines new projects to create a compelling urban tourism experience. The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy seeks to capture these projects within one plan and maximise their tourism potential over the next five years. In the development of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy, the objectives reflect the contribution of this strategy to achieving the goals of 'People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025' which includes growing visitor numbers, overseas revenue and employment. In achieving these, the plan also addresses the challenges of seasonality, regional dispersion of visitors and sustainability.



The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is designed to work with existing visitor experience assets and develop them into experiences to motivate visitors to select Limerick. It provides the tourism industry with a strong thematic and product focus for

experience development. Equally, the plan recognises the potential of Limerick as a gateway hub for accessing the Wild Atlantic Way. The city's location adjacent to Shannon International Airport and ease of road and rail access, provides the city with strong fundamentals for future growth.

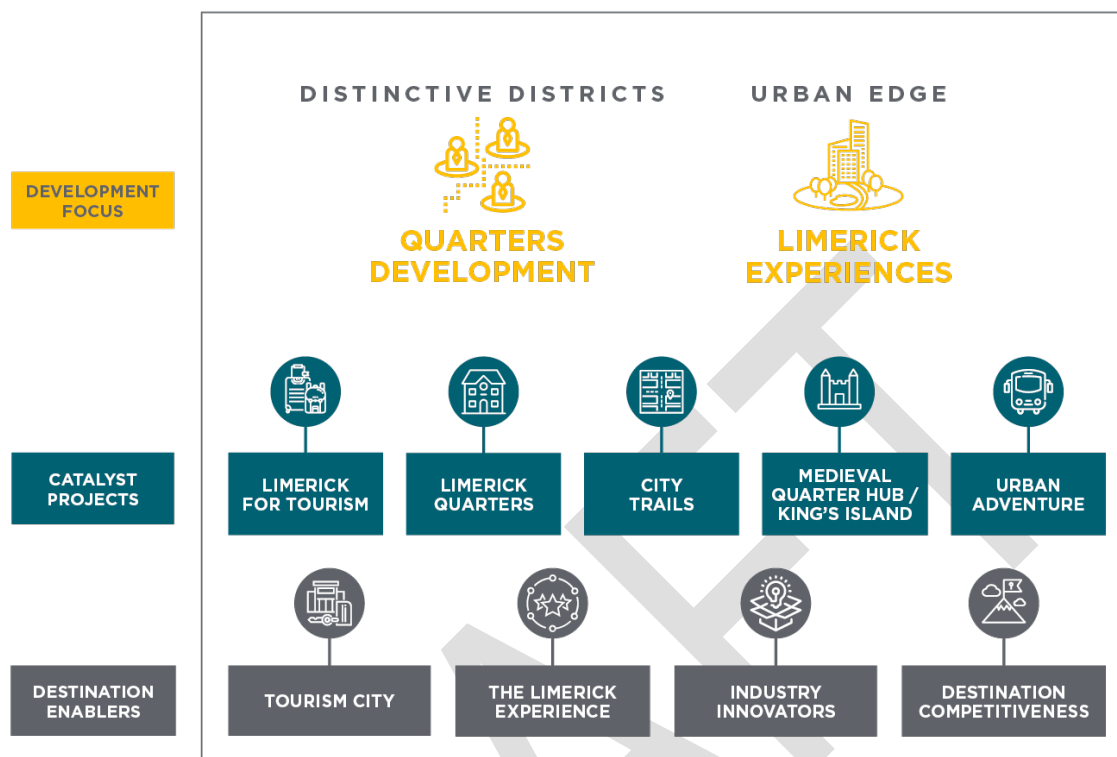
The approach adopted within the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is based on an experience growth model. It is centred around the enhancement and development of visitor experiences created and delivered by the local tourism industry. In the immediate term, the tourism industry will focus on enhancing the existing portfolio of experiences to optimise the current levels of experience provision. This will progress over the medium-term to growing the existing portfolio of saleable experiences, delivered by the local tourism industry. Over the longer term of the strategy, the vision is to deliver a series of catalyst projects that will be transformational in how tourism in Limerick operates while addressing the challenges identified by all stakeholders.



LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY CITY STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- Establish Limerick as a key destination in the leisure tourism market for domestic and international visitors.
- Provide a short to medium-term focus for post COVID-19 recovery while building resilience in the long-term through a new strategic destination development approach.
- Create the tourism structures for long-term tourism success from the 'Limerick, Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Implementation Group' that will leverage future tourism opportunities for Limerick city working with the county-wide tourism base.

- Assess opportunities for Limerick to develop a major international tourism attraction that will become a tourism catalyst / hero project for the city, potentially aligned to the city and third level partners' association with the science, tech and engineering sectors.
- Maximise the potential of existing hero attractions, assessing and developing their capacity to grow visitor numbers and improve the overall visitor experience. e.g. King John's Castle, St. Mary's Cathedral, The Hunt Museum and Limerick Museum.
- Examine how the potential of key city assets can be maximised to develop new visitor experiences that reflect global urban tourism trends i.e. Limerick Milk Market as a key focal point for Limerick City experiences such as food, culture and arts.
- Develop the range and quality of the Limerick Festivals and Events portfolio to attract new domestic and international audiences to Limerick.
- Enhance and market existing saleable experiences while establishing new tourism experiences to attract visitors to Limerick.
- Contribute to sustainable destination development through adopting the Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment (VICE) model as international best practice to develop tourism in a responsible way in Limerick.
- Maximise the opportunity provided by the creation of a coherent gateway destination approach for Limerick, communicating the essence of the place, its people and designation as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City.
- Enhance visitor flow and orientation into the city and throughout its city quarters.
- Work with all stakeholders to improve the aesthetic appearance of the city, fostering community and stakeholder ownership, improving the presentation of Limerick City for visitors.
- Improve the variety and quality of the current evening offering and address existing gaps such as accessibility to attractions, retail outlets, restaurants and live music, particularly traditional Irish music.
- Prepare for the hosting of the 2027 Ryder Cup to maximise the destination opportunity and associated legacy benefits that major events can deliver.
- Development of a strong city tourism destination that will support increased levels of international air access through Shannon International Airport while growing air connectivity directly to the Wild Atlantic Way.



In order to achieve the strategic objectives of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy, the development framework is structured around interdependent layers of activity. They include;

Destination Enablers - Creating the conditions for experience development

The implementation of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is focused on the creation of a number of Destination enablers that support the delivery of a coherent strategy. They include;



The development of Limerick as a quality tourism destination through enhanced visitor infrastructure that creates the conditions for all areas of the city to benefit from tourism.



The creation of new and enhanced day and evening visitor experiences that support a year-round tourism destination.



Industry
Innovators

Developing the capacity of the tourism industry to become innovative tourism experience providers to collectively deliver world-class experiences.




Destination
Competitiveness

A collaborative stakeholder approach delivering the Limerick experience brand that achieves international competitiveness.

Achieving the vision through Catalyst Projects

The destination development focus is based on creating compelling reasons to visit different parts of the city and the creation of enhanced city quarters. This requires the creation of visitor experiences that bring the stories of the urban neighbourhoods to life in new and innovative ways. These catalyst projects are as follows;

 LIMERICK FOR TOURISM	Adopt a new tourism leadership approach to develop the sector to become an important economic sector for Limerick.
 LIMERICK QUARTERS	Develop Limerick City tourism quarters as the framework for Limerick urban experience development to promote visitor dispersal across the city; Waterfront Quarter, Georgian Quarter, Market Quarter and King's Island/ Medieval Quarter, each linked to a revitalised city centre.
 CITY TRAILS	Create innovative city experience trails orientating visitors across the city adopting a variety of experience themes and international quality placemaking approaches.
 MEDIEVAL QUARTER HUB / KING'S ISLAND	Develop a master-planning approach to develop the King's Island / Medieval Quarter and Nicholas Street hub to integrate all existing resources, attract new experiences and maximise the potential of footfall to existing attractions.
 URBAN ADVENTURE	Develop day time urban adventure activity that maximises the opportunity provided by existing built and natural heritage resources such as the River Shannon.

Destination Projects - Developing the Core Visitor Experiences

Across each Destination enabler, a range of development projects have been identified. These will support the delivery of the catalyst projects and contribute to achieving the vision for Limerick. These are developed under the themes of Distinctive Districts and Urban Edge, aligned with the uniqueness of the various urban districts (i.e. Waterfront Quarter, Georgian

Quarter, Market Quarter and King's Island / Medieval Quarter) within the city and the ability of visitors to access the new Limerick saleable, visitor experiences.

WHY LIMERICK?

Limerick is a west of Ireland city that is reinventing itself. It embodies the charm and culture of Ireland's west coast while also boasting an edgy music scene, a vibrant arts community, high quality food offering, and historical built heritage to rival any European destination. The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy aims to ensure Limerick fulfils its potential as an attractive leisure tourism destination.

Since 2014, Limerick has experienced considerable economic growth and is now established as the country's fastest growing regional economic centre. The city and county continue to attract high levels of new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) that exceed all national performance indicators. Limerick possesses all the required infrastructure, talent and ambition to continue to meet the strategic and economic objectives mapped out in Limerick 2030. The delivery on that ambition has seen the Limerick narrative completely transformed nationally and internationally. It is now an international university city recognised as a vibrant place to live, study and invest in. Notwithstanding this growing reputation, the destination, both city and county, now faces a range of new challenges in a fast-changing tourism environment, particularly in recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new 'Limerick Tourism Development Strategy - Action Plan, 2019-2023' has been developed by Limerick City and County Council to revitalise the tourism industry, double the number of visitors, capture opportunities that exist for growth and highlight priority action areas to unlock the benefits a thriving tourism industry can generate. The plan provides the basis for countywide tourism growth. Unique attractions such as Foynes Flying Boat and Maritime Museum, communities and sites such as Lough Gur, Newcastle West and Adare will be central to the delivery of the strategy. The capacity to meet growing demand for outdoor experiences will be met through the ongoing investment in the Limerick Greenway and best-in-class bike and walking trails at Ballyhoura.

Limerick has always represented the 'regional capital' and as the university city has long been viewed as the key catalyst for wider regional development. Its close proximity to smaller hubs across the county creates a unique opportunity to promote the city destination as a wider experience with smaller towns like Adare, Rathkeale and Newcastle West. The opportunity to develop as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City has the potential to become transformational in how the Limerick tourism experience evolves. The city possesses an array of built heritage assets supported by generations of stories with the scope to be developed into compelling reasons to visit Limerick. The city offers a strong mix of accommodation, attractions, quality dining experiences and retail choices providing the fundamental ingredients to grow into an international visitor destination and hub for exploration.

A VISION FOR LIMERICK

It's 2025 and Limerick, a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City has established itself as a leisure tourism destination. The choice of things to see and do by day or night has developed the city's reputation as an excellent base for touring the Wild Atlantic Way. Limerick has become a regional hub for exploration, with visitors attracted by the range of Limerick experiences, quality accommodation and the ease of access to an edgy and dynamic university city.

The city's Waterfront, Georgian, Market and King's Island Quarters all have a distinctive character and feel; and are enjoyed by visitors and the local community alike. Across these quarters, visitors are immersed in experiences that are bringing Limerick's culture and stories alive. The quarters each link with a thriving city centre on the edge of the mighty River Shannon, the life blood of Limerick. An 'always on' atmosphere is created by the fusion of visitors, locals and students, coupled with bustling city streets, waterfront walks, and busy restaurants and cafés. Limerick's cultural creativity is evident throughout the city and a vibrant night time music scene is one of many great unique experiences on offer. Limerick's food heritage is at the heart of the Limerick experience and the buzz of the Milk Market and Market Quarter will guide visitors to sample the thriving foodie scene across all four city quarters.

Limerick's pride as a city of sport is evident at every turn and in every conversation. As the home of Munster rugby, it boasts renowned stadia and sports museums, and the 2027 Ryder Cup host venue in Adare Manor will create moments to be shared for generations. It is a destination where all supporters want to spend an extra night when the big games are held. The city has carved out a reputation for its range of urban outdoor activities. It's a place for couples to get away for an urban adventure. It is the city for family breaks where visitors will experience Limerick through cycling trails, walking trails, public art and on water activity.

Limerick's character as a resilient, edgy, creative and ambitious city is evident everywhere enabling visitors to engage with its true essence.

