

# SLIGO DESTINATION & EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

MARCH 2024



# CONTENTS

<b>Section 1</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1.1 Executive Summary .....	3
1.2 Introduction and Objectives .....	4
1.3 Vision .....	5
1.4 How We Achieve this Vision – Destination Development Pillars.....	6
1.5 Destination Catalyst and Destination Enabling Projects.....	7
1.6 Context .....	9
1.7 Wild Atlantic Way – Regional Tourism Development Strategy (RTDS)...	14
1.8 Sligo – Regional Tourism Development Role .....	16
1.9 A Sustainable Tourism Approach.....	17
<b>Section 2</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Approach .....	18
2.1 Achieving Our Vision .....	18
2.2 Catalyst Projects.....	18
2.3 Destination Enabling Projects .....	27
2.4 Key Performance Indicators .....	28
<b>Section 3</b> .....	<b>30</b>
3.1 Delivery.....	30
3.2 Guiding Principles:.....	31
3.3 Action Plan.....	31
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>58</b>
Appendix One – Environmental.....	58
Appendix Two - Supporting Current Policy and Planning .....	63

This is a summary document. A copy of the full Sligo Destination and Experience Development Plan is available on [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie) or on request to [sligodedp@failteireland.ie](mailto:sligodedp@failteireland.ie).

Mullaghmore Head and Classiebawn Castle  
Cover: Benbulbin

# Section 1 - Introduction



# 1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## VISION

Sligo is the adventure capital of the northwest, and a place of immersion in wildness and natural beauty.

This is brought to life through compelling experiences on land and water, across trails and waves of international renown. Sligo's wellness offering delivers a wealth of activities to revitalise and recharge. Its burgeoning music scene, and its thriving culture of art, literature and food enables visitors to truly engage with communities and leave feeling invigorated. The treasures and mysteries of the ancient megalithic landscape, shaped by those who have gone before, lead the visitor deeper into the land and delights at every turn.

## DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

**A HAVEN FOR  
ADVENTURE AND  
WELLBEING**

**THE CULTURAL  
RHYTHM OF  
SLIGO**

**A DESTINATION  
TRANSFORMED**

<b>Destination Catalyst Projects</b>	National Outdoor Activity Centres / Attraction of Scale (Hazelwood Demesne) / Enniscrone Regeneration / SLNCR Greenway / Sligo Town Experience / World Class Golf / Iconic Sligo Walks and Trails / Industry Development / Accommodation
<b>Destination Enabling Projects</b>	The Yeats Story / Rural and Community Tourism / Passage Tomb Landscapes / Wellbeing / Coastal Tourism Experiences / Festivals and Events / Experience Clusters
<b>Outcomes</b>	Year-Round Outdoor Activity Destination / Tourism Industry Development / Increased Community Engagement / Sligo Attractions Cluster / Sligo Town Experience / Private Sector Investment / Regional Collaboration / Visitor Flows to the Northwest / Regional Tourism Transformation / Reduced Carbon Footprint

## 1.2 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

**The story of Sligo is a story of how the landscape has shaped the people and culture of the county, and how its people and culture have shaped the landscape for thousands of years. The majestic presence of Queen Maeve’s Cairn on the horizon of Knocknarea and the megalithic legacy of distinctive passage tombs at Carrowkeel and Carrowmore call out this profound interconnection between landscape and ancient culture. The dramatic prominence of Benbulbin has inspired myths, legends and poetry down through the millennia.**

Beyond its ancient allure, Sligo pulsates with a vibrant contemporary energy, fuelled by a thriving arts culture that celebrates its literary and artistic heritage and its musical legacy. It beckons adventurers with the promise of exhilarating outdoor experiences, inviting them to explore its untamed landscapes. Meanwhile, culinary enthusiasts are tantalised by the distinctive flavours of local cuisine, while music lovers find themselves swept away by the rhythm of Sligo’s musical traditions.

Recognising the need for improved development and promotion of the area’s unique features to achieve increased international recognition, Fáilte Ireland,

working in partnership with Sligo County Council and other industry stakeholders, has developed a Destination and Experience Development Plan (DEDP) for County Sligo. This 5-year plan provides a shared vision and clear direction towards strengthening and growing the destination’s market share through the delivery of catalyst and destination enabling projects that seek to maximise the key strengths of Sligo. It has been developed through a programme of research and consultation guided by the V. I.C. E. (Visitor, Industry, Community, Environment) model for sustainable tourism development. It incorporates the views of visitors, the tourism industry, local communities in addition to a programme of international benchmarking.



## The key objectives of the Sligo Destination and Experience Development Plan are:

- ▶ Ensure the Sligo visitor experience is brought to life through the development of a mix of tourism products and experiences that will attract visitors and retain them for longer.
- ▶ Unlock the economic potential of tourism in Sligo by progressing a range of key initiatives that will disperse tourists across the wider destination.
- ▶ Strengthen the value of tourism to the local community by providing sustainable employment opportunities.
- ▶ Develop a sustainable basis for commercial tourism development by enhancing and creating strong destination experiences that excite consumers and buyers alike
- ▶ Create the conditions to attract leisure visitors on a year-round basis to Sligo and immerse themselves actively in the community while providing the opportunity to interact with local people as part of the Sligo experience
- ▶ Develop the role of Sligo as a key enabler for regional tourism development and transform how visitors engage with the northern half of the Wild Atlantic Way

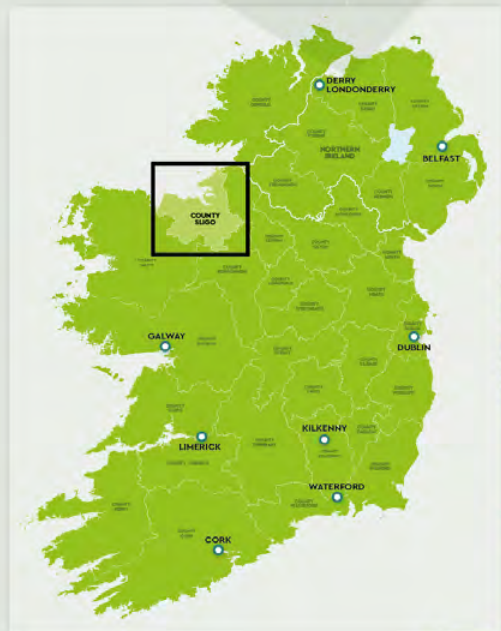
The Sligo DEDP represents an overarching destination development framework linking existing and new projects with new opportunities for consideration. It builds on the ambition of the Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy and will be key to growing the value of tourism in the northern half of the region. This requires a collective stakeholder approach integrating all elements of the visitor experience to develop Sligo as a distinctive visitor destination.

The overarching objective is to ensure Sligo is a great place to live and great place to visit. This requires a focus on the products and experiences with the capacity to grow the value of tourism for local communities and ensure the economic benefits will be dispersed across the county. The destination and experience development approach places a priority emphasis on sustainability and climate action, highlighting the interdependency between all agencies and stakeholders to work together towards a shared vision for sustainable tourism in Sligo.

There are many considerations in developing Sligo as a compelling visitor destination and how it can become the catalyst to transform tourism development in the Northwest. It requires strategic product investment aligned with a shared vision for developing an international class outdoors experience. Ensuring the appropriate levels of visitor infrastructure and services are in place across the county will be a key consideration. This coherent strategic approach will ensure all future infrastructure investment from public realm, signage and transport will be aligned with the ambition for tourism in Sligo. Ingrained within every aspect of the destination development will be distinctive Sligo visitor experiences delivered through our coastal and rural communities, our natural environment and a cultural scene that bounces to a unique Sligo rhythm.



Coleman Centre Gurteen



## 1.3 VISION 2034

**Sligo is the adventure capital of the northwest, and a place of immersion in wildness and natural beauty.**

This is brought to life through compelling experiences on land and water, across trails and waves of international renown. Sligo's wellness offering delivers a wealth of activities to revitalise and recharge. Its burgeoning music scene, and its thriving culture of art, literature and food enables visitors to truly engage with communities and leave feeling invigorated.

The treasures and mysteries of the ancient megalithic landscape, shaped by those who have gone before, lead the visitor deeper into the land and delights at every turn.



## 1.4 HOW WE ACHIEVE THIS VISION – DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

**The vision for Sligo is to become internationally recognised for the quality and diversity of its outdoor activity experiences. It will deliver a new interpretation of sustainable wellbeing through how visitors engage with the outdoors and range of land and water-based activities. These outdoor activities will draw visitors to locations across the county ensuring that the economic benefit of tourism is widespread.**

Sligo will offer distinctive and engaging experiences drawing on its unique blend of cultural riches such as the Yeats story, food culture, musical performance and the many forms of artistic expression that can be enjoyed by the visitor. Its world-renowned archaeological and historical sites will continue to entice visitors to Sligo, to explore the rich tapestry of the landscape.

Sligo Town will bustle with a new tourism energy as a destination attraction in its own right and grow its role as a hub for exploring the diverse built and natural heritage of the county. Developing the appeal of Sligo will transform how visitors will engage with the northern geography of the Wild Atlantic Way inspiring new levels of regional connectivity.

Three strategic destination development pillars have been identified to influence product and experience development in Sligo; **'A Haven for Adventure and Wellbeing'**; **'The Cultural Rhythm of Sligo'**; and **'A Destination Transformed'**. These three pillars will ensure a coordinated destination approach building on the strengths of Sligo, the opportunities identified through stakeholder engagement and leveraging the uniqueness of the Sligo visitor experience.

### A Haven for Adventure and Wellbeing

**Objective** – Developing Sligo as a year-round activity destination through the quality of the outdoor experience delivering a new interpretation of wellbeing.

**Vision** - A year-round adventure filled destination where the quality of the outdoor experience has put Sligo on the international stage. Spectacular walks and hikes, connected greenways and epic mountain biking are combined with incredible golf courses, luxurious seaweed baths and immersive wellness experiences to deliver a new blend of adventure and wellbeing.

Sligo is recognised globally as a world class surf tourism destination where dabblers and enthusiasts share the waves with international surfers across stunning locations such as Enniscrone, Easky, Aughris, Strandhill, and Mullaghmore - where legends ride on the shoulders of giants.

### The Cultural Rhythm of Sligo

**Objective** – Grow the range and diversity of visitor experiences across the county that motivates visitors to explore more and stay for longer.

**Vision** - Sligo delivers its own unique interpretation of culture. From the spoken word to traditional music, from built heritage through history to artistic and literary culture, Sligo is iconic. Sligo's culinary scene boasts a distinctive fusion of flavours, drawing inspiration from both land and sea, offering gastronomic delights that tantalise the taste buds.

The legacy of the Yeats Family, intrinsically linked to Sligo, is reinterpreted and presented to the visitor through renewed and compelling experiences across the county. The treasures and mysteries of Sligo's ancient megalithic landscape, shaped by those who have gone before, will lead the visitor deeper into this land and delight at every turn. The Sligo experience is a seamless fusion of adventure, culture, natural beauty, and rich heritage.

### A Destination Transformed

**Objective** – Developing the role of Sligo Town as the hub for the county and key attractor to the Northwest.

**Vision** - Sligo Town represents a vibrant destination with a constant buzz, attracting a diverse mix of visitors. Sligo's urban life thrives with dynamic placemaking initiatives, festivals, and cultural offerings. Building on this theme will play a key role in transforming Sligo as a well-recognised tourism destination. It will grow the attractiveness of Sligo in the domestic and international marketplace, leverage the accommodation base and develop its own signature day and evening experiences.