Existing Plans and Policy

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is aligned with a number of existing strategies, policy and industry reports recognising the importance of tourism to the local economy and culture of the city which include:

- Fáilte Ireland Strategic Plan
- People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025 Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.
- Limerick 2030 – An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick
- Limerick Tourism Development Strategy & Action Plan 2019 – 2023
- Limerick City Development Plan
- Limerick City and County Heritage Plan 2017 – 2030

The following provides an overview of the key actions identified within the reports that directly relate to tourism development with implications for Limerick.

PEOPLE, PLACE AND POLICY: GROWING TOURISM TO 2025

Grow visitor numbers, overseas revenue and employment. In achieving these, the plan also addresses the challenges of seasonality, regional dispersion of visitors and sustainability.

This policy statement is centred on Ireland achieving its full potential as a destination for overseas tourism. However, it is recognised that the domestic tourism market underpins the range of visitor accommodation and services that provide competitive advantage to Ireland in the international market and many of the measures contained in this statement will similarly benefit the domestic tourism sector.

LIMERICK 2030

Limerick 2030 is the first Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick. It sets out a framework for public sector action and private sector investment until 2030 through the three key elements of economic strategy, spatial plan and a marketing plan.

A key objective of the spatial plan for the city centre is ‘to establish a unique tourism offer that takes full advantage of the city centre’s special heritage and environmental characteristics.’

LIMERICK TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2019 - 2023

The Limerick Tourism Development Strategy Action Plan 2019 – 2023 was launched in April 2019. This strategy document identifies four themes that connect the unique selling points of both Limerick City and County. A vibrant city is central to this and the ability to orientate visitors across all areas of the city.

The strategic themes include:

1. Into the Blue, identifying the importance of the Shannon River and Estuary to Limerick.
2. Energy Unleashed, harnessing Limerick’s sporting culture.
3. Vibrant History, showcasing Limerick’s archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage.
4. Alive & Kicking, celebrating Limerick’s vibrant and dynamic culture and night life.

The strategy refers to a range of actions directly relevant to Limerick City;

- Support Council efforts to develop Limerick as a waterfront city via development of the waterfront. (Into the Blue Action 1.2)
- Work with tourism providers to develop iconic itineraries on the water. e.g.: from city to Ardnacrusha; estuary into city; city to Lough Derg; Shannon Pilgrim Way etc. (Into the Blue Action 2.2)
- Continue to develop the Riverfest annual event and explore other opportunities to celebrate Limerick’s position on the River Shannon. (Into the Blue Action 3.1)
- Package water-based attractions in Limerick (boating, sailing, kayaking, fishing, swimming etc.) with other themed attractions (Vibrant History, Alive & Kicking & Energy Unleashed) and Festivals & Events. i.e.: Historic kayak tours. (Into the Blue Action 3.2)

- Market the tourism potential of the natural habitats of Limerick, e.g.: Lough Gur, Westfields Wetlands, Shannon River, Shannon Estuary, Bleach Lough etc. (Into the Blue Action 3.5)
- Extend the GSGL from Rathkeale into Limerick City and onto Montpelier via UL and Castleconnell. (Energy Unleashed Action 1.5)
- Create a marketing template for hospitality providers to notify guests and visitors of local sporting events. (Energy Unleashed Action 1.8)
- Work with stakeholders involved in the golfing industry to establish Limerick as a destination and base for golfing holidays in the west of Ireland. (Energy Unleashed Action 1.9)
- Celebrate Limerick's reputation for sporting excellence through the hosting of international teams, by supporting the existing providers - (Currently hosted by UL/LIT & Manor Fields, Adare). Build a programme of sporting activities to include provision for the family market to coincide with major sporting events. (Energy Unleashed Action 1.10)
- Make heritage venues more accessible to visitors by: Extending opening hours and number of open days and support a more active presence at significant heritage sites (e.g.: guided walks by heritage groups). Create discounted networked heritage cluster packages, a Heritage Leap Card. (Vibrant History Action 1.2)
- Encourage visitors to stop and stay - Via provision of ample food and drink options and thematic signposting throughout the networked heritage clusters and Medieval Quarter in the city. (Vibrant History Action 1.3)
- Create and market a Tourism Route in the city to include the following: St. Mary's Cathedral, Nicholas Street, King John's Castle, Bishops Palace, Treaty Stone, Limerick Museum, Limerick City Gallery of Art, Hunt Museum, International Rugby experience etc. (Vibrant History Action 1.4)
- Engage with the Georgian Society of Limerick and Limerick Civic Trust to explore rich architectural history in Limerick and provide a platform to showcase this hidden gem. (Vibrant History Action 1.6)
- Advance plans for development of a Limerick Conference Centre. Continue to support the Shannon Conference & Sports Bureau and support bid submissions and familiarisation trips. (Alive & Kicking Action 1.1)
- Continue to promote Limerick as a location to international film production companies in partnership with Innovate Limerick. (Alive & Kicking Action 1.7)
- Promote and enhance the Council's existing facilities, i.e.: Libraries, Limerick City Gallery of Art, Limerick Museum etc. (Alive & Kicking Action 1.8)
- Capitalise on the city's Purple Flag status by developing night time activities with key stakeholders and promoting the evening and night time offering. (Alive & Kicking Action 1.9)
- Work with key stakeholders to create themed after-dark tours of medieval Limerick in line with key holidays such as Halloween. (Alive & Kicking Action 1.10)
- Explore Limerick's Unique Selling Points and identify key events and attractors. (Alive & Kicking Action 1.12)
- Extend and develop an interpretation programme for a Limerick Literary Trail and take steps to promote Limerick's literary heritage. (Alive & Kicking Action 1.13)
- Consider the creation of a Tourism Charter to be signed by all public and private bodies allocated responsibility for delivery of actions set out under this [tourism strategy] and in support of follow up plans and strategies.'

Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016

This development plan, updated in 2018, states, 'Tourism as an economic driver is of huge importance in Limerick City and the potential that exists for the Tourism Industry to expand further must be harnessed through appropriate development policies which will enhance the visitor experience in Limerick.

Limerick City and County Heritage Plan 2017 – 2030

This heritage plan, launched in 2017 in conjunction with the Heritage Council emphasises the importance of tangible and intangible heritage in maximising the potential of heritage in tourism development and local economic development in Limerick.

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SECTION ONE KEY RESULT AREAS AND TARGETS

1.1 KEY RESULT AREAS AND TARGETS

The overarching objective of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is to sustainably increase the economic benefit of tourism to the area.

Specific Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) will be baselined and monitored throughout the lifecycle of the plan. The impact of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy will be measured by monitoring key metrics that examine the commercial development of tourism across the area.

The plan framework adopts the VICE model as a means of measuring success. The VICE Framework identifies sustainable tourism as the interaction between **V**isitors, the **I**ndustry that serves them, the **C**ommunity and culture that hosts them and their collective impact on and response to the **E**nvironment where it all takes place.

1.2 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The measurement of success will include analysis of the following areas of performance over the course of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy.

1. Demand side conditions
2. Supply side conditions
3. Destination development
4. Environment

Demand Side - Visitor

1. Increase in leisure visitor numbers (domestic and international) to Limerick by 2% YoY ahead of the national average from year 3 of implementation, measured by occupancy and visitor attraction numbers.
2. Increase in visitor numbers in off peak season.
3. Increase the value of visitors to Limerick over volume.
4. Increased visitor satisfaction.

Supply Side - Industry

5. Increase Saleable Products (five new or improved saleable experiences) and a tailor-made distribution plan for the City.
6. Season Extension: Extend opening hours annually by 5% annually.

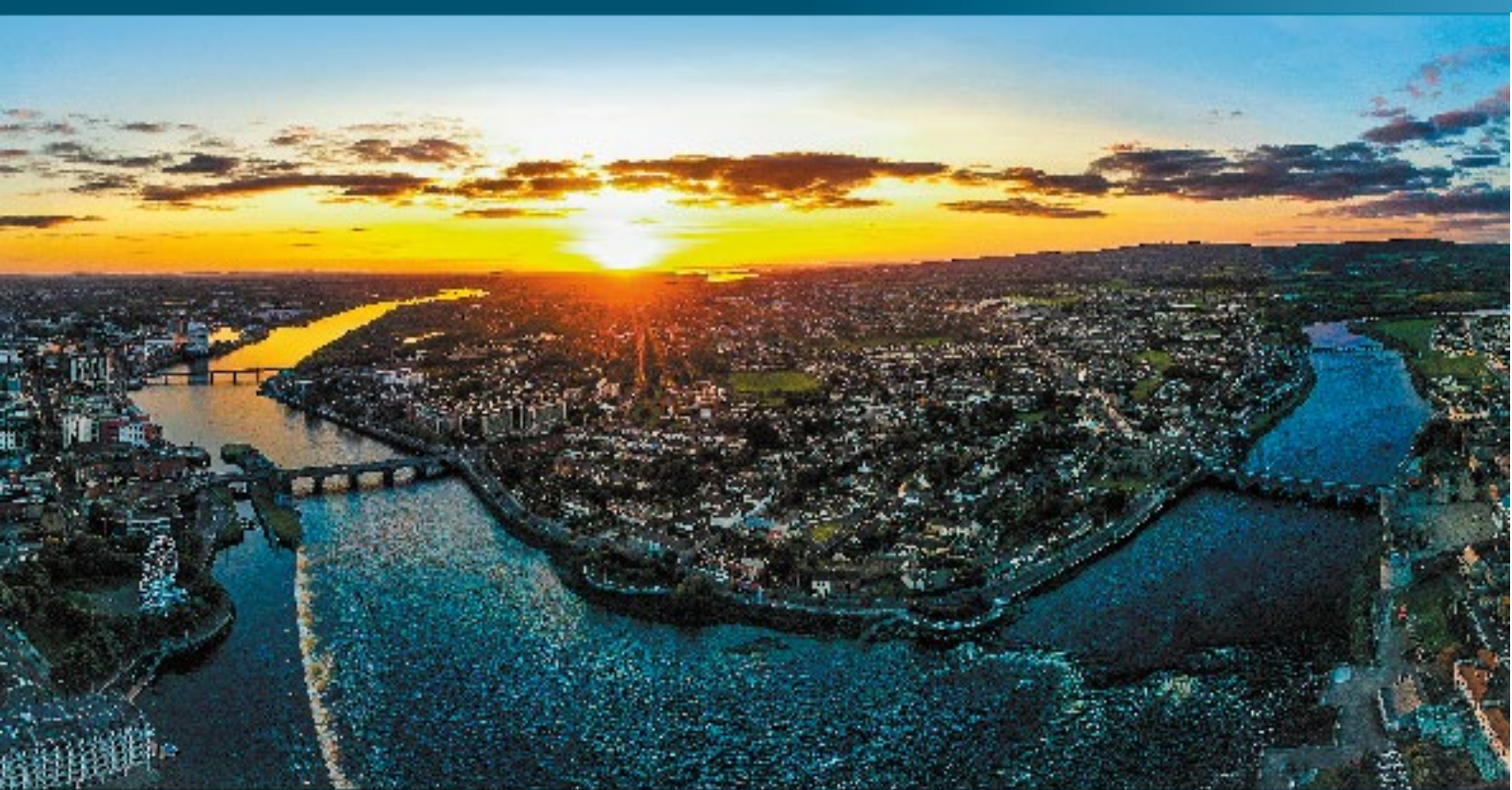
Destination Development

7. Develop global recognition for Limerick as a sustainable tourism destination.
8. Deliver on key sustainable tourism targets in areas of focus such as traffic and transport.
9. Heighten market awareness of the range and diversity of experiences that introduce the visitor to the wider Limerick area proposition.

Environment

10. Develop effective management of the environment, including natural, cultural and heritage assets through the progression of a Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy Monitoring Programme.

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SECTION TWO SETTING THE SCENE

2.1 EXPERIENCE BRANDS

LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY CITY STRATEGY AND OBJECTIVES

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is designed to enhance the existing tourism proposition of the city that will contribute to its evolvment as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City. Limerick represents the first city to be selected as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City experience brand. The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is developed through the adoption of the successful Destination and Experience Development Plan framework (DEDPs created across other national destinations). These are designed to maximise the destination's economic potential through a five-year destination development strategy, focused on delivering world-class visitor experiences.

Developing a visitor experience requires a shift away from the traditional product versus price mentality. It is about delivering life enhancing moments that inspire visitors to share their experiences with others, but also make them want to return. The concept of experience development extends beyond simply providing an enjoyable experience for visitors. To achieve international cut-through in today's 'sharing economy', experiences need to utilise thematic interpretation techniques that evoke a positive emotional response in visitors.

The role of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is to support the development of world-class experiences focused on the city's rich heritage and natural assets while adding to the overall destination proposition. The purpose of this document is to present the destination development themes organised into an experience development framework to be adopted as a destination action plan for the next five years.

This framework will provide the context for tourism operators and stakeholders to work in partnership, create new and improved existing visitor experiences, and communicate coherent and unified stories to the visitor.

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is a five-year destination development plan for the area. The key objectives are as follows:

- Ensure the local experiences are brought to life through the development of the optimal mix of hero and ancillary products that get people into the area and retain them.
- Provide a short to medium-term focus for post COVID-19 recovery while building resilience in the long-term through a new strategic destination development approach.
- Unlock the economic growth potential of an area by progressing a range of key initiatives that will motivate and facilitate potential tourists to visit and stay in Limerick.
- Develop a sustainable basis for commercial development centred on creating strong signature, supporting and ancillary experiences that are commoditised through the creation of saleable experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike.
- Create the conditions to encourage international visitors to immerse themselves actively in the city quarters, interact with local people and engage the senses by immersing themselves in the destination.

- Strengthen the value of tourism to the local community by providing employment opportunities.
- Extend the tourism season for Limerick.
- Work with Wild Atlantic Way to maximise the opportunity for Limerick as a base for exploration.
- Development of a strong city tourism destination that will support increased levels of international air access through Shannon Airport while growing air connectivity directly to the Wild Atlantic Way.

Ireland's Experience Brands are at the heart of 'Tourism Brand Ireland'. They bring it to life and create the motivation for visitors to visit the island of Ireland by defining its diverse character in a way that potential visitors will understand. The Experience Brands provide the competitive advantage that separates Ireland from its competitors.

An Experience Brand therefore must be unique enough to stand out in the international marketplace and stimulate demand. Each Experience Brand must have a clear consumer proposition which ensures that a consistent approach is taken to the identification and development of memorable tourism experiences within these brands. An Experience Brand must also be distinctive in the international marketplace and differentiate itself from other Experience Brands within the island of Ireland and in other destinations.

An Experience Brand must:

- Be grounded in the consumer (travel values, social values, behaviours).
- Be motivational for international visitors.
- Be of scale - made up of a critical mass of related attractions and supporting experiences which are purchasable and accessible and supported by appropriate tourism infrastructure.
- Be more than one experience and usually a combination of supporting experiences which underpin one or two lead experiences.
- Be unified by a compelling story and one which has international relevance.
- Be capable of increasing dwell-time and/or driving economic benefit.
- Have a consumer led proposition, values, and theme(s).
- Be market-led and tested.

Sitting below the Brand Ireland pillars are four key propositions (or experience brands) which represent the country's areas of strategic importance. These four areas are:

Wild Atlantic Way - "Experience one of the wildest, most enchanting and culturally rich coastal touring routes in the world. Wherever you travel along the Wild Atlantic Way you'll find magic, adventure, history and beauty in abundance."



Ireland's Ancient East - "When you explore Ireland's Ancient East, you wander through 5,000 years of history. In these lush, green lands, tales of feuding dynasties hide behind crumbling Gothic architecture; ghostly tombs predate the pyramids; and knights, kings, monks and Vikings loom large in incredible stories."



Dublin, Surprising by Nature - "Dublin living thrives side by side with the natural outdoors so you can constantly jump between completely unique, different and often unexpected experiences"



Hidden Heartlands - "Explore the lush green heartlands of Ireland's natural rural beauty, where activity and relaxation are centred around rural communities and their lifestyles, that can be discovered across a lattice work of land and water trails showcased by the iconic River Shannon and the Beara Breifne Way."



In addition to the experience brands, a dedicated business tourism unit works under the brand **Meet in Ireland**



Fáilte Ireland's Business Tourism Unit works in partnership with Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland to develop Ireland's full potential as a business tourism destination. With an international remit, the focus is to encourage and support both Irish and International businesses to host their International Association Conferences, Corporate Meetings and Incentive Trips in Ireland.

2.2 WILD ATLANTIC WAY OVERVIEW

Established in 2014, the Wild Atlantic Way has captured the imagination of visitors both home and abroad. This is very much testament to the strong partnership between the tourism industry and the Wild Atlantic Way team in Fáilte Ireland.

2021 will see Fáilte Ireland publish the five-year regional development plan for the Wild Atlantic Way 2021 - 2025, outlining how it will grow the visitor economy of the region in a sustainable manner for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Fáilte Ireland has initiated a number of Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) across the Wild Atlantic Way. These are five year commercially focused destination development plans for a region, which bring the public and private sector together to drive visitors and revenue to lesser known areas and attractions, especially in the off-peak season. The themes of the plans have been designed to enhance each area's strongest tourism assets and appeal to core overseas markets. Vitally, these plans will be delivered in a way that encourages visitors to spend more time in an area, without compromising the environment or culture of the region.

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is designed to maximise the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way. Limerick has received a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City designation, based on its geographical and cultural position in the West of Ireland and because of its close proximity to the Wild Atlantic Way. This designation aims to highlight the value to the visitor of combining a stay in Limerick and using it as a base to easily access and explore the wider iconic touring route – the Wild Atlantic Way. With this new destination positioning, Limerick has the opportunity to attract year-round visitors to the region, extending the season on the Wild Atlantic Way.

2.3 HOW THE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy was developed through an extensive programme of consultation, research and international best practice review.

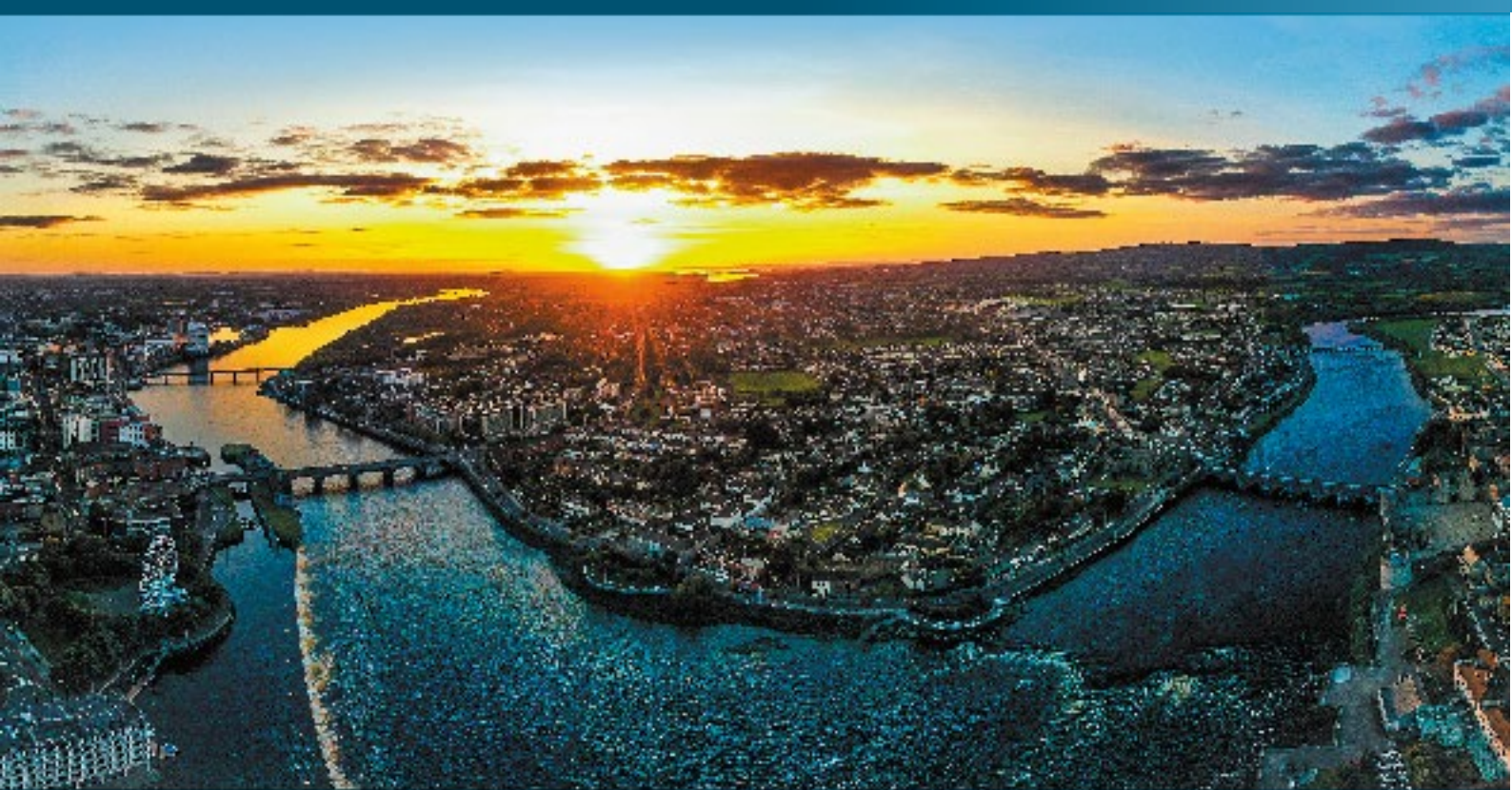
The research methodology employed a bespoke experience and destination research framework, devised to examine current destination experiences, project development considerations and opportunities. Limerick City's current destination capacity was also assessed versus international best practice.

This was further supplemented by a programme of research within the destination, including group and individual consultations, workshops, mystery shopper visits by international and domestic visitors, international consumer assessment, social media analysis and online reviews of the destination.

An analysis of international best practice was undertaken to examine comparable themes or areas that adopt a similar strategic approach that is proposed for development in this plan. The core objective is to identify their key success factors and apply the learnings to this project.

The programme of research specifically included the following;

- Hosting of the project initiation workshop attended by representatives of key stakeholders and tourism industry.
- Mystery shopper programme across all stages of the visitor journey from pre-booking to in-destination.
- Visitor experience product audit for Limerick.
- Review of online share of voice and consumer sentiment to destination through a programme of 'digital noise' assessment.
- Programme of research conducted with tour operators involved in the MICE and Leisure sectors.
- Examination of online saleable experiences available in destination and associated distribution channels.
- International benchmarking against comparable destinations with a similar product base and thematic approach to experiences.
- Programme of secondary research reviewing existing tourism and economic development plans.
- Series of one-on-one industry consultations and on-site visits throughout the destination with tourism industry and other key stakeholders.
- Tourism industry workshop to agree, finalise the strategic focus and secure industry commitment to the process over the next five years.



SECTION THREE WHERE ARE WE NOW

3.1 KEY INSIGHTS INFORMING OUR ACTIONS / RESEARCH OVERVIEW

INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING

A programme of international benchmarking was undertaken to assess Limerick against a number of international destinations with comparable profiles and industry development focus. The three cities examined with the international benchmarking process included;

1. Ljubljana, the capital city of Slovenia
2. Belfast, Northern Ireland
3. Linz, the administrative centre of Upper Austria

Key Learnings Applied to Limerick

The key lessons can be organised under five headings with innovation being embedded in every aspect of sustainable destination development as reflected in:

1. Positioning
2. Product
3. Organisational Structure
4. Community Engagement
5. Internationalisation

1. Positioning

- ✓ Ensuring that there is a clear, ambitious and unambiguous vision with a strategy and action plan for the destination based on a sound understanding of market strengths and the destination resources and aligned with the national tourism strategy;
- ✓ Having a clear and agreed position in the international marketplace that is truly reflective of the core assets and touristic appeal of the destination;
- ✓ Harnessing the power and the potential of the international profile; achieved by the positioning and branding of the wider region and the appropriate national tourism strategy;
- ✓ Agreeing amongst all stakeholders across the destination an agreed set of metrics that will measure sustainable development and the overall success of tourism in the destination at the end of the five-year period.

2. Product

- ✓ Ensuring that there is a commitment to the on-going development and investment in high-quality, innovative products, events and experiences that can add value and deliver a competitive edge to the appeal of the destination;
- ✓ Creating networks representing different sectors, interests, products and disciplines to collaborate in order to identify and deliver new, market-ready products and experiences;
- ✓ Ensuring that all aspects of destination development are sustainable and deliver the agreed outcomes of success for the destination and the community as a whole;

- ✓ Creating visitor experiences that will command high values, deliver year-round tourism and contribute to the unique appeal of the destination.