Significant regeneration investment, a new attraction of scale, developing the cultural visitor experience base and how visitors engage with the water will be key elements to the development of Sligo Town as a tourism hub. It will play a key future role in how visitors will be influenced to explore the the north of the Wild Atlantic Way and grow the regional connections, help to disperse the visitor throughout the county and create cross border opportunities.

## 1.5 DESTINATION CATALYST AND DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECTS

The destination and experience development vision will be achieved through the implementation of a range of projects identified as Catalyst projects and Destination Enabling projects. They collectively contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Sligo DEDP and a number of target outcomes. These include building a year-round destination, developing the coastal tourism experience base, enhancing the role of Sligo as an attractor in addition to an enhanced urban experience.

It will strive towards reducing the carbon footprint through the collective approach to sustainable tourism. A focus on industry development and fostering a more collaborative approach will be central to destination development and building the capabilities of the tourism industry to realise the year-round tourism opportunity. Nine projects have been identified as key Catalyst projects and are underpinned by seven Destination Enabling projects. These supporting destination projects and extended list of actions are detailed in the Sligo DEDP Action Plan.

### The Catalyst projects identified for the Sligo DEDP are as follows:

Project	Key Actions
<b>National Outdoor Activity Centres</b>	Maximising the potential of two national outdoor activity centres to develop Sligo as the adventure capital of the Wild Atlantic Way.
<b>Attraction of Scale (Hazelwood Demesne)</b>	Supporting the plans to develop a world class visitor experience at Hazelwood.
<b>Enniscrone Regeneration</b>	Supporting the repositioning of Enniscrone as a revitalised destination. Enniscrone has become the focus of significant regeneration projects and can anticipate a new period of tourism growth.
<b>SLNCR Greenway</b>	Development of the Sligo, Leitrim and Northern Counties Railway (SLNCR) Greenway linking Sligo, Leitrim and neighbouring northern counties.
<b>Sligo Town Experience</b>	Enhancing and re-imagining the visitor experience in Sligo Town, including the completion of Queen Maeve Square and the Garavogue River Walk. This will see a focus on developing the town as a tourism hub for the county and the wider Northwest.
<b>World Class Golf</b>	Developing Sligo as a world class golf destination through the quality of the county's three natural links courses and how the sector can be developed to realise the opportunity.
<b>Iconic Sligo Walks and Trails</b>	Enhancing the wide base of trails that offer exceptional experiences linked to the cultural and natural heritage assets of the destination. This is also extended to include building on thematic trails such as food and drink, Yeats and new opportunities such as music.
<b>Industry Development</b>	A collective approach to developing tourism through the strengthening of the tourism industry's capability to work together, package the destination, develop new experiences and grow their commercial approach.
<b>Accommodation</b>	Developing the accommodation base across Sligo through the development of new accommodation options from growing hotel bed stock to examining niche accommodation in rural and coastal communities.

## Destination Enabling Projects

Underpinning these catalyst projects will be number of destination enabling projects that will support the development of new experiences, fostering new ways of working together and maximising tourism opportunities. Their aim is to build the destination's capacity for new visitor experience development.

Project	Key Actions
<b>The Yeats Story</b>	Continuing to reinterpret the legacy of the Yeats Family and their connection to Sligo through new and refreshed visitor experiences across Sligo Town and the wider county.
<b>Rural and Community Tourism</b>	Supporting and promoting distinctive Sligo experiences throughout the county, across key themes such as outdoor activities, food and drink, traditional Irish music, Great Houses.
<b>Passage Tomb Landscapes</b>	Promoting sustainable and sensitive visitor interaction with the treasures of Sligo's ancient landscape such as Carrowmore, Carrowkeel and Knocknarea.
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Elevating and developing the strengths of Sligo's wellbeing experiences, from its long association with seaweed baths to more modern wellness activities and events.
<b>Coastal Tourism Experiences</b>	Continuing to ensure the development of authentic coastal experiences across Sligo.
<b>Festivals and Events</b>	Continuing to provide a platform for all aspects of live events and performance, to offer the visitor opportunities to enjoy the best of the Cultural Rhythm of Sligo.
<b>Experience Clusters</b>	Fostering the development of tourism clusters both by themes and locations, to ensure a critical mass of visitor experiences.



National Surf Centre Strandhill

## 1.6 CONTEXT

### Why Sligo?

**Recent and planned product investment will position Sligo as an enhanced and dynamic destination for the Wild Atlantic Way. It will build on the county's unrivalled cluster of best-in-class leisure activities such as the National Surf Centre and forthcoming National Mountain Bike Centre, to its collection of natural links golf courses with considerable international appeal. Wellbeing experiences, including the county's long established seaweed baths, paired with modern wellness activities offer a new proposition for rest and relaxation. Private and public investment in the destination have the potential to be game changers for tourism and driving new levels of year-round demand among international and domestic visitors.**

The cultural richness of the county provides the visitor with an ever-growing range of reasons for exploration. Sligo's historical wealth is clearly visible in its Passage Tomb landscape, archaeological and monastic sites, and in the Spanish Armada story. The living cultures of traditional music, classic and contemporary art and a vibrant food scene continue to be reinterpreted and presented anew to those who visit. The continued legacy of the Yeats Family in Sligo and how their stories are brought to life provides a further compelling base for experience development and a way to engage the visitor.

Opportunities such as product linkages from new greenway investment, regeneration of towns and communities across the county, and the ongoing development of walks, hikes and trails in Sligo will transform the appeal of the destination on a year-round basis. This level of product investment will be instrumental in developing the role of Sligo as the tourism hub of the Northwest. Greater levels of regional interconnectivity with the Upper Shannon area of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and strengthening cross border linkages will be essential to how future visitor flows are influenced.

Sligo Town is the destination focal point possessing the majority of available bed stock in the county. It represents a town with significant tourism growth potential. The current urban regeneration investment provides the platform to rejuvenate the urban experience while proposed private sector investment in a new attraction at Hazelwood has the potential to be transformational in generating year-round visitor footfall to Sligo.



Sligo Folk Park, Riverstown

## Where We Are Now

The Sligo DEDP was developed through a programme of stakeholder consultation and research, reflecting the views of visitors, the local tourism industry and the wider community. The following summary points reflect the areas of feedback that have helped to inform the development approach to the plan.

### Lead with Outdoor Adventures

The county has a growing level of recognition for its adventure sector based on its critical mass of product and activity providers. The adventure operators have a strong network (Adventure Sligo), with a coherent focus on excellence arising from the Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre and the new National Surf Centre, Strandhill. The opportunity provided through the outdoor adventures sector is one which can be leveraged by locations and communities across the whole county.

The county also possesses an extensive trails network with public support for further developing this network and leveraging the existing long distance trail systems – including the Sligo Way, and the Miners Way and Historical Trail offering regional linkages with Leitrim and Roscommon.

### Industry Collaboration – A collective destination development approach

Industry development and structured approaches to ensuring sustained collaboration will be essential for the delivery of the Sligo DEDP. An emerging opportunity to consolidate leadership of the industry and to develop a new destination network aligned with the Sligo DEDP will provide for county wide ‘joined-up thinking’. The consultations highlighted the strong appetite for an approach that will facilitate a more coordinated response to destination development, marketing, and creating new opportunities for networking. Addressing the branding and positioning of the county as a visitor destination will require a new and coordinated strategic approach and alignment with existing Sligo branding to position the county as a must- visit destination.

## Sligo Town Experience and Destination Role

Sligo Town represents a logical tourism hub for the wider Northwest destination. The development of Sligo as an urban destination, leveraging its cultural and natural heritage assets has the potential to transform the market positioning of the town. The opportunity through a large-scale attraction investment at Hazelwood close to Sligo Town, the development of the new Queen Maeve Square in Sligo and the proposed new Cultural and Learning Hub for the town centre will invigorate the visitor offering. The ongoing emphasis on the evening and night-time economy (building on the Purple Flag Award) combined with investment in the town will collectively strengthen Sligo’s appeal as a tourism destination. It will require a co-ordinated destination approach through industry collaboration and commitment to delivering the destination vision.

### Developing the Attractors

The proposed attraction at Hazelwood has the scope to be a significant attraction to Sligo which will appeal to an international audience. However, Sligo’s outstanding potential to deliver cultural experiences and tell a dramatic story of the past is underdeveloped.

There are elements of the story at sites and attractions such as Carrowmore, Grange, Lissadell House, the Yeats Building, and the new Yeats Trail. However, the story is disjointed with significant gaps while there currently are no iconic cultural experiences that act as a destination attractor for the county as a whole.



Hazelwood House & Lough Gill Distillery

## Cultural Richness

A key component of what makes Sligo attractive as a county to live is the vibrant local arts culture and the county's appreciation for its literary and artistic heritage, its agrarian traditions, and its musical legacy. This deep-rooted regard for this cultural base has resulted in a strong emphasis on events and innovative ways of celebrating the county's cultural heritage. Future experience development aligned with this scale of rich culture must be a priority and equally how it is embraced within the destination narrative, and particularly outside of the urban areas. Through this cultural richness, the destination potential of south Sligo can be unlocked by developing compelling experience clusters and attractions.

## Sligo Wellbeing Experience

There is a growing global demand for wellness travel presenting significant opportunities for Sligo to embrace. Strandhill Community Development Association's award of the EDEN (European Destination of Excellence) Award for Health and Well-being in 2019 represents evidence of the appeal of the area for wellbeing. Enniscrone, through its seaweed baths, wellness activities and future regeneration projects is likewise ideally placed to take advantage of this sector.

There is a growing appreciation within the destination of the potential to build on this association based on the current and emerging experiences linked to wellness travel. These include nature-based tourism, outstanding landscapes, local foods, and strong cultural heritage. Building on this theme, will assist in creating the structures for a multi-dimensional wellbeing offering.

## Digital Transformation

The county's economic development focus includes a level of emphasis on technology and digital innovation. As a strategic focus for the county and the collective pursuit of becoming a leading smart town and region, there is a need to explore the role of technology in tourism. The focus on technology and digital must be embraced by the tourism industry to realise the opportunities presented through future destination development activity.

## Community Tourism Engagement

The development of future greenways, coastal trails and building the coastal tourism experience base will provide new engagement opportunities for community tourism. The development of community trail heads, new local enterprises and experiences will contribute to growing the value of tourism in the county. The dispersion of visitors across the county will require the development of 'reasons to visit' for rural communities. Establishing links to current and future tourism investment in product areas such as trails should represent the starting point for communities to consider how they will engage with the tourism opportunity.

## Accommodation Gaps

A growth in the accommodation stock levels and diversity of accommodation options is a strategic priority for Sligo. There is a requirement to investigate the appropriate mechanisms to address the accommodation challenge in the destination. Ensuring an appropriate mix of accommodation will be important in attracting the target markets aligned with the product and experience positioning for the county. Currently there is a gap in the five-star hotel market while other gaps exist in terms of niche accommodation offerings. Accommodation designed to meet the needs of mountain bikers in the vicinity of the National Mountain Bike Centre or properties that specifically target walkers have yet to be established, while higher-end wellness-focused accommodation is largely absent across the destination.

## Accelerating Destination Development

The opportunity to transform visitor engagement with the northern geography of the Wild Atlantic Way and grow the value of tourism for the Northwest requires an acceleration of the tourism development focus within the DEDP.