3. Organisational Structure

- ✓ Establishing an appropriately structured and resourced organisation to deliver the destination vision, strategy and action plan;
- ✓ Ensuring that this has a strong leadership and an acceptable representation reflective of the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders;
- ✓ Developing sustainable and appropriate flows of revenues and access to capital finance to ensure that the strategy and action plans can be delivered;
- ✓ Undertaking regular and frequent analysis of the competitor set and benchmarking against a relevant group of other destinations;
- ✓ Undertaking the collection and analysis of market information and intelligence and acting upon the findings.
- ✓ Having a well-resourced and dedicated destination management and marketing organisation;
- ✓ Aligning all public policies and resources to support the sustainable tourism development of the destination.

4. Community Engagement

- ✓ Ensuring community support for the sustainable development of tourism in the destination through regular and appropriate consultation;
- ✓ Delivering shared wealth and benefits to the wider community as a result of tourism development;
- ✓ Creating opportunities (jobs, business ideas and shared facilities) for members of the local community;
- ✓ Promoting a better understanding of the role and benefits of tourism to the local community and their political representatives;
- ✓ Ensuring that all aspects of tourism development are wholly integrated into the improvement of the overall quality of life for the community and facilities and services are capable of serving both audiences – the guest and the host.

5. Internationalisation

- ✓ Investing in international tourism networks and membership of international tourism organisations;
- ✓ Securing internationally recognised awards and designations;
- ✓ Having a strong presence at major international events and travel shows;
- ✓ Regular benchmarking against an international competitor set.

TOUR OPERATOR DESTINATION RESEARCH

General Feedback

- The Tour Operator feedback suggested a lack of knowledge of Limerick City as a visitor destination.
- There is an overall perception that Limerick City is an unknown entity with clients not asking for Limerick; hence it is not talked about in the international marketplace.
- The city has a significant advantage in terms of its level of accessibility to national roads and rail networks and close proximity to an international airport.
- Overall feedback was that Limerick as a destination is not maximising on its close proximity to an international airport.
- Tour operators suggest that there is an insufficient range of attractions, activities and day time experiences in Limerick City itself. However, they acknowledge there are adequate offerings within driving distance. There was no level of familiarity around evening economy experiences apart from the banqueting experiences at Bunratty and Knappogue Castles.
- Air access into Shannon from Europe was highlighted as an issue in attracting European visitors into Limerick and the region in general.
- The city is not currently perceived as a gateway or hub to the Wild Atlantic Way. Respondents feel it is currently bypassed for the 'hot spots' such as Bunratty, Ennis, Killarney and Galway.
- There is a perception that, with the exception of King John's Castle, the city centre lacks a focal point or heart.
- In terms of future development, tour operators recommended that Limerick must find a strong positioning or niche in the market place. It was suggested that exposure to international and domestic visitors could be generated through more high profile events in Limerick. The city should consider the opportunity to create a great Limerick Foodie Experience such as a walking trail or tour which include optional upgrades for high-end clients.
- Respondents felt there are not sufficient B&Bs, guesthouses, small hotels in the city centre providing the Irish welcome, attentive service and food offerings for international visitors.
- Overall feedback suggests that there is not a sense of a collaborative marketing effort for Limerick as a destination..... "As a DMC, we spend an average of 8 weeks per year travelling internationally promoting Ireland to existing and potential clients, yet, there has never been a collaborative approach to us from Limerick Inc to spread the word."

Leisure Operator Feedback

- In general, clients of leisure operators have a neutral experience of Limerick, i.e. it serves its purpose as an overnight location.
- Clients do not ask for Limerick, hence operators do not talk about Limerick. "If we are proposing Wild Atlantic Way, it is usually Connemara or South West".
- Overall, feedback suggests that the Limerick City story is not being told internationally. One operator highlighted Limerick has never featured in any request or enquiry from any of our clients. "Does this mean the story of Limerick hasn't been well told over the years? The Shannon Heritage story would be more prominent".

- Accommodation is sufficient for tour series groups but not for MICE in the city.
- There was a consistent view that Limerick needs to focus itself on being a “central hub” to explore many areas of Ireland.
- A Distillery or Craft Beer venue that could offer evening events to include entertainment would be a great addition to the city. The city requires more Irish night offerings e.g. Belfast is developing an evening entertainment option. Limerick needs the same. A Siamsa Tire Theatre (similar to Tralee) in Limerick or a Johnnie Foxes type evening experience in the city was suggested.
- A number of operators indicated they are not selling Limerick currently as an overnight option; occasionally as part of a day or more likely, half day option from Dromoland or Adare. Tours will usually include Hunt Museum, Milk Market, King John's Castle, Plassey House.
- It was suggested that Limerick should focus more on its culture and diversity, not only marketing the city as a Wild Atlantic Way “hub”.

MICE Operator Feedback

- US and European MICE markets are not currently programming Limerick City for clients. US incentive clients require 5-star properties in Ireland. However, 5-star castles in the region are being programmed but Limerick City itself is not benefitting from this scale of MICE business due to the lack of quality saleable experiences available for this market. European clients are programming Dublin due to lack of air access to the region.
- Hotels in Limerick are seen as offering good value for money, particularly at weekends when compared with other Irish cities and large tourism towns. However, the city is lacking bespoke, high end experiences, luxury accommodations and venues for the MICE and luxury traveller.
- When proposing to clients seeking 5-star hotels in the area, it is a challenge for Limerick as operators are pitching against the two castle properties in the area. Sometimes with 5-star clients, rate is not as important so this is a challenge for Limerick City. Operators felt that more could be done in Limerick hotels in terms of “value add” for groups.
- Currently the majority of operators only use Limerick as a “pass through” for MICE groups.
- Overall feedback suggests that Limerick is not being programmed for MICE groups. Due to current air access MICE clients are almost entirely from the US into the Shannon region, attracted to castle-type properties but are largely not currently programming Limerick.
- Limerick does not possess sufficient attractions or visitor experiences for MICE groups. If the hinterland, including Lough Derg, Cliffs of Moher, Lough Gur and Adare village are included, there are sufficient day time experiences. According to operators, Limerick City on its own is not sufficient. It currently lacks bespoke and high-end experiences. It was also suggested that it lacks luxury accommodation and venues.
- The summary points among tour operators around why Limerick is losing out to other destinations is largely due to the size of hotels, appearance of the city, lack of luxury accommodations, limited activities and gala dinner venues.

CITY AUDIT

A City Audit was conducted in Limerick adopting the thirteen criteria employed by Fáilte Ireland in assessing Destination Towns. This provided a consistent framework for assessment with other urban destinations and alignment with best practice for urban tourism development.

The key outcomes of the audit process were distributed across areas where the city is performing well, areas with immediate development opportunities and aspects of the city identified as weaknesses.

The key areas of strength identified included accommodation due to the range and quality of the hotels available; the attractiveness of the city which looked well overall with well-maintained flower displays, public walkways and parks. The food and drink offering was rated strongly with the city having a strong food provenance with restaurants and cafes being easily accessible.

A number of areas with immediate development opportunities were rated in the audit process as satisfactory but requiring more attention. These included developing a coordinated promotional approach around things to do and see for visitors in the daytime. Limerick is acknowledged as hosting a wide range of festivals and events. However, this requires a more co-ordinated industry approach to profiling the calendar of events for prospective international visitors.

The audit established eight areas of weakness for Limerick under the thirteen criteria assessed. The eight areas were; access, orientation and signage; public realm; storytelling, interpretation and animation; things to do in the evening; retail; sustainability; basic services and safety; and, visitor awareness (marketing).

Under the criteria of access, orientation and signage, the audit found Limerick to be a vehicle-dominated city, with no encouragement through waymarking to visit tourism attractions in the city centre. The quality of the public realm from a visitor perspective requires development with the lack of a consistent or coordinated approach to public realm highlighted. The opportunity to engage the visitor through local story and history interpretation, storytelling and animation was highlighted for development. The evening economy requires expansion. Within the retail context, there was little evidence of local creativity or talent being showcased despite the strong Limerick arts resonance. Equally, there were no opportunities for tourists to engage in creative activities or purchase local arts and crafts.

Sustainability was highlighted as requiring attention. The provision of basic services and safety for tourists is addressed through the Purple Flag designation, but remains an area for continuous monitoring. The Purple Flag provides a multi-stakeholder platform for Limerick and must be embraced through a collective approach. In terms of destination communications, co-ordinated destination marketing and visitor awareness were highlighted as areas for future attention.

MYSTERY SHOP

A series of mystery shop visits were undertaken to examine the visitor journey from pre-booking to the experience delivered in Limerick. A number of visitor scenarios were examined from pre-visit enquiries for groups to in-destination visits by mystery shoppers. The mystery shoppers were representative of key visitor segments i.e. culturally curious and great escapers.

Mystery Shop Key Learnings - Pre-Visit

- The mystery shopper's accommodation providers' research indicated that the overall willingness to engage and response times were good, with the majority responding within five hours of the enquiry.
- Less than half (44%) of hotels did not help with things to see and do in Limerick despite being asked for suggestions in the email.
- Findings illustrated some confusion among accommodation providers about what the Wild Atlantic Way is. Some respondents seem to perceive the Wild Atlantic Way to be an end-to-end journey as opposed to awareness of, or highlighting, the local attractions, places, people, culture found on the Wild Atlantic Way within a day trip from Limerick.
- Hotel websites were generally good for mentioning and including links to providers and attractions in Limerick although web content on what to see and do was hidden on a number of sites and difficult to find.
- Response times and engagement of attractions and activity providers to the mystery shopper were varied. Almost half responded within one hour, one taking five days to respond and another taking a week to respond. A further provider did not respond.
- Less than half helped with clarification of the attraction or other things to see and do nearby.
- The vast majority of websites did not mention the Wild Atlantic Way and only one third of websites referred to other attractions and activities that visitors could consider as part of a visit to the area.
- Online booking is not widely available with less than half of surveyed attractions offering an online booking option.

Mystery Shop Key Learnings – On Site Visit (In-Destination)

- Visitor orientation was highlighted as a major challenge during the in-destination visit. With little signage or accessible information around night-time options, the mystery shopper's overriding sentiment was one of being unable to easily locate the 'hidden gems' or the authentic night-time experience of Limerick City.
- Throughout the visit there was a sense of not being able to find and define the city centre from a visitor perspective.
- The mystery shopper felt it was difficult to access the real 'Limerick Story' throughout the visit. Storytelling and interpretation in attractions visited generally did not convey the rich history and unique stories of the city.

- The visit coincided with a music festival in the city. Despite advance research on what to do in the city, the mystery shopper was not aware pre-visit of the event due to limited marketing highlighting the festival events.
- While the city has an abundance of tourism assets, a cohesive narrative encapsulating the Limerick City experience was required to communicate the rich history and diverse story to visitors.
- Front of house knowledge was average in terms of providing the visitors with a range of interesting local experience options to consider. It was felt that front of house staff recommended their own preference instead of customising their answer to suit the audience e.g. dinner recommendations.
- The character of the city was best reflected in interactions with the local people telling the local story. The highlight of the mystery shop experience being the food trail and the Milk Market experience, enabling the visitor access the interesting stories they were seeking and an opportunity to engage with local story tellers.

DIGITAL NOISE

- King John's Castle is the dominant attraction featuring in social media posts about Limerick. Images shared are primarily of the castle or views from the towers, featuring cityscapes with the River Shannon.
- There was little engagement within the city centre itself with limited inclusion of O'Connell Street and other city centre areas. A number of placemaking features generated online activity that included street art pieces and the painted horse sculptures at the Hunt Museum.
- The #loveLimerick hashtag is widely used in relation to the city on social media by the local residents, businesses and media illustrating the collective benefit of promoting a singular social media tagline. However, there is limited engagement by visitors.
- There is very little reference to evening economy experiences by visitors (food, pub or local culture) within posts, with the majority of posts generated typically by local businesses.
- Currently, the Limerick experience is not generating any significant social media traction. The shared experiences by visitors are facilities related rather than experience led, suggesting a city offering limited experiences and not reflecting the dynamism of the city, venues, attractions or events.

3.2 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS – S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Quality of built heritage throughout the city.
- Waterfront position and quality of waterfront public realm.
- Existence of strong city districts that bring visitors through the Limerick historical journey e.g., King's Island and Georgian Quarters.
- Connected and compact nature of the core of the city.
- Depth of countywide tourism experiences from unique heritage and culture, to best-in-class outdoor experiences.
- International city profiling through sports event hosting.
- International success as location for foreign direct investment and quality economic destination.
- Development of new destination brand model.
- Range of cultural provision from visual to performing arts.
- Internationally acclaimed art events and home to international School of Art and Design.
- Quality of food offerings, food heritage and diversity of dining options.
- Range of established festivals and events.
- Uniqueness of city centre sites e.g. Milk Market and capacity for multi-purpose use.
- Third level colleges, student vibrancy and new UL city centre location.
- Range and quality of accommodation base in the city.
- Proven capacity to attract and host major events and conferences.

Weaknesses

- Lack of cooperative approach to achieve the tourism potential of Limerick City in contrast to other economic sectors.
- Limited access to saleable local experiences that communicate the authenticity and uniqueness of Limerick City.
- Quality of current visitor orientation, signage and wayfinding for visitors to the city is poor.
- Dominance of business tourism in current occupancy levels achieved by city accommodation providers i.e. occupancy dominated midweek by the business sector.
- Limerick not perceived as a leisure tourism destination.
- Lack of programming by international tour operators.
- City centre retail experience is being challenged by city suburb shopping outlets reducing footfall and city centre vibrancy.
- Limited evening economy provision and lack of non-alcoholic entertainment options in the evening and current scale of evening economy provision.
- Limited focus on fostering tourism entrepreneurs and small businesses with tourism appeal.
- Absence of significant levels of footfall in the city centre outside of peak business period.
- Limited number of businesses open in the city centre in the evening that will generate footfall.

- City centre and other quarters are not leveraging the existing visitor attraction numbers to the Medieval Quarter / King's Island to disperse visitors throughout the city.
- No sustained inputting to a centralised Limerick calendar of events to communicate to potential visitors.
- Limited access to artisan produce telling the Limerick story.
- Lack of a co-ordinated destination narrative being communicated on a sustained basis.
- Strong cultural themes such as arts not being maximised to allow the visitor engage in a variety of art experiences, despite the existence of the internationally acclaimed School of Art and Design.
- Industry collaboration to co-create experiences that will increase destination dwell time.
- Urban adventure activities are limited and opportunity for the visitor to engage with the river.
- Recognition among wider ancillary services of opportunity tourism provides e.g. retail, food and beverage.
- Limerick hotels are largely programmed by tour operators for only one-night stays.

Opportunities

- Development of the city as a weekend getaway destination through the creation of new city experiences and packaging.
- Extend the leisure season beyond the current three-month season.
- Develop an integrated city quarter approach linking the distinctive areas of the city while providing a platform for local collaboration e.g. Georgian Quarter, Medieval Quarter / King's Island, City Centre – A connected destination.
- Linking the heritage and cultural stories to the countywide stories accessible in local communities throughout County Limerick.
- Development of the Ryder Cup event city experience and legacy opportunities for the destination.
- Development of a city quarter model supported by local working groups to generate new visitor experiences.
- Ability to leverage off the Wild Atlantic Way and introduce new experiences to city packages through wider regional collaboration and regional outlook with Limerick as a hub for exploration.
- Grow the leisure tourism product opportunity across the city and link to the product base across the county e.g. mountain biking, cycling, golf.
- International destination profiling through the hosting of the Ryder Cup.
- Increased levels of industry collaboration to develop the tourism potential of the city and become recognised as a national leisure break destination.
- Develop an innovative packaging approach building on existing experiences and activities that improves the supply of the product and contributes to increasing the length of stay in the city.
- Capitalise on the food heritage of the city to develop new visitor experiences that communicate the Limerick food story.
- Development of the Milk Market as a cultural resource based on a multi-day operational model.

- Development of innovative trails approach linking the city and introducing arts and culture as key place making component.
- Creation of a coherent narrative around Limerick as Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City that tells the story of Limerick in a consistent manner adopted by all tourism stakeholders i.e. accessing the local story.
- Development of a collaborative model that creates an active and functioning network that will develop the tourism potential of Limerick as a Gateway City.
- Develop an approach to experience packaging that will maximise the existing assets, recognising the depth of the existing product base and identifying new integrated experiences through industry collaboration.
- Growth of MICE segment through the development of quality visitor experiences.
- Development of urban Blueways linking the River Shannon and canal from the city to the University of Limerick grounds.
- Growing importance of Limerick as a tourism hub for the Wild Atlantic Way and the emerging opportunities through the Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon.

Threats

- Failure to recognise economic potential of tourism in contrast to well established sectors in Limerick.
- International competitiveness of city tourism destinations.
- Accessibility challenge by air to Shannon International Airport.
- Emerging national urban destinations becoming increasingly competitive.
- Threat of Brexit and macroeconomic conditions potentially affecting other key markets.
- Challenge facing regional tourism destinations arising from Brexit and its impact on the UK and European markets.
- Failure to create new innovative experiences that entice programming of the destination by specialist overseas operators.
- Inability to develop strong credible tourism industry collaborative networks in the short-term to develop the sector.
- Insurance overheads limiting the creation of urban adventure experiences.

3.3 KEY CONCLUSIONS BASED ON RESEARCH

City Experience Development – Saleable Experience Supply

The city possesses an abundance of built heritage and cultural assets. There is a depth of historical resonance in the areas of food, arts, culture and the stories of Limerick. However, the current scale of opportunities for the visitor to engage with these potential experiences is very limited. The ability of tour operators to programme Limerick or engage with the MICE sector will be hampered without a development focus on day and evening activities and experiences. The city experience does not “cut through” a competitive marketplace with the current provision levels. The stories and assets exist but experience innovation is now required to leverage these to develop a strong portfolio of saleable experiences to introduce to the marketplace.

An International Destination – Ryder Cup Hosts

The hosting of the 2027 Ryder Cup brings with it an expectation of a world-class host destination. The city will become the “de facto” host destination with significant event lead up, hosting and legacy opportunities. The tourism potential of the event is significant. It must also be considered in the context of the variety of tourism legacy opportunities. It will be a world-class destination development approach that will create the conditions to ensure a lasting legacy from the event. The destination audit has identified a range of areas for development focus to become more visitor ready. These represent the fundamentals of developing a coherent destination. The ability to combine the new and emerging city experiences with a well functioning visitor destination will maximise the event impact. Equally it will form the basis for sustained success post Ryder Cup. The challenge will be to exceed the destination fundamentals and strive for a new level of international competitiveness, achieved through an enhanced value proposition for visitors.

An Integrated City District Model - Neighbourhood Experiences

Global urban tourism trends increasingly point to a desire by visitors to explore the local neighbourhoods and seek out authentic local experiences. Currently, visitors must ‘self explore’ without any orientation guidance throughout the city. The development of a more coherent City Quarter model is required, building on the existing Medieval, Georgian and Waterfront. It will facilitate the exploration of “localhood” options now sought by visitors, open up new areas of the city and aid visitor dispersion across the city. It will provide a platform to create a new narrative for the city and for the tourism industry to embrace, while fostering community cohesion in these districts through unified district narratives. The approach must strive to create an international class destination feel to the city. Modern and contemporary will be integrated with the Medieval and Georgian stories while the orientation along the waterfront will create new energy across these areas, day and night.

Visitor Flow through City Trails

The absence of a city trail linking the core quarters of the destination is limiting visitor flow from existing “honey pots” i.e. King John’s Castle (Medieval Quarter / King’s Island) to aid dispersion across the city. At present, visitor awareness around the geography of the city is limited with no sense of a city centre hub. The creation of well functioning trails will stimulate footfall throughout the day and evening economies across the wider destination. It can

create new visitor economies in emerging parts of the city and will instil investment confidence among the trade to consider extended operational periods into the evening time with increased footfall.

An Exploration Base – Working Regionally to Develop the City Base

Limerick represents the ideal exploration base offering easy access to the Wild Atlantic Way and Shannon Estuary Way spur. It will also play an important role in the Tourism Masterplan for the Shannon. The ability to retain visitors in the city destination for longer will be contingent on its ability to develop its exploration base potential. This requires a development mindset to work with countywide and regional partners to explore new levels of collaboration beyond the immediate city base. The ability to package and co-create experiences with countywide experience providers will be vital in developing the gateway potential. This level of networked approach will be a prerequisite to nurture and sustain the gateway opportunity. Equally, the development of Limerick as a key hub for the Wild Atlantic Way will be vital in supporting the need for increased air connectivity through Shannon International Airport. Improved access into the region is central to visitor growth across the entire Wild Atlantic Way destination. In achieving this ambition for growth, Shannon International Airport will be central to continued destination growth.

Tourism Destination Leadership

Successful destinations prosper through collaboration and tourism leadership. The silo approach that currently exists has created a disparate approach to destination development. A leadership group must challenge the approach to enable Limerick become a more relevant destination in the leisure and MICE markets. The development of a new destination brand will succeed if the product and experience match the visitor promise. The perception that Limerick is being “by-passed” to other destinations such as Killarney, Ennis and Galway will only be addressed through industry collaboration and a unified approach to deliver a compelling visitor destination. The international best practice review has established a range of fundamentals to address from product development, destination positioning to having the correct structures to achieve success. Tourism leadership is the key fundamental required to realise the opportunity tourism can deliver for Limerick.



SECTION FOUR LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY STRATEGY

4.1 THE STRATEGY & OBJECTIVES

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is a five-year destination development strategy designed to guide tourism through a roadmap of key projects adopted by all stakeholders in the pursuit of sustained tourism growth for Limerick City.

Over the course of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy, its success will be measured through the achievement of growth across a range of indicators including new experience supply, visitor demand and destination development indicators. The approach adopted within the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is designed to be transformative in how an integrated approach to developing existing and new Limerick experiences will generate economic growth across the destination. It is designed to harness the potential of the Wild Atlantic Way and leverage this opportunity to provide compelling reasons to visit and stay in the city, while providing the tourism industry with a central focus for experience development. The key plan objectives are as follows;

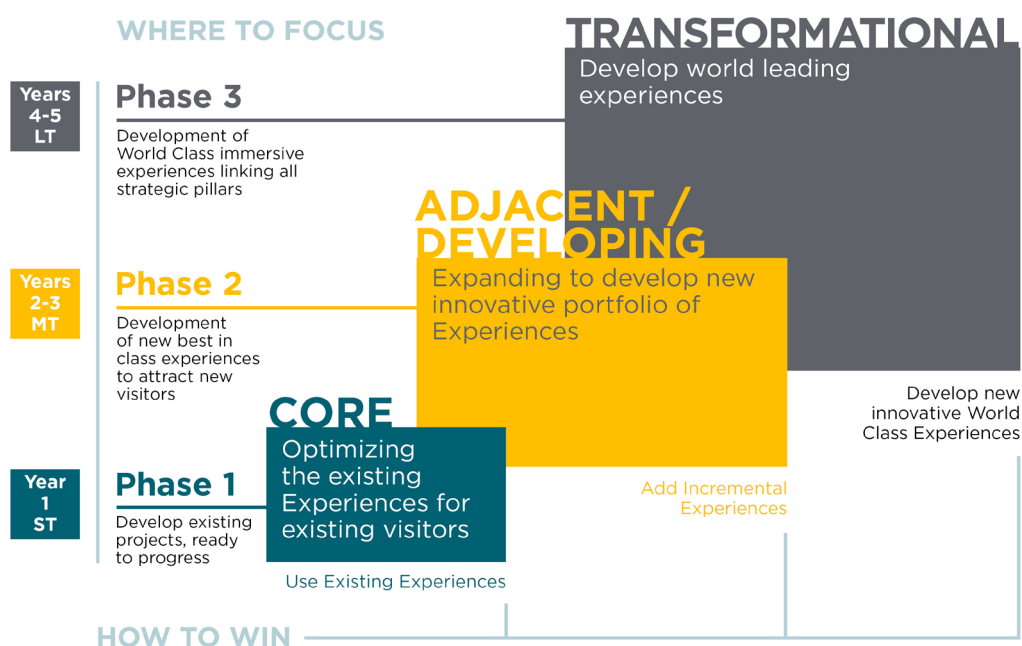
- Establish Limerick as a key destination in the leisure tourism market for domestic and international visitors.
- Provide a short to medium-term focus for post COVID-19 recovery, while building resilience in the long-term through a new strategic destination development approach.
- Create the tourism structures for long-term tourism success from the Gateway Strategy working group that will leverage future tourism opportunities for Limerick City and county.
- Assess the opportunities for Limerick to create a major international tourism catalyst/hero project for the city that will become a major attractor aligned with the city and third level partners' association with the science, tech and engineering sectors.
- Maximise the potential of existing hero attractions, assessing and developing their capacity to grow visitor numbers and improve the overall visitor experience. e.g. King John's Castle, St. Mary's Cathedral, The Hunt Museum and Limerick Museum.
- Examine how the potential of key city assets can be maximised to develop new visitor experiences that reflect global urban tourism trends i.e. Limerick Milk Market as a key focal point for Limerick City experiences such as food, culture and arts.
- Develop the range and quality of the Limerick Festivals and Events portfolio to attract new domestic and international audiences to Limerick.
- Enhance and market existing saleable experiences and create new tourism experiences to attract visitors to Limerick and increase dwell time while supporting the destination development themes.
- Contribute to sustainable destination development through adopting the Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment (VICE) model as international best practice while working with other sustainable tourism models that will develop tourism in a responsible way in Limerick.
- Maximise the opportunity provided by the creation of a coherent Gateway destination approach for Limerick, communicating the essence of the place, its people and status as Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City.
- Enhance visitor flow and orientation into the city and throughout its city quarters.