A concentrated focus on the actions within the Sligo DEDP has the potential to be transformational in how visitors will engage with Sligo, how it can develop as an attractor to the Northwest, and develop interconnectivity with other regions.



Old Cliff Baths, Enniscrone

# What the Plan is Addressing

## Opportunities to Consider

- ▶ Year-round experience development based on the extensive outdoor adventure product base of the county.
- ▶ Cluster approach to experience development leveraging world class experiences such as surfing, mountain biking and golf.
- ▶ Revitalisation of urban areas and small towns as tourism destinations through public realm enhancement projects.
- ▶ Building on the water heritage of Sligo by raising the profile of the Garavogue River corridor from Lough Gill to the ocean through the core of Sligo.
- ▶ Development of greenways and related walking infrastructure, including the 'joining-up' and repositioning of existing assets.
- ▶ Development of cultural experiences and evening economy opportunities around Yeats and heritage of traditional music in Sligo.
- ▶ Regional linkages through product development that can influence new visitors flows into the county such as greenways, Lough Gill links to Parkes Castle, coastal trails.
- ▶ Potential of the Neolithic Passage Tomb landscapes as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- ▶ Water based tourism experience development from coastal tourism to future Blueway development.
- ▶ Developing niche business tourism opportunities.
- ▶ Linking tourism industry development through digital capability building and Sligo's economic ambition around technology.
- ▶ Development of a Sligo wellbeing experience base approach linked to food, place, community and culture.
- ▶ Highlighting the county's portfolio of iconic natural assets such as Benbulbin, Knocknarea, the Dartry and Ox Mountain ranges, stunning beaches, forests and lakes
- ▶ Elevate the food and drink opportunity for Sligo arising from new large-scale investment in Hazelwood
- ▶ Building on the strengths of existing platforms and offerings such as Sligo Walks, Sligo Food Trail, Yeats Trail, Yeats Unwrapped



## Challenges to Address

- ▶ Fragmented industry approach with limited levels of networking or collaboration to grow the appeal of the destination.
- ▶ Significant level of seasonality associated with Sligo tourism economy.
- ▶ Visitor dispersion across the county and reducing transient nature of destination with visitors associating it as a pass-through destination.
- ▶ Lack of coherent destination narrative and messaging in the marketplace.
- ▶ Limited destination cut through in the international marketplace with significant dependency on the domestic market.
- ▶ No flagship visitor attraction associated with Sligo.
- ▶ Limited range and choice of accommodation options outside of Sligo Town.
- ▶ Gaps in accommodation stock ranging from hotels to alternative sources of visitor accommodation across the county.
- ▶ Pace of delivery of large-scale capital projects that have the scope to transform the tourism experience base.
- ▶ Low engagement with tourism opportunity outside of a number of core areas in the county.
- ▶ Key cultural assets and heritage not accessible to visitors due to limited number of experiences i.e. music.
- ▶ The need to balance environmental objectives versus creating new visitor experiences linked to the activity sector and meeting visitor expectations around sustainable tourism practice.
- ▶ Current levels of online and digital marketing among the tourism industry making it difficult for visitors to engage with the destination from pre visit information to booking experiences.
- ▶ Issue of insurance limiting the growth of outdoor activity providers in the destination.
- ▶ Ability to attract and retain staff into tourism and hospitality careers affecting ability to operate in off peak seasons.
- ▶ Reinvigorating the existing visitor attraction base to develop new visitor experiences and extend their appeal to a wider range of visitors.

## Plan Implementation

The implementation of the Sligo DEDP is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery and is structured around an action plan approach. Key stakeholders will take ownership or partner on the delivery of the key tasks required to implement the Sligo DEDP. It represents a five-year operational plan providing a commercial destination development focus building on existing project plans and integrating 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 Yeats Building, Sligo Town

## 1.6 WILD ATLANTIC WAY – REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (RTDS)

**Regional Tourism Development Strategies (RTDS) for 2023- 2027 have been developed for each of Fáilte Ireland’s four Regional Experience Brands (Wild Atlantic Way, Dublin, Ireland’s Ancient East and Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands). These plans provide the strategic framework for other tourism development strategies, most notably, Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) and County Tourism Strategies. The Sligo DEDP has been developed to contribute to the overarching regional objectives for the Wild Atlantic Way.**

The strategic initiatives for the Sligo DEDP are based on the Strategic Objectives of the Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy (RTDS). Under each of the strategic objectives, a number of strategic initiatives have been identified to achieve the vision for Sligo and contribute to the ongoing sustainable development of the Wild Atlantic Way.

### Strategic Objective 1:

**Grow the year-round appeal of the Wild Atlantic Way domestically and internationally ensuring the area attracts and disperses high value visitors into and throughout the region.**

- ▶ Grow the appeal of Sligo within the international market and address the challenge of the area perceived as a transient destination.
- ▶ Develop Sligo as the adventure capital of the Wild Atlantic Way and home to national outdoor activity centres.
- ▶ Develop the potential of Sligo Town as a connected destination hub from which visitors can experience the wider Northwest of Ireland.
- ▶ Develop destination clusters based on opportunities in activities, food, wellbeing and culture.
- ▶ Grow the volume of available accommodation stock to attract and retain visitors and ensure local economic impact from tourism.

### Strategic Objective 2:

**Raise the international profile of the Northern half of the Wild Atlantic Way to increase visitation and revenue.**

- ▶ Prepare the tourism industry and local communities for future opportunities provided by the capital investment in attractions and activities.
- ▶ Develop the regional opportunity through future product investment that can stimulate new visitor flows into and around Sligo.
- ▶ Enhance the existing trails base to regenerate them to become refreshed trails experiences that enable the visitor to explore the destination.
- ▶ Grow the number of saleable visitor experiences (B2B and B2C) accessible across the destination supported by new approaches to packaging, sales and distribution.
- ▶ Develop authentic local community experiences to disperse visitors across Sligo and meet local people through culture and heritage experiences.
- ▶ Develop Sligo as a destination that transforms visitor engagement with the Northwest.

### Strategic Objective 3:

#### Protect the authenticity and “wildness” of the Wild Atlantic Way.

Protect, sustain and enhance the natural environment of the destination and how visitors engage with our natural environment.

Develop the international profile of the destination as an authentic destination and home to great coastal tourism experiences.

Build on the heritage of surfing in the destination and grow its year-round appeal through the National Surf Centre Strandhill.

### Strategic Objective 4:

#### Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability so that it can thrive over the period of this plan.

Develop the capacity of the tourism industry to develop its online presence and commercial approach to online activity.

Work with the tourism industry to improve their capabilities to deliver new and enhanced experiences aligned with the destination vision.

Develop the cultural opportunity across Sligo to create vibrant evening economy hubs for visitors.

### Strategic Objective 5:

#### Foster strong coalitions of industry and stakeholders with a common purpose in creating flourishing destinations and thriving communities.

Develop tourism clusters focused on destination development opportunities to include activities, food, music, culture and Yeats.

Encourage private sector investment in the destination to create new experiences that will grow the tourism product base in the county.

Ensure tourism is integrated as a key element of future strategic development to include future urban and rural regeneration activity.

Grow the number of tourism enterprises operating in the destination supported by an environment that encourages new levels of tourism entrepreneurship.

Develop sustainable transport options to reduce the carbon footprint and examine new approaches to visitor management with sustainability at the core of all destination activity.



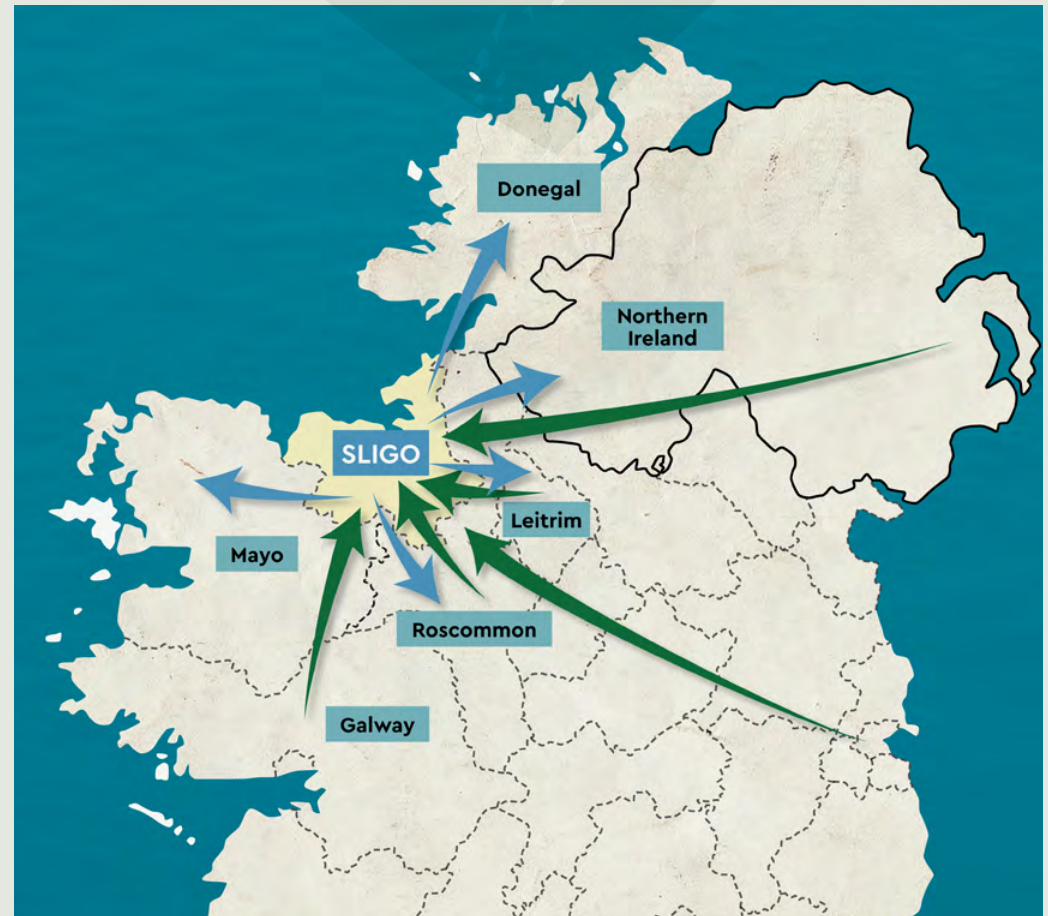
Spanish Armada wall mural, Grange

## 1.7 SLIGO – REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ROLE

The Sligo DEDP represents a five-year plan aligned with a ten-year vision that will transform tourism in the Northwest and how visitors will engage with the northern region of the Wild Atlantic Way. The destination development approach mapped out within the Sligo DEDP will have a significant influence on regional visitor dispersion and the future importance of Sligo as an attractor for the Northwest.

Achieving the goals of the Wild Atlantic Way regional tourism development approach requires many elements combining. The transformation of Sligo as an international tourism destination will fulfil a dual purpose. It will grow the value of tourism for the county and become the stimulus for how visitors will engage with the Northwest. It will connect with the activity of other DEDPs such as North Mayo, Inishowen, Upper Shannon, Shannon Erne and Borders. The approach will leverage its geographic advantage as **the closest Wild Atlantic Way destination from the Dublin market.**

New product and experience development opportunities through schemes such as URDF, RRDF, ORIS, LEADER, Shared Island, and Peace Plus will combine to create a new scale of product that will generate new levels of consideration for the Northwest among international and domestic visitors. The timing of the Sligo DEDP combined with new funding streams and adjoining regional DEDP activity has the potential to considerably alter future visitor flows. The coherency of the DEDP's approach in the Northwest aligned with the Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategy will strive to create a dynamic Northwest tourism economy. Regional partnerships and a shared vision will be key to underpinning this new scale of ambition for tourism.



## 1.8 A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM APPROACH

Against the backdrop of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Government's commitments under the Climate Action Plan 2021 and the Report of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group, 2021–2023, tourism must adopt a much more sustainable approach. The Covid-19 global pandemic has accelerated visitor consciousness of their role in sustainable tourism. There are new expectations among emerging visitor markets with changes in how they value local experiences combined with increased levels of environmental awareness.

The Sligo DEDP adopts the V.I.C.E. model for sustainable tourism as the basis for the plan to reflect the destination's commitment to a sustainable tourism approach. The Sligo DEDP will focus on the following in meeting a commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism and become a key element of future destination development.

- ▶ Support the tourism industry in providing great visitor experiences highlighting the destinations sustainability values.
- ▶ Expand local capabilities to develop new sustainable visitor experiences.
- ▶ Connect visitors to destination sustainability at every stage of the visitor journey.
- ▶ Position Sligo as a national and international leader in sustainable destination development; economically, socially, culturally and environmentally.
- ▶ Balance long term sustainability with economic value for communities across Sligo.
- ▶ Ensure a coherent approach to sustainability exists among the urban, rural and coastal communities within Sligo.
- ▶ Highlight destination co-responsibility for climate change and other sustainable challenges.
- ▶ Ensure destination development activity benefits local communities and enhances Sligo as a place to live.



Lough Gill and Slish Wood, Co Sligo

# Section Two - Approach

## 2.1 ACHIEVING OUR VISION

The plan outlines a range of initiatives that are designed to bring each Destination Development Pillar to life and ultimately to achieve on the vision for Sligo. Initiatives that are likely to have a particular transformational impact are identified as *Catalyst Projects*. In addition, the plan identifies *Destination Enabling Projects* – a broad spectrum of destination development factors relating to governance, access, supporting infrastructure, capacity building, storytelling and sense of place.



## 2.2 CATALYST PROJECTS

### Catalyst Project 1: National Outdoor Activity Centres

**Objective: Develop Sligo as the adventure capital of the northern Wild Atlantic Way by maximising the opportunity presented by the development of national outdoor activity centres at Strandhill and Coolaney.**

#### OVERVIEW

The opening of the National Surf Centre in Strandhill has elevated the positioning of the county nationally and internationally as a surf destination. The facility provides state of the art services and facilities for surfing schools, surf visitors and residents. It will provide ongoing development opportunities for Strandhill as a tourism hub and outdoor activity centre. A new coordinated approach will contribute to the development of the area as an international surfing destination and deliver a quality differentiated surf experience only accessed in Sligo. Equally the Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre opportunity will play a significant role in confirming Sligo's positioning as a destination for year-round outdoor activity and profile as an outdoor activity playground.

#### Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Develop the profile of Sligo as a destination renowned internationally for its outdoor activity.

**Industry** – Grow the volume of outdoor activity experiences linked to a growing activity and product base and a collective packaging of Sligo as an outdoor activity destination.

**Community** – Prepare local communities for the opportunities presented by investment in outdoor activity provision.

**Environment** – Create awareness of the responsibility of users of Sligo's outdoor activity centres to respect the local environment and Leave No Trace.

#### Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the National Outdoor Activity Centres destination project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
National Surf Centre Strandhill	Develop and implement the commercial operating plan for the new National Surf Centre	NSC	SCC, FI
	Develop visitor experiences on site to maximise the potential of this new flagship attraction	NSC	FI
	Work to deliver large scale surfing events or festivals to increase the profile of the National Surf Centre	NSC	SCC, FI
Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre	Continue to work collaboratively to develop the Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre as a destination of choice for mountain bikers	Coillte, SCC, FI	CMBC, CDC
	Work with the local community to explore new business opportunities	CDC	FI, SCC
	Work collaboratively to develop the outdoor recreational potential of emerging opportunities with the surrounding area	CDC	FI, SCC, HSE, Coillte

## Catalyst Project 2: Attraction of Scale - Hazelwood Demesne

**Objective: Work collaboratively to support the ongoing development of Hazelwood as an internationally renowned attraction of scale for the Northwest.**

### OVERVIEW

The Hazelwood Demesne is a 33-hectare estate located on the banks of Lough Gill at the head of the Garavogue River. The estate and its Lough Gill Distillery have been acquired by one of the world’s largest distilled spirits companies (Sazerac) with ambitious plans to create a world class visitor attraction. In addition to its ability to grow visitor numbers to Sligo, it will be a key enabler to develop a cluster of Garavogue River experiences easily accessible from Sligo.

A Grade 1 architect has been appointed by Sazerac to work on the sensitive restoration of the house and grounds as the initial phase of the project.

### Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Enhance the capacity of Hazelwood Demesne and its attractions to grow its appeal to international and domestic visitors.

**Industry** – Develop the attraction base and package the reasons to visit and explore the Hazelwood Demesne.

**Community** – Leverage the quality of visitor attractions in the area to link with existing trails and touring routes to encourage wider exploration of Sligo communities.

**Environment** – Delivery of new visitor experiences across attractions featuring sustainability as a guiding ethos within all operations.

### Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the Attraction of Scale – Hazelwood Demesne destination project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Experience	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
Hazelwood House	Support the ongoing restoration of the Hazelwood House as a house of national importance, and Sazerac’s potential plans for an immersive visitor experience within the house	HE	
	Support the further leveraging of the estate’s existing tourism assets through continuing to restore the gardens, and developing outdoor activities within the estate, including related interpretation	HE	Coillte, SCC, FI
Lough Gill Distillery	Support the ongoing development of a world-class distillery experience	HE	



## Catalyst Project 3: Enniscrone Regeneration

**Objective: Supporting the repositioning of Enniscrone as a revitalised destination. Enniscrone has become the focus of significant regeneration projects and can anticipate a new period of tourism growth.**

### OVERVIEW

Enniscrone has become the focus of significant regeneration and economic revitalisation. This family seaside destination that enjoyed considerable popularity in previous decades, is on the cusp of being rejuvenated and can anticipate a new period of tourism growth. Recent investment such as the Destination Towns and Outdoor Dining schemes, coupled with upcoming Shared Beach Facilities development and the proposed regeneration project signify the scale of the potential for Enniscrone.

### Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Motivate the visitor to visit the coastal destination town of Enniscrone and the wider west Sligo area.

**Industry** – Develop the conditions to link the destination experiences through activity and cultural experiences linked to the coastal trail and its rural communities.

**Community** – Introduce new tourism opportunities into local communities in Enniscrone.

**Environment** – Introduce our visitors to sustainable coastal experiences through active exploration of Enniscrone and west Sligo.

### Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the Enniscrone Regeneration destination project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
Cliff Bath House and Pavilion	Re-imagine the area between the Bath House and the Old Pavilion, and work towards developing a completely re-landscaped promenade	SCC	
	In refurbishing the Cliff Bath House, use the project to create a strong and renewed association with health and well-being, and highlight the significance of the Bath House by relocating the Wild Atlantic Way Discovery Point to this building	SCC, FI	EDCD
Shared Beach Facilities	Complete the construction of the new shared beach facility	SCC, FI	

## Catalyst Project 4: SLNCR Greenway

**Objective: Deliver the SLNCR Greenway and work with local communities to grow the value of the investment for the local area.**

### OVERVIEW

The development of the SLNCR Greenway will provide a strategic trails link between Sligo and its neighbouring counties. It will strengthen the outdoors product base and provide a platform to disrupt visitor flows into the county and encourage longer dwell time by using Sligo as the hub for the Greenway experience. The greenway will be a key catalyst project for visitor dispersion across Sligo presenting new opportunities for rural communities to develop their own signature Sligo experiences aligned with the themes of the Sligo DEDP i.e. activities, culture, wellbeing and the base for regional exploration.

### Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Motivate visitors to explore the destination and immerse themselves in the Sligo communities linked to the SLNCR.

**Industry** – Annual growth of saleable experiences to leverage investment in Greenway and community experiences.

**Community** – Generate positive socio-economic, environmental and cultural benefits through visitors exploring communities via Greenways.

**Environment** – Promote responsible visitor engagement with our local environment through the use of the Greenways.

### Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the SLNCR Greenway destination project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
SLNCR Sligo to Enniskillen Greenway	Support the development and delivery of the proposed SLNCR Greenway. In the short to medium term, advance the current planning process, preliminary design, route selection and public consultation with land owners and communities within Co. Sligo.	TII, SCC	LCC, FODC, FI, LCG
	Councils to collaborate on a cross border basis, engaging with the local business community, local interest groups and landowners along the SLNCR route to explore related tourism development opportunities and maximise its tourism potential	SCC, LCC, CCC, FODC	FI, LCG
Sligo Greenway	Support ongoing efforts to advance the delivery of the Sligo Greenway project from Collooney to Mayo boundary	SCC	FI, SGC

## Catalyst Project 5: Sligo Town Experience

**Objective: Enhance the visitor experience in Sligo Town to act as a tourism hub for Sligo and gateway to the Northwest.**

### OVERVIEW

Sligo Town represents the axis point between Lake, River and Coast. It also serves as the gateway to the county tourism experience with the opportunity to grow this role as a connected tourism hub for the Northwest region of the Wild Atlantic Way. The below portfolio of projects have the potential to transform the visitor experience in Sligo Town. The re-imagining of the Garavogue River space and the completion of Queen Maeve Square will create a new dynamic focus on the water's edge. It will draw attention to the river as the central feature of the town and elevate the range of experiences associated with Sligo's water eco-system. It will be a multi-use gathering space that will tie together informal play areas, open green space, and performance spaces, which will heighten the animation of the area and the facilitation of events year-round. The completion of the Garavogue River Walk from Queen Maeve Square to Lough Gill will further enhance the river and town experience.

### Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Motivate visitors to base themselves in Sligo Town by growing the number of experiences during the day and evening time and develop its role as a hub to explore the wider county.

**Industry** – Develop the day and evening time experience base and integrate county Sligo in their packaging.

**Community** – Link urban community experiences to grow the appeal of the destination to domestic and international visitors.

**Environment** – Communicate a commitment to river and waterways sustainability in how Sligo delivers its river and town experiences.

### Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the Sligo Town Experience project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
Queen Maeve Square	Complete the construction of the Queen Maeve Square and the enhancement of the immediate environs	SCC	FI
	Establish a governance structure that will oversee the operational use of the facility	SCC, FI	
	Deliver a large scale event or festival for Queen Maeve Square	SCC	FI
	Complete the Garavogue River Walk	SCC	FI
Visitor Experiences	Reassess the existing elements of the visitor experience in Sligo Town, and ways of enhancing the delivery of experiences across key themes such as Yeats, food and drink, music and arts	SCC, FI	Local businesses
Sligo Gaol	Prioritise conservation projects and continue to assess market demand for potential experiences	SCC	
The Model	Continue to explore new approaches to raising its profile as a key national centre for contemporary culture and as a core attractor in Sligo	The Model	FI
The Museum	As part of the master planning of current town centre regeneration sites, explore the potential of a county museum to interpret the historical, cultural, landscape and literary strengths of Sligo as part of the library and other facilities	SCC	
Sligo Abbey	Work collaboratively to explore the opening up of the Abbey grounds	OPW	SCC
Purple Flag	Collectively retain Purple Flag status for Sligo as the basis for developing the evening time economy	BID	DSF, SCC
Evening Time Experiences	Grow the range of evening time visitor experiences in Sligo	FI	BID, SCC, local businesses

## Catalyst Project 6: World Class Golf

**Objective: Develop Sligo as a world class golf destination and a hub for golf in the Northwest.**

### OVERVIEW

Developing Sligo as a world class golf destination will be a key element in developing the golfing opportunity for the Northwest. The county’s three natural links courses will lead the way in raising the profile of golf in Sligo and work with neighbouring counties to create a new scale of golf experiences. Initiatives such as working with the golf courses to develop their commercial approach to tourism, online visibility and destination packaging of golf will be key elements of a world class golf destination.

### Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Motivate visitors to explore world class golf courses in the destination, attracted by the quality and range of golfing experiences available.

**Industry** – Develop the collective strengths of the golf industry to grow the opportunity.

**Community** – Develop the capacity of local communities to attract visitors to stay in the core accommodation hubs surrounding Sligo’s golf courses.

**Environment** – Continue to protect our coastal assets that are home to natural links golf courses.

### Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the World Class Golf destination project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
Golf Tourism	Use existing marketing channels to promote the collective strengths of golf across the county, and work with Tourism Ireland to build a similar profile for golf in Co. Sligo	SCC, FI, TI	
	Work with the golf courses to develop exclusive packages that highlight compelling experiences	FI	DSF
	Consider developing a multi-day/multi-course Co. Sligo Trophy event	Golf Courses	FI, DSF

## Catalyst Project 7: Iconic Sligo Walks and Trails

**Objective:** Work collaboratively to consolidate the profile of trail assets within Co. Sligo through on-going development of off-road sections and connectivity between trails.

### OVERVIEW

Sligo County Council has successfully developed a series of trails working alongside local communities to support local projects. The county now has a broad base of trails offering exceptional experiences and easy engagement with the cultural heritage of the destination and the county's iconic landscapes. This work will be leveraged through the further consolidation of trail initiatives, which in turn, will significantly strengthen the county's profile as a walking and outdoor activity destination. The project will also examine the development of Blueways and how the county will link with wider regional trails to disrupt visitor flows to and within the county.

### Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Develop the outdoor trails opportunity across county Sligo to grow the

appeal of the county as a walking and hiking destination.

**Industry** – Develop the conditions to develop activity and cultural destination experiences linked to the trails networks and communities in Sligo.

**Community** – Introduce new tourism opportunities into local communities through the enhancement of local trails.

**Environment** – Create awareness of the responsibility of users of Sligo's walks and trails to respect the environment and Leave No Trace.

### Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the Iconic Sligo Walks and Trails destination project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
Sligo Way	Continue to develop the Sligo Way as an iconic long-distance trail experience	SCC	FI, Coillte, LCG
Miner's Way and Historical Trail	Review the Miner's Way and Historical Trail experience and assess how it could be used to support the Passage Tomb Landscape of Co. Sligo UNESCO initiative	SCC	FI, SNLG, LCG
Beara Breifne Way	Work with Fáilte Ireland to develop opportunities related to the Beara Breifne Way	FI	
Blueways	Explore the potential of developing blueways in Sligo	WI, SI, FI	SCC
Ox Mountains	Work with Coillte to identify areas across the Ox Mountains where the Sligo Way could be taken off road	SCC	FI, Coillte, LCG
Off-Road Trails	Pursue existing initiatives to upgrade and/ or negotiate off-road sections, including diverting the Coolaney to Ladies Bray section off road through the Mountain Bike Centre	SCC	FI, Coillte, LCG
Lough Talt	Continue to work on taking the Sligo Way off-road at Lough Talt and extending it to Bonniclon	SCC	FI, Coillte, LCG
Wayfinding	Continue to expand on interpretation and signage for trails in the destination	SCC, FI	Coillte, LCG
Local Trails	Pursue ongoing development of local trails through partnerships with local communities and landowners	Land Owners, LCG	SCC, Sligo LEADER Partnership, FI
Local Trails	Encourage communities to develop an action plan for local trails and trails maintenance	SCC	LCG
Sligo Walks	Continue to build on and promote the excellent Sligo Walks platform	SCC	FI, DSF

# Catalyst Project 8: Industry Development

**Objective: Increase the capacity of the tourism industry and local communities to attract visitors to Sligo through new levels of collaboration and experience development.**

## OVERVIEW

Destination development requires a concentrated focus on growing the capabilities of the tourism industry to realise the opportunity of the DEDP. It will ensure a new focus on experience development and new ways of working together. A new destination tourism governance approach will generate new collaborative opportunities and oversee the implementation of the Sligo Destination and Experience Development Plan. The overall approach will focus on a collective delivery model and consider all aspects of managing, delivering and marketing tourism and the destination within a framework that fully embraces the philosophy of a public-private partnership approach to tourism.

## Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Deliver a new approach to building the capabilities of the tourism

industry to collaboratively and collectively grow the value of tourism in Sligo.

**Industry** – Work together to attract domestic and international visitors and grow the economic impact of the sector across the county through new levels of industry collaboration.

**Community** – Develop local community clusters such as food and drink clusters to introduce the visitor to engaging local Sligo communities.

**Environment** – Building awareness of sustainable tourism through a Destination Stewardship approach.

## Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the Industry Development destination project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
County wide tourism leadership	Establish a new county-wide tourism leadership structure that brings together the public and private sectors and the various agencies that influence tourism into a unified partnership	FI, SCC	DSF
Governance	With the definition of a governance structure, develop clear terms of reference, roles and responsibilities for the emergent partnership	FI, SCC	DSF
Destination Stewardship	Embed an emphasis on destination stewardship into the terms of reference for the new governance structure	FI	
	Promote the importance of destination stewardship in messaging to the visitor to encourage visitors to be more conscientious about their impact on the environment and the community	DSF	FI
Visitor Experiences	Grow the number of saleable visitor experiences (B2B and B2C) available in Sligo	Fi	DSF
	Strengthen or develop experiences linked to distinctive Sligo themes (eg Yeats, traditional music, food and drink, Spanish Armada)	FI	
	Work to increase the number of Sligo visitor experiences attending trade platforms and events each year	FI	DSF

Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
Digital Capacity	Build the digital capacity of the Sligo tourism industry through initiatives such as the Digital that Delivers Programme	FI	
Business Support	Create and deliver a focused tourism business support programme for Co. Sligo	FI	DSF
Business Support	Promote engagement with the new Climate Action Programme to reduce carbon emissions from the tourism sector across Sligo	FI	DSF
Business Support	Promote engagement with the Employer Excellence Programme to assist with attracting and retaining tourism staff	FI	DSF
Marketing	Define the appropriate mechanism and approach for marketing Co. Sligo	SCC, FI	DSF
Marketing	Strengthen the Council's capacity and internal resources to strategically deliver on its enabling role in tourism development and promotion	SCC	FI
Marketing	Develop a marketing strategy for business tourism that aligns or is integrated within the leisure tourism marketing strategy	FI	DSF
Transport & Access Planning	Assess the short to long term requirements for Sligo to maximise its current accessibility through rail, bus and road networks and visitor dispersion across the county	SCC, TII	FI
Transport & Access Planning	Work in partnership with Local Link to develop route options that can stimulate day and evening time visitor activity within our Sligo communities	LL	SCC, FI

# Catalyst Project 9: Accommodation

**Objective: Grow the volume and range of visitor accommodation across Sligo.**

## OVERVIEW

The implementation of an accommodation strategy will represent the first phase in addressing the accommodation needs of the county. It will assess availability, quality of offer, location, and relevant supporting services. The findings will be used to inform future developments such as a masterplan for the Sligo Harbour area. The accommodation strategy will also focus on niche accommodation and related cluster areas i.e. wild camping, hiking and biking markets, which will ultimately support the strategic growth of overnight visitation.

## Sustainable Tourism Implications

**Visitor** – Attract visitors to the destination through the provision of sufficient, quality, and affordable accommodation options.

**Industry** – Work collaboratively to provide deals and packages that include accommodation and other tourism experiences in the destination.

**Community** – Work with local communities to develop accommodation initiatives and actions such as a management policy for wild camping.

**Environment** – Promote sustainable engagement with the destination through the provision of eco-friendly and sustainable accommodation options.

## Activating the Project

The following represent a number of the projects required to deliver the Accommodation destination project. The complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

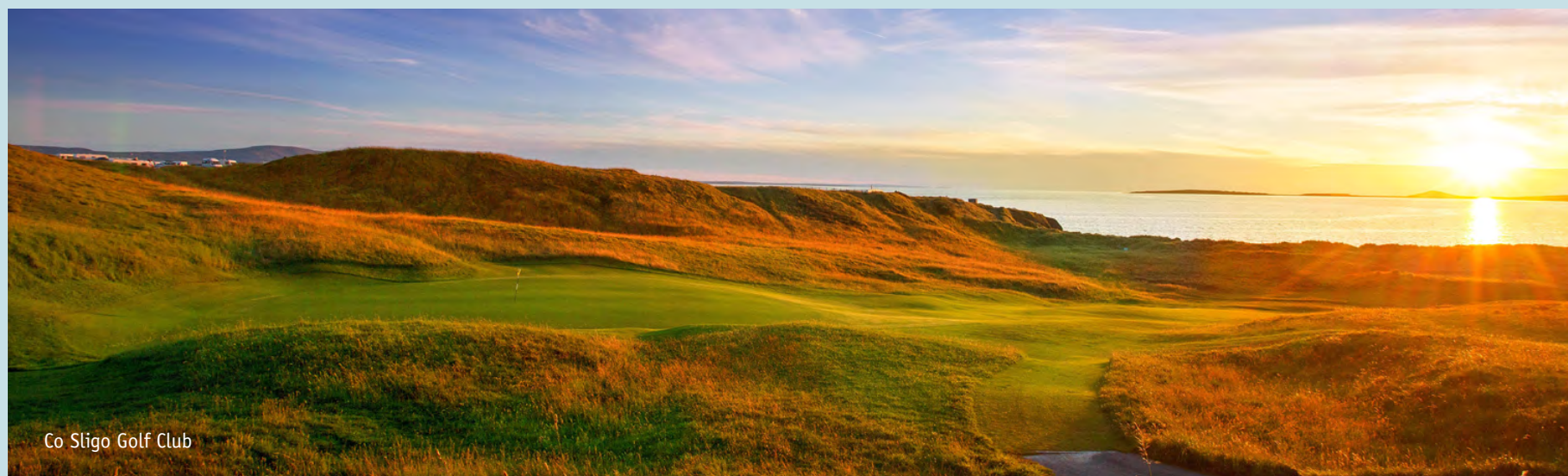
Project	Key Actions	Lead	Partners
Accommodation	Develop an accommodation strategy aimed at attracting new investment and fostering growth in the sector	FI	SCC
	Explore the opportunities to develop bespoke accommodation, camping and hospitality options	SCC	FI, STDA, LCG
Gap Analysis	Work collaboratively to complete an assessment and gap analysis of all accommodation elements	FI	SCC



## 2.3 DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECTS

A number of enabling projects have been identified to leverage the Catalyst projects and provide additional supports in areas of destination development that will have a sustained impact on the Sligo tourism economy. They include a focus on new experience development, maximising the opportunity for rural and community tourism and exploring year round opportunities through events and festivals. They are summarised as follows:

Project	Key Actions
<b>The Yeats Story</b>	Continuing to reinterpret the legacy of the Yeats Family and their connection to Sligo through new and refreshed visitor experiences across Sligo Town and the wider county.
<b>Rural and Community Tourism</b>	Supporting and promoting distinctive Sligo experiences throughout the county, across key themes such as outdoor activities, food and drink, traditional Irish music, Great Houses.
<b>Passage Tomb Landscapes</b>	Promoting sustainable and sensitive visitor interaction with the treasures of Sligo's ancient landscape such as Carrowmore, Carrowkeel and Knocknarea.
<b>Wellbeing</b>	Elevating and developing the strengths of Sligo's wellbeing experiences, from its long association with seaweed baths to more modern wellness activities and events.
<b>Coastal Tourism Experiences</b>	Continuing to ensure the development of authentic coastal experiences across Sligo.
<b>Festivals and Events</b>	Continuing to provide a platform for all aspects of live events and performance, to offer the visitor opportunities to enjoy the best of the Cultural Rhythm of Sligo.
<b>Experience Clusters</b>	Fostering the development of tourism clusters both by themes and locations, to ensure a critical mass of visitor experiences.