- Work with all stakeholders to improve the aesthetic appearance of the city, fostering community and stakeholder ownership, improving the presentation of Limerick City for visitors.
- Improve the variety and quality of the current evening offering and address existing gaps such as accessibility to attractions, retail outlets, restaurants and live music, particularly traditional Irish music.
- Prepare for the hosting of the 2027 Ryder Cup to maximise the destination opportunity and associated legacy benefits major events can deliver.
- Development of a strong city tourism destination that supports increased levels of international air access through Shannon Airport and improved air connectivity to attract visitors to the Wild Atlantic Way.

The strategy is designed to provide a five-year roadmap that will foster increased levels of collaboration among all stakeholders. It will provide the development focus to deliver the 'Limerick Experience' to achieve the key economic and destination objectives of season extension, increased revenue and employment growth. Limerick, its people and designation as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City, builds on the existing destination strengths and highlights immediate growth opportunities. Collectively, this will contribute to the development of a sustainable destination approach and narrative for adoption by all stakeholders.

4.2 LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY CITY STRATEGIC APPROACH

Over the five years of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy, the approach is to enhance the existing core visitor proposition to the longer term development of world-class visitor experiences. It will support the ambition to become a world leading destination harnessing the city's unique stories, status as a gateway tourism hub and base for the Wild Atlantic Way. It will support the telling of the Limerick story through world-class immersive and fascinating experiences for visitors.



In order to achieve the strategic objectives of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy, the development framework is structured around three interdependent layers of activity. They include;

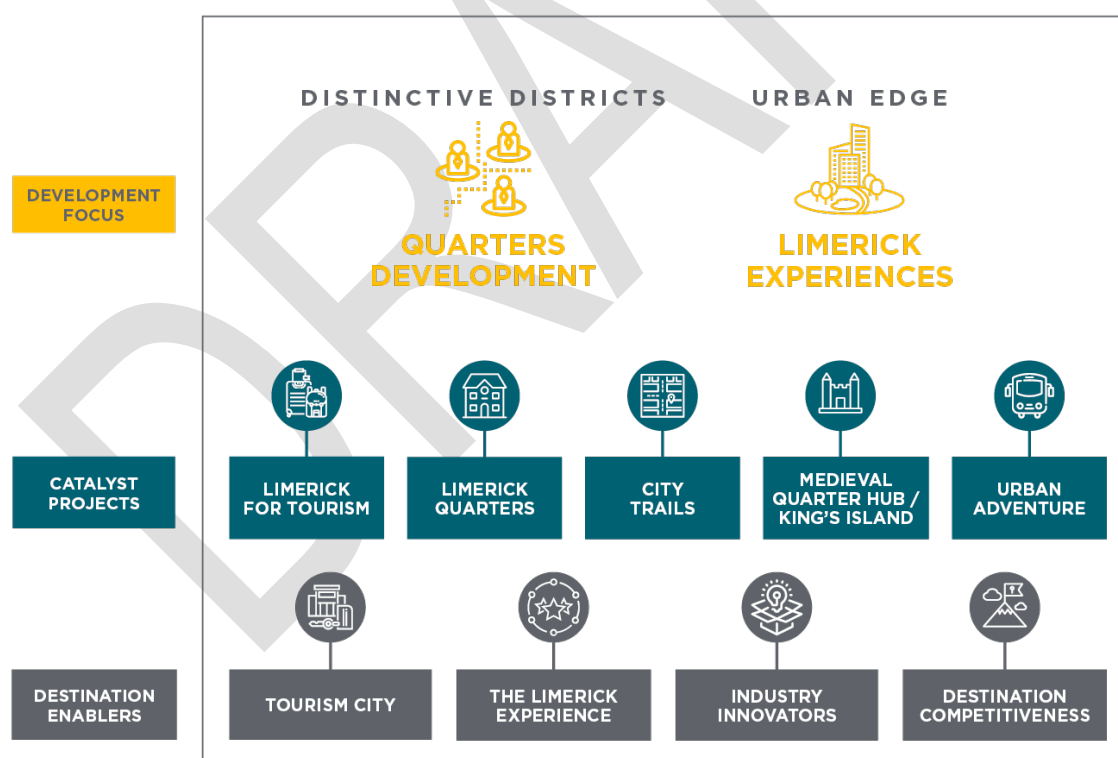
- A: Long Term: Achieving the destination's transformational ambition through the delivery of Catalyst Projects
- B: Destination Enablers - Create the conditions for enhanced experience development through four Destination Enablers
- C: Destination projects that build on the existing portfolio of civic, built and natural heritage assets

This phased development approach is based on optimising the current visitor experience asset base and working with all stakeholders to develop new saleable products, leveraging these existing experiences. Over the longer term, a number of transformational projects will be developed (i.e. Catalysts Projects) that will harness the existing product base and create the scale required to deliver a sustainable destination approach. They will create a focus for development among the tourism industry and are designed to expand the experience product base. The transformational projects approach will link all facets of the Limerick Wild

Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy to deliver the larger vision and provide a platform for all stakeholders to embrace in developing a world-class Limerick experience.

The Destination enablers and development focus themes are designed to provide the basis for a coherent industry approach to experience development and outline key supporting projects to enhance the Limerick experience and further develop the catalyst projects. The strategic Destination enabler themes will ensure a consistent development focus for the 'Limerick Visitor Experience' while influencing future 'product' creation. These are supported by a series of projects that are identified by stakeholders for delivery and will act as strategic enablers to accelerate the destination capacity, product base and collaboration to deliver world-class Limerick experiences.

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy model is based on achieving a collective destination vision delivering unique urban experiences that promote longer dwell time and enable Limerick to maximise the global opportunity presented by the Wild Atlantic Way. It is structured around a developmental focus delivering new city experiences through the enhancement of the City Quarters and creating new day and evening experiences. Each element of the development framework requires a degree of interactivity with a suite of experiences required to bring the Quarters alive and enable the visitor to become more immersed in the destination.



In achieving the overarching vision, a range of catalyst projects have been identified that will contribute to the creation of the in-destination conditions for tourism growth. These reflect

the strategic Destination enablers that will guide the development focus over the next five years. In achieving the plan objectives guided through the Destination enablers, each enabler contains a number of destination projects.



These Destination enablers provide the development focus for Limerick over the five-year timeframe of this plan.

Destination Enabler Themes

 Tourism City	The development of Limerick as a quality tourism destination through enhanced visitor infrastructure creating the conditions for all areas of the city to benefit from tourism.
 The Limerick Experience	The creation of new and enhanced day and evening visitor experiences that support a year round tourism destination.
 Industry Innovators	Developing the capacity of the tourism industry to become innovative tourism experience providers to collectively deliver world-class experiences.
 Destination Competitiveness	A collaborative stakeholder approach delivering the Limerick experience brand that achieves international competitiveness.

The following represent the projects identified through the stakeholder engagement process to deliver destination change and create the platform for tourism growth.

Catalysts Projects

 LIMERICK FOR TOURISM	Roll out of Limericks designation as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City, leveraging Limerick's proximity to the coastline for discovering what Limerick has to offer, while also being a perfect base to explore the Wild Atlantic Way. Establish clear terms of use and utilise the new designation as an enabler for accessing domestic and international markets for leisure tourism.
 LIMERICK QUARTERS	Create a City Quarters tourism experience development approach focusing on the districts of the Georgian, Medieval / King's Island, Market Quarter and Waterfront. This will include a focus on the waterfront area and integrating O'Connell St as a key city hub for the enhancement of the Limerick City visitor experience.

	Placemaking and orientation – development of a consistent approach to orientation signage using the Limerick Quarters model, contributing to the sense of place for Limerick.
 CITY TRAILS	Development of new city Experience Trails and Looped Walks of various distances to introduce visitor to the full range of Limerick experiences and aid visitor dispersion around the city quarters e.g. Artistic Limerick (urban art), Limerick Food Trails, Fashion Edge, local craft beer trail, Music and Trad trails.
 MEDIEVAL QUARTER HUB / KING'S ISLAND	Develop a masterplanning approach to develop the Medieval Quarter and Nicholas Street hub to integrate all existing resources, attract new experiences and maximise the potential of footfall to existing attractions.
 URBAN ADVENTURE	<p>Maximise the potential of existing hero attractions, assessing opportunities to upgrade the existing product offering, developing their capacity to grow visitor numbers and improve the overall visitor experience. e.g. King John's Castle, St. Mary's Cathedral, Hunt Museum, Limerick Museum.</p> <p>Increase collaboration between Limerick's City and County attractions by exploring the potential in developing a Sight Seeing Pass as a collective ticketing option for Limerick.</p> <p>Increase the number of city based saleable experiences with added emphasis on the need to develop activity experiences and the evening economy.</p>

4.3 DESTINATION PROJECT DELIVERY

Each of the Destination Enablers will be delivered through a focus on the following areas of development;

Destination Enabler 1: Tourism City

The development of Limerick as a quality tourism destination through enhanced visitor infrastructure creating the conditions for all areas of the city to benefit from tourism.

1. Enhance the existing city quarters to develop each into tourism districts, facilitating visitor flow across the city i.e. the Waterfront along with Georgian, Medieval / King's Island and Market Quarters aligned with the new Wayfinding, Orientation and Placemaking strategy for Limerick City.
2. Develop a tourism masterplanning approach to the Medieval / King's Island Quarter and Nicholas Street area as a major visitor hub.
3. Adopt an innovative and consistent approach to wayfinding and visitor orientation throughout the city.
4. Create a city trails approach embracing the range of experiences that Limerick can offer on trails and loops of various lengths.
5. Review the opportunity for placemaking presented through public realm enhancements that contribute to the city visitor experience.

6. Examine the opportunity of linking the city with the University of Limerick as an urban blueway.
7. Develop a new masterplan for St. Mary's Cathedral to maximise its potential as a major visitor attraction including new opportunities to view the city at height.
8. Develop the Franciscan Friary as a tourism opportunity site to deliver a city centre visitor experience.
9. Enhance the heritage value of the city through the continued activity of Limerick Civic Trust supported by new experience development focus.
10. Explore the potential of a major conference and convention centre for Limerick.
11. Examine the development of a new visitor attraction for Limerick based on the commercial heritage of Limerick from technology to film sectors.
12. Examine the opportunity for the Milk Market to become a multi-day experience for the local community and visitors to Limerick, based on future feasibility analysis.

Destination Enabler 2: The Limerick Experience

The creation of new and enhanced day and evening visitor experiences that support a year round tourism destination.

1. Develop a core quarter/district experience proposition to deliver motivational visitor experiences based on the demand for "localhood" experiences.
2. Examine opportunities to create a networked experience approach between a number of visitor attractions to encourage increased dwell time and alliance marketing.
3. Examine the potential for waterfront activities and an activity base using currently disused waterfront buildings.
4. Examine the structures and locations to deliver accessible arts and culture experiences for visitors e.g. meet the artist type experiences.
5. Explore the opportunities around the Limerick Lace story to integrate the heritage of lace making into a visitor experience.
6. Support and develop year-round food experiences to highlight the association of Limerick with Irish food heritage.
7. Explore the development of new tourism social enterprises in Nicholas Street that delivers new approaches to living history.
8. Examine the development of a new food and drinks trail for Limerick linking quality experiences.

Destination Enabler 3: Industry Innovators

Developing the capacity of the tourism industry to become innovative tourism experience providers to collectively deliver world-class experiences.

1. Develop the industry knowledge base through the development of the Limerick for Tourism model to create the structures to share experience knowledge among all visitor facing members of the tourism industry.
2. Create a new focus on evening economy experience development across Limerick.

3. Demonstrate destination leadership in engaging with digital platforms and technologies to connect visitor audiences with new and collaborative experiences.
4. Examine industry engagement platforms that link tourism providers in Limerick with Wild Atlantic Way experience providers to co-create new added value experiences on the Wild Atlantic Way.
5. Examine the designation of parts of the city quarters to deliver accessible experiences.
6. Examine the creation of visitor experience opportunities through Limerick's development as a SMART City and application to smart tourism initiatives.
7. Develop an industry wide approach to sustainable tourism activity leveraging Limerick's European Green Leaf City destination as the catalyst for sustainable tourism industry innovation.

Destination Enabler 4: Destination Competitiveness

A collaborative stakeholder approach delivering the Limerick experience brand that achieves international competitiveness.

1. Develop and implement a new tourism charter for Limerick City communicating the ambition and leadership for tourism in the city.
2. Adopt the new Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City brand in destination marketing programming.
3. Work with the new 'Limerick Atlantic Edge, European Embrace' destination brand for a unified destination approach, supported by the resources required for an international tourism destination brand approach.
4. Implement a new festivals and events strategy reflecting an international city destination.
5. Develop a strategic approach to create the structures and organisational capabilities to deliver Limerick for Tourism that becomes the transformational mechanism to accelerate tourism growth in the city.
6. Deliver a new Limerick business tourism strategy to address the challenge of seasonality in Limerick through enhancing its appeal to the MICE sector.
7. Examine the opportunity for a Gala Dining venue for Limerick to support the capacity of the destination to enhance its business tourism offering.
8. Create a sustainable Limerick festivals model supported by a dedicated festivals resource with a multi-stakeholder approach.
9. Support the continued development of the Purple Flag and its capacity to create a unifying engagement platform for the community and tourism industry.
10. Examine the opportunity to elevate the urban activity base through the creation of the infrastructure that supports tourism entrepreneurship in outdoor activities.



SECTION FIVE DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

5.1 STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery. Key stakeholders will take ownership or partner on the delivery of the key tasks required to implement the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy. It represents a five-year operational plan creating a destination development focus for Limerick.

The Gateway City strategy is designed to build on existing project plans and integrate all related activity for a coordinated series of outputs. These include projects that are being implemented, projects featured in existing plans and new concepts to build the destination's capacity for new visitor experience development.

The implementation phase is structured around an action plan approach. The framework adopts the VICE model as a means of measuring success and is applied to the operational framework for the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy. This includes the measurement of projects that will enhance tourism industry capacity development, experience creation and enhancement, catalyst and destination enabling projects.

A list of actions relating to all proposed projects and Destination enablers has been devised. Each of the stakeholders listed below have been tasked with delivering on actions which will help to shape the plan and ultimately ensure the success of the project over the next five years.

Acronym	Stakeholder
LCCC	Limerick City and County Council
FI	Fáilte Ireland
LC	Limerick Chamber
PS	Private Sector
SRCB	Shannon Region Convention Bureau
LCT	Limerick Civic Trust
UL	University of Limerick
CG	Community Groups
LT	Limerick for Tourism
MMT	Milk Market Trust
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
IHF	Irish Hotel Federation

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To ensure the successful implementation of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy experiences and the creation of a sense of place, the following guiding principles have been established to guide certain recommendations and projects listed in this section.

- All projects are self-sustainable, have access to capital and are not relying solely on grant aid to be developed or maintained.
- All projects are on-message with the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy experiences and aligned to the broader mission of the Wild Atlantic Way proposition and brand.

- All projects focus on setting the area apart from its competitors, contributing actively to creating a strong sense of place with a unique feel and ensuring visitor needs are catered for across the day and evening time.
- All projects add value to the area and provide a direct and demonstrable link to either extending visitor length of stay, extending the length of the tourist season or developing a new market.
- Principles of responsible tourism development are embedded in each action, creating better places to live in and to visit.
- All stakeholders will demonstrate a strong and sustained willingness to working as a collaborative network.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy will be overseen by the creation of an implementation group. The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy Implementation Group will operate until 2025 and is tasked with supporting the following objectives:

- Support the delivery of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy.
- Drive growth as per the agreed KPIs in the action plan.
- Lead and manage the action plan ensuring alignment around the prioritisation and delivery of key projects.
- Creation of a representative area wide body which ensures there is a mechanism in place that allows two-way communication between the implementation group and any sub groups which may be formed.
- Ensure that the catalyst and enabling projects support the delivery of experiences identified in the plan and are delivered within the five year timeframe.
- Provide a space where stakeholders can share new ideas with partners.
- Creation of a common tourism voice and a powerful tourism network that promotes each other's interests.

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy Implementation Group will represent key stakeholders and representatives from the area. It will be chaired by an independent chairperson or co-chairpersons with the ability to focus the group in the delivery of the actions required to implement the strategy.

FORMATION OF THE LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY CITY STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION GROUP (*to be advised)

Implementation of the strategy and delivery of the experiences will require each stakeholder agency or organisation to adapt the way in which they tell their story and in the selection of projects and initiatives that gain support moving forward.

However, each new or enhanced visitor offering needs to do more than just 'tell a story'. It needs to provide visitors with an opportunity to experience the qualities of Limerick and to leave feeling fascinated and enriched by brilliant visitor experiences. It is the responsibility of each agency, product provider and business operator to embrace this approach and to prioritise the themed experiences shared with our visitors.

LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY CITY STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

Fáilte Ireland will deliver this strategy in partnership with key industry and stakeholders who form the implementation group.

Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy Implementation Group – will focus on guiding key projects and monitoring strategy progress.

Limerick City and County Council – will play a key role in industry and destination development through the implementation of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy.

Educators / Enterprise – as educators in tourism, the LEO, LEADER and Education and Training Boards can partner with Fáilte Ireland to assist tourism operators in creating and delivering experiences.

Local tourism groups – need to work together to share their experience stories with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland, and work with businesses to help them find and share their experience under the common themes established in the strategy.

Individual businesses (Private Sector / Industry) – need to find which experience theme they best deliver, develop new or enhance existing experiences, and encourage their customers and the marketing agencies to share that story with the world.

IMPLEMENTATION OF FEASIBILITY PROJECTS

This strategy identifies the requirement to examine the feasibility of a range of projects. Where proposals for new initiatives are progressed to feasibility stage, consultation with relevant interested parties will take place.

ALIGNMENT WITH EXISTING PLANS

This strategy has been aligned with all agency plans (LCCC). In doing so, it both supports existing plans and seeks to gain leverage from their strategies and actions.

NOTE: Recommendations listed do not guarantee funding. All projects will have to go through the same application process. It is important to examine which agencies are offering funding as new streams of funding may become available during the life-time of this strategy.

PRODUCTS & EXPERIENCES REFERRED TO BY THIS PLAN

Products and experiences both existing and potential referred to in this document are examples of such products only and are not intended to be an exclusive list. It is envisaged that others can and will be added during the lifetime of this strategy.

5.2 MEASURING SUCCESS

VISITOR STRATEGY

The development of a visitor strategy will be integral to the overall success of the Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy. Research will be conducted in order to establish key market segmentation which will support international and domestic marketing campaigns. The impact of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy will be measured through the monitoring of key metrics that examine the commercial development of tourism across Limerick City. The plan framework adopts the VICE model as a means of measuring success. The VICE Framework identifies sustainable tourism as the interaction between Visitors, the Industry that serves them, the Community and culture that hosts them and their collective impact on and response to the Environment where it all takes place.

SPECIFIC RECORDED OUTPUTS FROM THE STRATEGY ANNUALLY WILL INCLUDE:

- Increase in leisure visitor numbers (domestic and international) to Limerick by 2% YoY ahead of the national average from year 3 of implementation, measured by occupancy and visitor attraction numbers.
- Increased saleable product (5 new saleable experience per annum) and improved distribution
- Increased visitor satisfaction – benchmarked through NPS and TripAdvisor
- Opening hour extension – 5% increase annually'

DEMAND SIDE	
Measurement 1	Increase in occupancy levels at weekends and key holiday periods by 10% by 2025 (against 2019 figures) and further growth of 2% YoY thereafter.
Measurement 2	Visitor numbers and visitor dispersion to key sites across Limerick assessed through measurement of footfall across key sites and attractions
Measurement 3	Visitor Satisfaction of Limerick as a destination
Measurement 4	Visitor spend during visit assessing value over volume

SUPPLY SIDE	
Measurement 1	New tourism enterprise development
Measurement 2	Employment levels in tourism enterprises Grow the volume of destination experiences that are bookable online
Measurement 3	New experiences development based on saleable experiences
Measurement 4	Industry training – Volume of Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy related courses and levels of participation on courses
Measurement 5	Enhancement of festivals – number of events and attendees at key Events
Measurement 6	Extension of periods of business operations – season extension In Limerick

DESTINATION SIDE	
Measurement 1	Appropriate sustainable visitor management model identified and majority of actions implemented
Measurement 2	International recognition for sustainable destination through targeting Sustainable tourism awards and relevant accreditation
Measurement 3	Increased reach of Limerick visitor experiences through social media channels
Measurement 4	An Increased NPS (Net Promoter Score) NPS* how likely or unlikely visitors are to recommend a visit to this area to friends or family.
Measurement 5	Increase in contracted tour operators programming
Measurement 6	Increase in positive press coverage and Equivalent Advertising Value (EAV) domestic and international.

ENVIRONMENT	
Measurement 1	Develop effective management of the environment, including natural, cultural, and heritage assets through sustainable tourism.

5.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

This Strategy provides an opportunity to ensure that all existing and future tourism projects and initiatives for Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner. The VICE (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) Model for Sustainable Tourism is an approach from which this Plan has been developed and which it strives to implement.

Fáilte Ireland recognises the need to integrate environmental considerations into this strategy in a way that responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment. Environmental consideration including inland and coastal water quality and amenity, climate change, traffic, biodiversity, built and cultural heritage, landscape and communities, all play a vital part in the tourism sector.

1. Environmental Assessment

The protection, enhancement and promotion of our most important tourism asset, the natural environment, will form an integral part of the formation of this strategy. At present Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment is being carried out and the strategy will be finalised once this process has been completed to ensure full legal compliance.

2. Sustainable & Responsible Tourism

This Strategy conforms and commits to sustainable growth of tourism in Limerick and in completing the above-mentioned assessments demonstrates the strong commitment to the VICE Model for Sustainable Tourism Development. The implementation of the following guiding principles is key to the success of the Plan;

Guiding Principles for Sustainable & Responsible Tourism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the feasibility of developing and implementing visitor management plans where relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the quality of visitor experiences and local social/cultural impact at key sites
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the adoption of a responsible tourism approach with ongoing monitoring of environmental impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the Limerick visitor experiences are accessible to all where possible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness and appreciation of the Limerick region's unique landscape and environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support voluntary and community-led environmental protection projects, which in turn benefit tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase environmental performance among tourism businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for the protection of key environmental and tourism assets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage sustainable modes of transport and ensure they are accessible to tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve tourist management, particularly in mature and established tourist areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce and implement minimum sustainable standards for tour guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage tourism related businesses to engage in the Leave No Trace Programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase and promote environmental protection and enhancement when progressing actions derived from this plan 	

3. Implementation & Consent

This Strategy is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management. These include the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) and lower tier Development Plans and Local Area Plans.

Implementation of this Strategy shall be consistent with and conform with the above and will involve Fáilte Ireland helping to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with this consent-granting framework.

In order to be realised, projects included in this Strategy will have to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes (including requirements for lower-tier Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which this Strategy is not part and does not contribute towards.

Further detail on requirements in this respect are set out in Section 9.2 of the accompanying SEA Environmental Report.

4. Integrating Requirements for Environmental Protection & Management

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects that emerge as part of specific, competitive, themed and time-bound grant schemes or as part of wider strategic partnerships. These include projects relating to land use, infrastructural development and land use activities and attractions. Reference made to such projects included in this Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer.

In order to achieve funding for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities, stakeholders shall be required to demonstrate compliance as relevant, with measures and requirements relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management.

These measures are further detailed in Section 9.3 of the accompanying SEA Environmental Report.