Co Sligo Golf Club

The alignment of the Catalyst Projects and Destination Enabling Projects with the three Development Pillars is illustrated in the table below. Darker check marks indicate primary Pillar and lighter check marks indicate secondary Pillar.

Catalyst Project	A Haven for Adventure and Wellbeing	The Cultural Rhythm of Sligo	A Destination Transformed
National Outdoor Activity Centres	<b>X</b>	X	
Attraction of Scale (Hazelwood Demesne)		<b>X</b>	X
Enniscrone Regeneration	<b>X</b>	X	X
SLNCR Greenway	<b>X</b>		X
Sligo Town Experience		X	<b>X</b>
World Class Golf	<b>X</b>		
Iconic Sligo Walks and Trails	<b>X</b>	X	
Industry Development	X	<b>X</b>	X
Accommodation			<b>X</b>

Destination Enabling Project	A Haven for Adventure and Wellbeing	The Cultural Rhythm of Sligo	A Destination Transformed
The Yeats Story		<b>X</b>	X
Rural and Community Tourism	X	<b>X</b>	
Passage Tomb Landscapes	X	<b>X</b>	
Wellbeing	<b>X</b>	X	
Coastal Tourism Experiences	<b>X</b>	X	
Festivals and Events	X	X	<b>X</b>
Experience Clusters	X	X	<b>X</b>

## 2.4 Key Performance Indicators

The overarching objective of the DEDP is to sustainably increase the economic benefit of tourism to the area. It provides a destination development focus aligning all stakeholders with an agreed vision through the adoption of a five-year pathway to achieve this ambition.

Specific KPIs will be baselined and monitored throughout the lifecycle of the plan. The impact of the Sligo DEDP will be measured through the monitoring of key metrics that examine the commercial development of tourism across the area.

The measurement of success will include analysis of the following areas of performance over the course of the Sligo DEDP:

**Demand side conditions (Visitor)**

**Supply side conditions (Industry)**

**Destination development (Community)**

**Environmental Conditions (Environment)**

### VISITOR

- ▶ Increase bednights in Sligo YoY ahead of regional average from year 3 of implementation of the Sligo DEDP.
- ▶ Increase in visitor numbers in off peak season.
- ▶ Increase the value of visitors to Sligo over volume.
- ▶ Increased visitor satisfaction.

### INDUSTRY

- ▶ Increase Saleable Products (three to five new or improved saleable experiences per annum) and a tailor-made distribution plan for the destination.
- ▶ Season Extension: Progress towards extending annual opening hours across the destination.
- ▶ Build the capacity of the tourism industry and the local community to maximise the opportunity provided by the Sligo DEDP.

### COMMUNITY

- ▶ Maximise the tourism impact for local communities through the planned projects.
- ▶ Create a network of authentic community experiences linking the rural communities of Sligo.
- ▶ Create experience scale through product clusters and destination hubs to attract and retain visitors in the destination for longer.
- ▶ Protect our local culture and ensure tourism contributes to the wellbeing of local communities.
- ▶ Ensure the facilities being considered are appropriate for the local community and enhance Sligo as a place to live.

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- ▶ Develop global recognition for Sligo as a sustainable tourism destination differentiated by the opportunities for the visitor to immerse themselves in responsible tourism activity.
- ▶ Develop effective management of the environment, including natural, cultural and heritage assets through the progression of a DEDP Monitoring Programme.
- ▶ Support the industry to change the environmental sustainability of tourism premises to achieve government targets.

# Section Three - Delivery

## 3.1 Delivery

**The implementation of the Sligo DEDP is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery. It represents a five-year operational plan creating a destination development focus for County Sligo. It builds on existing project plans, integrating 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. A list of actions relating to all proposed projects and strategic pillar actions has been devised.

All stakeholders will be consulted in relation to the delivery of the identified actions. Each of the stakeholders listed below will be 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. The implementation of the Sligo DEDP will be overseen by the creation of a new implementation group that will operate until 2029, to be known as the Destination Sligo Forum (DSF). The Destination Sligo Forum is tasked with supporting the following objectives:

- ▶ Support the delivery of the Sligo DEDP.
- ▶ 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 subgroups which may be formed.
- ▶ Ensure that the Catalyst and Destination Enabling projects support the delivery of experiences identified in the plan and are delivered within the 5-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.
- ▶ Deliver the Sligo DEDP cognisant of additional opportunities that may exist by working in collaboration with other regions and implementing actions in other DEDPs that will support the objective of disrupting visitor flows into and around the region.

The implementation group will ensure it is representative of the tourism industry, local community voice and relevant agencies and stakeholders.

## 3.2 Guiding Principles:

**To ensure the successful implementation of the Sligo DEDP 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, meaning they have access to capital and are not relying solely on grant aid to be developed or maintained.
- ▶ All projects are on-message with the Sligo DEDP experiences and are 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.

## 3.3 Action Plan

The alignment of the Catalyst Projects and Destination Enabling Projects with the three Development Pillars is illustrated in the table on page 36. Darker check marks indicate primary Pillar and lighter check marks indicate secondary Pillar.

The focus of this plan is ultimately on developing compelling and marketable experiences that can differentiate Sligo, encourage the visitor to stay longer and spend more, and attract new markets from overseas while maintaining the domestic market in a sustainable manner.

Reference made to projects in this Plan does not guarantee funding, but where

funding is available, it will be in alignment with this Plan. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer. Developers are required to comply with relevant legislation and the provisions of Statutory Policies, Strategies, Plans and Programmes, including those relating to environment and planning.

### Catalyst Projects

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 1</b>	<b>National Outdoor Activity Centres</b>			
National Surf Centre	Develop and implement the commercial operating plan for the new National Surf Centre	2024/2025	NSC, SCC, FI	
National Surf Centre	Develop visitor experiences on site to maximise the potential of this new flagship attraction	2024/2025	NSC, FI	
Surfing Events and Festivals	Work to deliver large scale surfing events or festivals to increase the profile of the National Surf Centre	2025-2029	NSC, FI	SCC
Strandhill Beach	Address the needs for rescue service plan, and improved signage on the dangers of swimming at Strandhill Beach	2025/2026	SCC	SCDA, surf schools
Surf Campers	Identify ways of meeting the needs of surf campers in winter	2025/2026	SCDA	STDA, SCC
Local Surfing Communities	Engage other local communities that are recognised for surfing (Enniscrone, Easkey and Mullaghmore) to assess sector needs	2025-2029	FI	LCG, ISA
Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre	Continue to work collaboratively to develop the Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre as a destination of choice for mountain bikers	2024-2029	Coillte, FI, SCC	CMBC, CDC
Coolaney National Mountain Bike Centre	Work with the local community to explore new business opportunities	2025-2029	CDC	FI, SCC
Outdoor Recreation	Work collaboratively to develop the outdoor recreational potential of emerging opportunities with the surrounding area	2025-2029	CDC	FI, SCC, HSE, Coillte
Outdoor Recreation	Support the Sligo Rowing Club and the Sligo Kayak Club in the building of a new boat house at Doorly Park pier	2025-2029	SRC, SKC	

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 1</b>	<b>National Outdoor Activity Centres</b>			
Outdoor Recreation	Explore ways of servicing the needs of commercial water-based operators at Doorly Park in developing new visitor experiences, as a result of this investment	2024-2029	SRC, SKC	AS
Outdoor Events	Work with operators and event organisers to promote new events and experiences	2024-2029	SRC, SKC	DSF, SCC, FI
Doorly Park Gate Lodge	Complete the refurbishment of Doorly Gate Lodge and identify a strategic role for the building	2024	STDA	SCC, FI
Water Transportation	Explore the opportunity to develop seasonal water transportation from the new pontoon and sites of interest	2025-2029	Private Operators	FI, DSF, STDA

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 2</b>	<b>Attraction of Scale - Hazelwood Demesne</b>			
Hazelwood House	Support the ongoing restoration of the Hazelwood House as a house of national importance, and Sazerac's potential plans for an immersive visitor experience within the house	2024-2029+	HE	
Distillery Experience	Support the ongoing development of a world-class distillery experience	2024-2029	HE	
Outdoor Activities	Support the further leveraging of the estate's existing tourism assets through continuing to restore the gardens, and developing outdoor activities within the estate, including related interpretation	2024-2029	HE	Coillte, SCC, FI
Events and Festivals	Work with Hazelwood to develop a calendar of themed events	2024-2029	HE	DSF, FI

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 3</b>	<b>Enniscrone Regeneration</b>			
Bath House and Old Pavilion	Re-imagine the area between the Bath House and the Old Pavilion, and work towards developing a completely re-landscaped promenade	2025-2029	SCC	
Cliff Bath House	In refurbishing the Cliff Bath House, use the project to create a strong and renewed association with health and well-being, and highlight the significance of the Bath House by relocating the Wild Atlantic Way Discovery Point to this building	2025/2026	SCC, FI	DSF, EDCD
Green Coast Designation	Continue to prioritise beach safety and the maintenance of its Green Coast designation	Ongoing	SCC	ETT
Shared Beach Facilities	Complete the construction of the new shared beach facility	2025-2029	SCC, FI	
Boardwalk	Explore the opportunity to erect a boardwalk in the sand dunes to prevent ongoing erosion	2026-2029	SCC	EDCD, ETT

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 4</b>	<b>SLNCR Greenway</b>			
SLNCR Sligo to Enniskillen	Support the development and delivery of the proposed SLNCR Greenway. In the short to medium term, advance the current planning process, preliminary design, route selection and public consultation with land owners and communities within Co. Sligo	2024-2029	TII, SCC	LCC, FODC, FI, LCG
SLNCR Sligo to Enniskillen	Councils to collaborate on a cross border basis, engaging with the local business community, local interest groups and landowners along the SLNCR route to explore related tourism development opportunities and maximise its tourism potential	2024-2029	SCC, LCC, CCC, FODC	FI, LCG
Sligo Greenway	Support ongoing efforts to advance the delivery of the Sligo Greenway project from Collooney to Mayo boundary	2024-2029	SCC	FI, SGC
Sligo Greenway	Assess the potential for extensions and loops along the proposed Greenways for Sligo	2024-2029	SCC	
Greenways	Further assess the potential for developing a greenway between Ballina and Enniscrone	2024-2029	SCC, MCC	