5.4 LIMERICK WILD ATLANTIC WAY GATEWAY CITY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The implementation of the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery. Key stakeholders will take ownership or partner on the delivery of the key tasks required to implement the strategy. It represents a five-year operational strategy creating a commercial destination development focus for Limerick.

The Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy is designed to build on existing project plans and integrate all related activity for a co-ordinated series of outputs. This includes projects that are being implemented, projects featured in existing plans and new concepts to build the destination's capacity for new visitor experience development.

The implementation phase is structured around an action plan approach. The framework adopts the VICE model as a means of measuring success and is applied to the operational framework for the Limerick Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City Strategy. This includes the measurement of projects that will enhance tourism industry capacity development, experience creation and enhancement, catalyst and elevation destination enabling projects.

TIMING

Short-term	Year 1-2	2021 /2022
Medium-term	Years 3-4	2023/2024
Long-term	Years 5+	2025

Acronym	Stakeholder
LCCC	Limerick City and County Council
FI	Fáilte Ireland
LC	Limerick Chamber
PS	Private Sector
SRCB	Shannon Region Convention Bureau
LCT	Limerick Civic Trust
UL	University of Limerick
CG	Community Groups
LT	Limerick for Tourism
MMT	Milk Market Trust
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
IHF	Irish Hotel Federation

CATALYST PROJECTS		Time	Lead	Partners
1	Support the roll out of Limerick's designation as a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City by establishing clear terms of use and utilise the new designation as an enabler for accessing domestic and international markets for leisure tourism, leveraging Limerick's proximity to the coastline for discovering what Limerick has to offer, while also being a perfect base to explore the Wild Atlantic Way.	ST/MT	FI	LCCC
2	<p>Create a Limerick City Quarters tourism experience development approach focusing on the districts of the Waterfront Quarter, Georgian Quarter, Market Quarter and Kings Island / Medieval Quarter. This will also include a focus on integrating all quarters with O'Connell St as a key city hub for the enhancement of the new Limerick City visitor experience.</p> <p>Placemaking and orientation- development of a consistent approach to orientation signage using the Limerick Quarters model, contributing to the sense of place for Limerick.</p>	ST	LCCC/FI	
3	<p>Maximise the potential of existing hero attractions, assessing opportunities to upgrade the existing product offering, developing their capacity to grow visitor numbers and improve the overall visitor experience. e.g. King John's Castle, St. Mary's Cathedral, Hunt Museum, Limerick Museum.</p> <p>Increase collaboration between Limerick's City and County attractions by exploring the potential in developing a Site Seeing Pass as a collective ticketing option for Limerick.</p>	ST/MT	FI / PS / LCCC	
4	<p>Undertake a feasibility study examining the future development of the Milk Market including international benchmarking analysis to learn from international destinations where comparable venues have become central to the City experience. The feasibility study will also include the examination of the surrounding area assessing public realm, visitor amenities and area aesthetic presentation.</p> <p>Examine the development of the Milk Market as an accessible seven-day visitor experience and key contributor to the Limerick tourism offering based on conclusions of the feasibility study.</p>	ST/MT	LCCC/FI	
5	Implement a master-planning approach to the Kings Island / Medieval Quarter and Nicholas Street hub to integrate all existing resources, attract new experiences and maximise the potential of current and future footfall to existing attractions.	ST/MT	LCCC/FI	PS
6	Development of new city Experience Trails and Looped Walks of various distances to introduce visitor to the full range of Limerick experiences and aid visitor dispersion around the city quarters e.g. Artistic Limerick (urban art), Limerick Food Trails, Fashion Edge, local craft beer trail, Music and Trad trails.	ST/MT	LCCC	FI

DESTINATION ENABLER: TOURISM CITY		Time	Lead	Partners
Project 1 – Quarters Model				
1.1	Create an activation plan for each City Quarter to create distinctive visitor experiences and calendar of activity /events each linked to the city centre experience e.g. animating the Waterfront Quarter linked to Riverfest.	ST/MT	LCCC	FI PS
1.2	Implement the Orientation and Interpretation Strategy as per the successful Destination Towns proposal.	ST/MT	LCCC/FI	
1.3	Examine the feasibility of a calendar of events for the Georgian Quarter harnessing the opportunities presented by local arts and culture and incorporating venues such as the Peoples Museum, Limerick Art Gallery, Belltable Theatre and the People's Park.	ST/ MT	LCCC/FI	
Project 2 – Public Realm & Visitor Orientation				
1.4	Implementation of the new public realm plan for Limerick that creates the infrastructure to support visitor flow between the various city districts, O'Connell St enhancing the aesthetic appeal and attractiveness of the city.	ST-LT	LCCC	
1.5	Develop the Limerick City story through creative place making and innovative approaches to the interpretation of the Limerick story.	ST	LCCC	
1.6	Review all current billboard and outdoor signage on inbound commuter routes to the city to remove or update to deliver destination consistency.	ST	LCCC	
Project 3 – City Trails				
1.7	Examine the development of a City Blueway/Greenway linking the City with the University of Limerick as a visitor experience.	MT-LT	LCCC	UL
1.8	Prepare the city's infrastructure for increased access to cycle routes with the development of the Great Southern Greenway.	MT-LT	LCCC	FI
1.9	Prepare the city's infrastructure for increased access to cycle routes with the development of the Limerick Greenway and support the development of new saleable experiences to maximise the opportunity that this new recreational infrastructure presents for Limerick.	MT-LT	LCCC	FI
Project 4 – Festivals and Events				
1.10	Undertake a review of the current Limerick festivals and events to determine impact and alignment with the new Limerick brand promise. The review process will identify new opportunities to explore in developing the city event programme aligned with themes ranging from mass participation events, seasonal events, food and drink, medieval, music, fashion, arts and culture.	MT/LT	FI/LCCC	

DESTINATION ENABLER: TOURISM CITY		Time	Lead	Partners
1.11	Integrate all Limerick arts and cultural event calendar activity into future city event planning and associated destination communications to maximise the tourism opportunity through an extended programme of events while supporting efficient event programming for the benefit of all internal and external audiences.	ST	LCCC	
Project 5 – Tourism Opportunity Sites				
1.12	Examine the Franciscan Friary on Henry Street as a tourism ‘opportunity site’ in the city with a focus on the sustainable economic development through tourism.	MT	LCCC	
1.13	Examine the feasibility of a major new indoor visitor and cultural attraction for Limerick City examining the opportunities through the rich industrial heritage of Limerick, across traditional and emerging sectors	MT	LCCC/FI	PS
1.14	Create new heritage experiences through the development of new immersive visitor experiences through the portfolio of heritage assets operated through Limerick Civic Trust.	ST	LCT	FI

DESTINATION ENABLER: THE LIMERICK EXPERIENCE		Time	Lead	Partners
Project 6 – Limerick Experiences Network				
2.1	Develop the Limerick story through the integration of a range of existing attractions into a Limerick experience network supported by the development of new experiences across the City Quarters linked to the central O’Connell St area and Waterfront district	ST	FI	PS
2.2	Examine the opportunity to establish new and immersive urban arts and cultural experiences to deliver accessible arts experiences for visitors while also availing of heritage opportunities such as Limerick Lace and Limerick Silver.	UT	LCCC/FI	
2.3	Examine the development of new Living History experiences delivered through social enterprise located at Nicholas Street.	MT	LCCC	CG FI
Project 7 – Urban Adventure				
2.4	Examine the feasibility of creating a water activities hub using currently disused boathouse buildings on the River Shannon as new urban adventure experience hubs while examining the opportunity to link to the water and adventure experiences delivered in UL.	MT	LCCC	PS UL CG
Project 8 – Limerick Food and Drink Experience				
2.5	Develop new Limerick Food and Drink experiences increasing the options for Limerick day and evening experiences while encouraging the Limerick	ST	FI	PS IHF

DESTINATION ENABLER: THE LIMERICK EXPERIENCE		Time	Lead	Partners
Project 6 - Limerick Experiences Network				
	hospitality industry to develop more experiential offerings for visitors.			
2.6	Develop a Limerick Food Experience trail linking the heritage of the Limerick Food Story and associated food and drink experiences. Review the work of the Limerick Food Strategy Group to date examining key strategy recommendations.	ST	FI	PS IHF

DESTINATION ENABLER: INDUSTRY INNOVATION		Time	Lead	Partners
Project 9 - Industry Capacity & Knowledge				
3.1	Use the Local Expert's Programme as a networking and development platform for tourism experiences.	ST	FI	PS LT
3.2	Examine industry engagement platforms that link tourism providers in Limerick with Wild Atlantic Way experience providers to co-create new added value experiences on the Wild Atlantic Way.	ST	FI	PS
3.3	Increase the number of bookable experiences available to visitors in Limerick across the day and evening economy, linked to hotel websites and other online promotional channels.	ST-LT	FI	PS IHF
3.4	Deliver a dedicated annual product and Limerick Gateway destination knowledge programme for front line hospitality personnel focused on existing and new Limerick experiences and accessibility to the Wild Atlantic Way.	ST-LT	FI	IHF
3.5	Examine the development of supports and structures to foster tourism innovation and creation of Limerick Tourism Entrepreneurs.	ST-LT	LCCC	LEO CG
3.6	Undertake a hotel industry specific programme to enhance current online experience packaging and itineraries to attract new levels of leisure business linked to existing and new Limerick experiences to promote increased dwell time in the area.	ST-LT	IHF	FI
3.7	Develop the accommodation and hotel quality profile nationally and internationally by targeting annual tourism awards by members of the Limerick hotel industry	ST-LT	IHF	
3.8	Implement a new collective programme of marketing innovation to be led and adopted by the hotel industry that will collectively promote Limerick and its accessibility to the Wild Atlantic Way through an agreed collaborative marketing and communications strategy.	ST	IHF	LCCC FI
Project 10 - Evening Economy				
3.9	Implement a new strategic approach to evening economy experience development across Limerick City through the Quarter's development model.	ST	FI	

DESTINATION ENABLER: INDUSTRY INNOVATION		Time	Lead	Partners
3.10	Support the continued development of the Purple Flag and its capacity to create a unifying engagement platform for the community and the tourism industry.	ST-LT	LC	PS CG LCCC
Project 11 – Sustainable Tourism Destination				
3.11	Develop an industry wide approach to sustainable tourism using the European Green Leaf City 2020 designation as the starting point for industry adoption of sustainable tourism practices. Build on the 2020 Green Leaf learnings to create a sustainable/eco-tourism agenda for Limerick.	ST-LT	LCCC	FI
3.12	Examine the range of supports required to develop a sustainable destination approach for the Limerick Tourism industry.	ST - LT	FI	PS LC LCCC
Project 12 – Smart Tourism City				
3.13	Develop the opportunity for a Smart Tourism destination through the Smart City activity.	ST-LT	LCCC	PS

DESTINATION ENABLER: DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS		Time	Lead	Partners
Project 13 – Business Tourism				
4.1	Deliver a new Shannon region business tourism strategy to address the challenge of seasonality supported by product development to enhance the appeal of Limerick as a MICE destination.	ST	SRCB	IHF PS FI LT
4.2	Examine the feasibility of a new regional conference and convention centre for Limerick.	MT	PS	
4.3	Examine the opportunity to develop an evening Irish cultural experience that is motivational for domestic and international group and FIT business, supporting the capacity of the destination to develop its business tourism offering.	LT	PS	FI
4.4	Examine the opportunity for a Gala Dining venue for Limerick to support the capacity of the destination to enhance its business tourism offering.	LT	LCCC	FI
Project 14 – Destination Brand and Communications				
4.5	Develop the new Limerick brand approach through a unified tourism destination approach supported by the narrative that supports the ambition of Limerick as an international tourism destination.	ST	LCCC	LT PS
4.6	Implement a media and communications strategy for Limerick supporting the Limerick Gateway objectives and aligned with the new brand communications strategy for Limerick and the Wild Atlantic Way gateway City brand.	ST-LT	FI	LCCC

DESTINATION ENABLER: DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS		Time	Lead	Partners
Project 15 – Limerick for Tourism				
4.7	Develop the structures and organisational capabilities to deliver a Limerick for Tourism structure which can become the mechanism to drive sectoral growth.	ST	LCCC	FI
4.8	Create a tourism industry Charter defining the ambition and collective approach to realising Limerick’s potential as a tourism destination.	ST	LT	LCCC
4.9	Target international tourism awards that contribute to Limerick’s profile as an emerging urban destination.	MT-LT	LT	LCCC