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 5</b>	<b>Sligo Town Experience</b>			
Queen Maeve Square	Complete the construction of the Queen Maeve Square and the enhancement of the immediate environs	2024/2025	SCC	FI
Queen Maeve Square	Establish a governance structure that will oversee the operational use of the facility	2024/2025	SCC, FI	
Queen Maeve Square	Support appropriate open-air casual trading and casual event licenses along the riverside	2024/2025	SCC, BID	Business Community
Events and Festivals	Deliver a large scale event or festival for Queen Maeve Square	2024-2026	SCC, BID	FI
Garavogue River Walk	Complete the Garavogue River Walk from Queen Maeve Square to Lough Gill	2024/2025	SCC	FI
Interpretive Plan	Work with partners to create branded signage and develop an interpretive plan	2024/2025	SCC, FI	
Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge	Pursue the development of a dedicated pedestrian and cycle bridge linking Cleveragh and Hazelwood Peninsula	2024-2029	SCC	
Lady Anne Trail	Continue to work on the development of the Lady Anne Trail from the hospital area to Hazelwood	2024-2029	SCC, Coillte, HE, Landowners	
Visitor Experiences	Consolidate existing plans and regeneration strategies to create a fully integrated visitor experience development plan that looks at the urban core holistically	2025-2029	SCC	FI, BID, SCCI
Visitor Experiences	Reassess the existing elements of the visitor experience in Sligo Town, and ways of enhancing the delivery of experiences	2025-2029	SCC, FI	



Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 5</b>	<b>Sligo Town Experience</b>			
Sligo Gaol	Prioritise conservation projects and continue to assess market demand for potential experiences	2025-2030	SCC	
The Model, Home of the Niland Collection	Continue to explore new approaches to raising its profile as a key national centre for contemporary culture and as a core attractor in Sligo	2024/2025	TM	FI
The Museum	As part of the master planning of current town centre regeneration sites, explore the potential of a county museum to interpret the historical, cultural, landscape and literary strengths of Sligo as part of the library and other facilities	2025-2029	SCC	
Sligo Abbey	Work collaboratively to explore the opening up of the Abbey grounds	2025-2029	OPW	SCC
Green Fort	Continue to implement The Green Fort Conservation Plan, and address interpretive needs	2025-2029	SCC	
Purple Flag	Collectively retain Purple Flag status for Sligo as the basis for developing the evening time economy	2024/2025	BID	DSF, SCC
Evening Time Experiences	Grow the range of evening time visitor experiences in Sligo	2024-2029	FI	BID, SCC, local businesses
Tidy Towns	Continue to support and promote the Tidy Towns initiative and community beautification projects	2024-2029	TT	BID, SCC, SCCI, local businesses
Finisklin	Advance the remediation work at Finisklin and work towards developing the previously proposed concept of the Gibraltar District Park	2026-2028	SCC	
Sligo Rovers	Support Sligo Rovers Football Club in the implementation of their Masterplan to create a 6,050 all-seater UEFA Category 3 stadium, and in the development of the Soccer Academy	2024-2027	Sligo Rovers FC	SCC

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 6</b>	<b>World Class Golf</b>			
Golf Tourism	Use existing marketing channels to promote the collective strengths of golf across the county, and work with Tourism Ireland to build a similar profile for golf in Co. Sligo	2024/2025	SCC, FI, TI	
Golf Tourism	Work with the golf courses to develop exclusive packages that highlight compelling experiences	2024/2025	FI	DSF
Golf Tourism	Consider developing a multi-day/multi- course Co. Sligo Trophy event	2025-2029	Golf Courses	FI, DSF
Golf Tourism	Prioritise addressing the extensive coastal erosion issues relating to natural links golf courses	2025-2029	Golf Courses	SCC

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 7</b>	<b>Iconic Sligo Walks and Trails</b>			
Sligo Walks	Continue to build on and promote the excellent Sligo Walks platform	2024-2029	SCC	FI, DSF
Sligo Way	Continue to develop the Sligo Way as an iconic long-distance trail experience	2024-2029	SCC	FI, Coillte, LCG
Miner's Way and Historical Trail	Review the Miner's Way and Historical Trail experience and assess how it could be used to support the Passage Tomb Landscape of Co Sligo UNESCO initiative	2026/2027	SCC	FI, SNLG, LCG
Beara Breifne Way	Work with Fáilte Ireland to develop opportunities related to the Beara Breifne Way	2026/2027	FI	
Blueways	Explore the potential of developing Blueways in Sligo	2025-2029	WI, SI, FI	SCC
Ox Mountains	Work with Coillte to identify areas across the Ox Mountains where the Sligo Way could be taken off road	2026/2027	SCC	FI, Coillte, LCG
Off-Road Trails	Pursue existing initiatives to upgrade and/ or negotiate off-road sections, including diverting the Coolaney to Ladies Bray section off road through the Mountain Biking Centre	2024-2029	SCC	FI, Coillte, LCG
Lough Talt	Continue to work on taking the Sligo Way off-road at Lough Talt and extending it to Bonniconlon	2024/2025	SCC	FI, Coillte, LCG
Lough Talt	Develop the Lough Talt trail looped walk	2024/2025	SCC	
Hazelwood Peninsula Looped Trail	Work collaboratively to extend the new Hazelwood peninsula looped trail	2026-2028	SCC, Coillte, HE, Land Owners	
Hazelwood Peninsula Looped Trail	Explore the options to extend this route out to St. Angela's Campus / Clogherevagh	2026-2028	SCC, Coillte, HE, Land Owners	
Gleniff Horseshoe Heritage Trail	Further develop the Gleniff Horseshoe – Benwiskin Trail as a heritage trail, while addressing peak season congestion concerns	2025-2027	SCC	FI, BEG
Coolera Cultural Trail	Assess the public interaction with the Coolera Cultural Trail following its launch	2024/2025	SCDA	FI, DSF
Spanish Armada	Explore the feasibility of developing a new trail or strengthening the existing De Cuéllar Trail	2026/2027	SAI	FI
Benbulbin	Continue to explore options for developing safe access to the top of Benbulbin	2026/2027	SCC	Land Owners
Glencar	Assess the feasibility of developing activities and experiences in the Glencar Valley	2025/2026	GCDG, Land Owners	FI
Wayfinding	Continue to expand on interpretation and signage for trails in the destination	2024-2029	SCC, FI	Coillte, LCG
Local Trails	Pursue ongoing development of local trails through partnerships with local communities and landowners	2024-2028	Land Owners, LCG	SCC, Sligo LEADER Partnership, FI

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 7</b>	<b>Iconic Sligo Walks and Trails</b>			
Local Trails	Encourage communities to develop an action plan for local trails and trails maintenance	2024-2028	SCC	LCG
Streedagh Beach	Develop a masterplan for Streedagh Beach to examine the requirements for a programme of coastal protection and visitor management requirements to minimise the impact from visitors	2024-2029	SCC	FI, CC, NPWS, LCG
	Address sand dune erosional issues along the coast, particularly where visitor use is further impacting natural erosion (e.g. car parking in vulnerable coastal areas)	2024-2027	SCC	LCG

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 8</b>	<b>Industry Development</b>			
County wide tourism leadership	Establish a new county-wide tourism leadership structure that brings together the public and private sectors and the various agencies that influence tourism into a unified partnership	2024-2025	FI, SCC	DSF
Governance	With the definition of a governance structure, develop clear terms of reference, roles and responsibilities for the emergent partnership	2024-2025	FI, SCC	DSF
Destination Stewardship	Embed an emphasis on destination stewardship into the terms of reference for the new governance structure	2024-2025	DSF	FI
Destination Stewardship	Promote the importance of destination stewardship in messaging to the visitor to encourage visitors to be more conscientious about their impact on the environment and the community	2024-2028	DSF	SCC, FI
Visitor Experiences	Grow the number of saleable visitor experiences (B2B and B2C) available in Sligo	2024-2029	FI	DSF
Visitor Experiences	Strengthen or develop experiences linked to distinctive Sligo themes (eg Yeats, traditional music, food and drink, Spanish Armada)	2024-2029	FI	
Visitor Experiences	Work to increase the number of Sligo visitor experiences attending trade platforms and events each year	2024-2029	FI	DSF
Digital Capacity	Build the digital capacity of the Sligo tourism industry through initiatives such as the Digital that Delivers Programme	2024/2025	FI	
Business Support	Create and deliver a focused tourism business support programme for Co. Sligo	2025	FI	DSF
Business Support	Promote engagement with the new Climate Action Programme to reduce carbon emissions from the tourism sector across Sligo	2024-2029	FI	DSF
Business Support	Promote engagement with the Employer Excellence Programme to assist with attracting and retaining tourism staff	2024-2029	FI	DSF
Marketing	Define the appropriate mechanism and approach for marketing Co. Sligo	2024-2025	SCC, FI	DSF

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 8</b>	<b>Industry Development</b>			
Marketing	Strengthen the Council's capacity and internal resources to strategically deliver on its enabling role in tourism development and promotion	2024-2025	SCC	FI
Marketing	Develop a marketing strategy for business tourism that aligns or is integrated within the leisure tourism marketing strategy	2024-2028	FI	DSF
Transport & Access Planning	Assess the short to long term requirements for Sligo to maximise its current accessibility through rail, bus and road networks and visitor dispersion across the county	2024-2027	SCC, TII	FI
Transport & Access Planning	Work in partnership with Local Link to develop route options that can stimulate day and evening time visitor activity within our Sligo communities	2024-2026	LL	SCC, FI

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
<b>Catalyst Project 9</b>	<b>Accommodation</b>			
Gap Analysis	Work collaboratively to complete an assessment and gap analysis of all accommodation elements	2024-2024	FI	SCC
Accommodation	Develop an accommodation strategy aimed at attracting new investment and fostering growth in the sector	2025-2027	FI	SCC
Accommodation	Explore the opportunities to develop bespoke accommodation, camping and hospitality options	2025-2029	SCC	FI, STDA, LCG
Wild Camping	Work with local communities to develop a management policy for 'wild camping'	2025-2027	SCC	FI, LCG

## Destination Enabling Projects

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 1	Yeats Story			
Visitor Experiences	Reassess how this theme can be presented to the visitor, and explore ways of consolidating the family story which is currently spread over several locations including The Yeats Building, Drumcliffe Church, The Sligo Museum, and The Model, and ensuring that the experience is readily accessible to a wider audience	2024-2026	FI, DSF	YS, TM, DCTDA, SCC
Visitor Experiences	Continue to promote the new Yeats Trail, with its newly landscaped sites and upgraded visitor facilities, as a way to explore Co. Sligo	2024-2029	FI, DSF	SCC
Digital Experiences	Review how the Yeats theme can be further explored digitally through the Yeats Unwrapped app and online packaging and distribution	2024-2026	FI, DSF	YS, TM, DCTDA

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 2	Rural and Community Tourism			
Profiling Rural Traditions	Strengthen the focus on integrated experiences that profile the county's deep rooted rural traditions and music, and reinforce emerging clusters such as the Riverstown/Tubbercurry/Gorteen area.	2024-2029	FI	DSF, LCG, local businesses
Great Houses	Continue to encourage owners to deliver quality bespoke experiences. The county has a number of estate homes that offer various experiences from accommodation and unique cuisine, to historic tours and bespoke wedding packages, including Temple House, Coopershill House, Lissadell House, Hazelwood House and Markee Castle	2024-2028	Estate House Owners	FI, DSF
Food and Drink Producers	Support the development of experiences based around food and drink producers in Sligo	2024-2028	FI	SFT, BIM
Regeneration Initiatives	Pursue current regeneration initiatives in Sligo, Strandhill, Rosses Point, Grange, Ballysadare, Tubbercurry, Ballymote, Keash and Enniscrone	2024-2027	SCC	LCG
Regeneration Initiatives	Work with businesses and communities to explore ways of leveraging regeneration initiatives	2024-2028	FI	SCC, SCCI, DSF
Drumcliffe	Support the ongoing efforts to manage and service the high volume of visitors and address conservation issues associated with the round tower and high cross at Drumcliffe	2024-2026	DCTDA	OPW, SCC, FI
Spanish Armada	Continue to build on the work of Spanish Armada Ireland and further explore their identified preferred options in line with Fáilte Ireland consumer insights	2024-2028	SAI	FI, Armada Sites

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 2	Rural and Community Tourism			
Coleman Centre	Work with traditional music sector to identify ways of raising the profile of the Coleman Irish Music Centre and increasing the visibility of this form of music	2024/2025	Coleman Centre	FI, DSF
Sally Gardens and Ballysadare River	Continue to move forward on specific projects that will enhance the destination experience and key themes, including the restoration of the Sally Gardens and the opening up of the Ballysadare River	2024-2027	SCC	
Dolly's Cottage	Support efforts to promote Dolly's Cottage in Strandhill	2024-2026	SCDA	FI
Historic Towns Initiative	Continue to advance heritage regeneration through the Historic Towns Initiative, and use these initiatives to stimulate new thinking leveraging these community heritage assets	2024-2028	SCC	LCG
Farmers Markets	Continue to promote the exceptional range of farmers' markets across the county and explore ways of further developing the culinary experience at these events	2024-2028	SFT, DSF	FI
Tidy Towns	Continue to support and promote the Tidy Towns initiative and community beautification projects	2024-2028	TT	LCG
Easkey	Address/highlight potential liability issues associated with Rosslee Castle	2024-2028	Land owners	
Local Communities	Work with local communities to identify and address destination management	2024-2028	FI, DSF	
Public Awareness Campaign	Consider developing a public awareness campaign in local schools that highlights the significance of tourism to communities and the critical role of the environment	2024-2028	LNT	FI
Eco-certification	Work with and encourage local communities that are interested in pursuing community level eco-certification, and work towards reducing carbon emissions	2024-2028	FI, DSF	LCG
Traffic Congestion	Explore options to address localised tourism related seasonal traffic congestion	2024-2027	SCC	LCG

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler3	Passage Tomb Landscape			
Passage Tomb Landscape	Continue to work within the local communities to raise awareness of the Passage Tomb landscape of Sligo and the World Heritage Nomination bid	2024-2029	DHLGH	SCC, SNLG
World Heritage Bid	Agree an MoU with DHLGH to frame and resource the preparation of the World Heritage bid for Sligo, and establish a World Heritage Team and World Heritage Steering Group in partnership with key stakeholders	2026-2028	DHLGH	SCC
Carrowmore Visitor Centre	Complete the upgrades to the Carrowmore Visitor Centre and the interpretive content	2024/2025	FI, OPW	SNLG

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 3	Passage Tomb Landscape			
Sustainable Visitor Experiences	Utilise the baseline study of the Passage Tombs of County Sligo (2021) to identify key management issues and potential core sites for delivering sustainable visitor experiences – work collaboratively to develop integrated visitor management plans, including exploring options to interpret the landscape off-site	2024/2025	SCC	SNLG, FI, DHLGH, OPW
Creevykeel Court Tomb	Creevykeel Court Tomb: Work with OPW to address the interpretive needs of this site	2024/2025	OPW	FI

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 4	Wellbeing			
Seaweed	Work with businesses and communities to undertake an audit of all seaweed products, experiences and services, and highlight linkages with health and wellbeing	2025/2026	FI	DSF
Wellbeing activities	Promote the wide range of wellbeing activities available throughout Sligo, such as seaweed baths, sauna, yoga, foraging and regenerative experiences	2024/2025	FI	DSF, local businesses
Surfing	Work with surf operators in Sligo to identify ways that surfing can further contribute to the county's positioning as a well-being destination	2024/2025	NSC, Surf operators	FI, DSF
Active Travel	Continue to support sustainable and active travel initiatives in Sligo	2024 - 2029	SCC, FI	Sligo Cycling Campaign, DSF

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 5	Coastal Tourism Experiences			
Rosses Point	Support Rosses Point Development Association in their efforts develop the marina	2024-2028	RPDA	SCC
Rosses Point	Extend the pontoon at Rosses Point; support the Association in attracting sailing events	2024-2028	RPDA	SCC, DSF
Rosses Point	Restore access to and from 'Second Beach' at Rosses Point	2024-2028	RPDA	SCC
Inishmurray	Continue the current assessment on access to the island and explore options for guided experiences and/or a virtual reality experience	2026/2027	SCC, NPWS	OPW
Boat Operators	Work with commercial boat operators that are licensed to provide tourism experiences, including chartered fishing, eco-wildlife tours and coastal sightseeing to explore ways of expanding the availability of marine- based experiences	2024-2027	FI, boat operators	

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 5	Coastal Tourism Experiences			
Mullaghmore	Support/facilitate a planning discussion on tourism in Mullaghmore and explore opportunities to create a safe coastal walk, in addition to refreshing the Discovery Point signage	2026/2027	SCC, FI	
Coastal Trail	Continue to assess the viability of developing a coastal trail, including from Bundoran to Mullaghmore	2025/2026	SCC	FI, LCC, DCC

Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 6	Festivals and Events			
Events and Festivals	Work with the festival and event organisers throughout the county	2024-2029	Event Organisers	FI, SCC, DSF
Events and Festivals	Work towards raising the profile of food and drink through existing and new events – highlight provenance	2024-2026	SFT	FI, DSF, SCC
Events and Festivals	Support the ongoing development of themed events and festivals that align with key themes and stories	2024-2026	SCC, FI	Event Organisers
Events and Festivals	Finalise and implement the Festivals and Events Strategy for Co. Sligo	2024/2025	SCC	FI
Music Festival	Explore opportunities for developing a new multi-faceted music festival that highlights key strengths of Co. Sligo alongside the music events, and work with all artistic sectors to develop and promote immersive experiences	2024/2025	SCC	FI
Arts and Culture	Extend and strengthen the emphasis on performing arts, music and cultural events across the entire county	2024-2029	Related arts, music and cultural organisations	SCC, FI, DSF
Outdoor Events	Continue to support and promote outdoor adventure events	2024-2029	Event Organisers	SCC, FI, DSF
Cleveragh Regional Park	Continue to support the development of the outdoor event space, and support the future events schedule to activate the events space post-construction	2024/2025	SCC	FI, DSF



Project	Actions	Time	Lead	Partners
Destination Enabler 7	Experience Clusters			
Community Engagement	Promote a cluster-based approach to working with communities in rural areas to highlight the critical mass of experiences	2024-2028	LCG, FI	
Sligo Food Trail	Explore opportunities to expand the trail/network into a stronger focus on developing food and drink clusters	2024-2028	SFT	FI, BIM
Cluster Development	Identify opportunities for strengthening linkages through the development of clusters around key Sligo themes	2024-2027	FI	DSF
Sligo Airport	Undertake a feasibility analysis of usage options for Sligo Airport that will support the tourism economy	2024/2025	Sligo Airport	SCC, Coillte, FI



Sligo Oysters



W.B. Yeats Trail: 10 Slishwood

WB Yeats Trail, Slishwood

## Table of Acronyms

Acronym	Stakeholder
AS	Adventure Sligo
ATU	Atlantic Technological University Sligo
BEG	Benwisikin Environmental Group
BID	Business Improvement District
BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
CCC	Cavan County Council
CDC	Coolaney Development Group
CMBC	Coolaney Mountain Bike Club
DCC	Donegal County Council
DCTDA	Drumcliffe Church Tourism Development Association
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DSF	Destination Sligo Forum
EDCD	Enniscrone & District Community Development
ETT	Enniscrone Tidy Towns
F&B	Food and Beverage
FI	Fáilte Ireland
FODC	Fermanagh & Omagh Council District
HE	Hazelwood Estate
HSE	Health Service Executive
LCC	Leitrim County Council
LCG	Local Community Group
LL	Local Link
LNT	Leave No Trace

Acronym	Stakeholder
MCC	Mayo County Council
MSLETB	Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
NSC	National Surf Centre
OPW	Office of Public Works
RPDA	Rosses Point Development Association
SAI	Spanish Armada Ireland
SCC	Sligo County Council
SCCI	Sligo Chamber of Commerce & Industry
SCDA	Strandhill Community Development Association
SFT	Sligo Food Trail
SGC	Sligo Greenway Co-op
SI	Sport Ireland
SKC	Sligo Kayak Club
SNLG	Sligo Neolithic Landscapes Group
SRC	Sligo Rowing Club
STDA	Sligo Tourist Development Association
TI	Tourism Ireland
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
TM	The Model, Home of the Niland Collection
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WI	Waterways Ireland
YS	Yeats Society Sligo

## Consultation

**This plan was developed through the 2021-22 COVID-19 period and was finalised in late 2023. The development of the Plan has been guided by a project Working Group and has been facilitated by Fáilte Ireland. The Working Group included representatives from all the key agencies and local tourism groups involved in influencing or delivering tourism. Fáilte Ireland would like to express its sincere thanks to all members of the Working Group for their time and efforts.**

### **Development of the Sligo DEDP involved:**

1. Desk research to review on-line presence of destination; relevant best practices; existing plans and strategies of stakeholders; and to undertake the mapping of all tourism assets.
2. Stakeholder consultation and an appraisal of the county through site visits, interviews and community discussions. Over 120 stakeholders were directly involved in discussions during the planning process.
3. Development of the Plan and presentation to the Working Group.
4. Review by the Working Group, and environmental impact assessment of Plan.
5. Public consultation period in early 2024

### **A wide range of stakeholders were consulted during the preparation of this plan. Individual organisations and agencies include:**

- ▶ Adventure Sligo
- ▶ Atlantic Technological University (ATU) Sligo
- ▶ B&B Ireland
- ▶ Coillte
- ▶ Coolaney Development Company
- ▶ Discover Enniscrone
- ▶ Drumcliffe Church Tourism Development
- ▶ Enniscrone Community Council
- ▶ Friends of Sligo Gaol
- ▶ Glencar Community Development Group

- ▶ Go Strandhill
- ▶ Grange & Armada Development Association
- ▶ Hawk's Well Theatre
- ▶ Hazelwood Demesne / Sazerac Company
- ▶ Irish Surfing Association
- ▶ Local enterprises / producers / representatives throughout Sligo
- ▶ National Surf Centre Strandhill
- ▶ Office of Public Works
- ▶ Rosses Point Development Association
- ▶ Sligo Business Improvement District (BID)
- ▶ Sligo Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Sligo County Council
- ▶ Sligo Food Trail
- ▶ Sligo LEADER Partnership
- ▶ Sligo Neolithic Landscapes Group
- ▶ Sligo Tourist Development Association
- ▶ South & West Sligo Tourism
- ▶ Strandhill Community Development Association
- ▶ The Model, Home of the Niland Collection
- ▶ Yeats Society Sligo

The views of local business operators, community groups, regional and national agencies, and local government within Co. Sligo were of fundamental importance in the development of the plan.

## Fáilte Ireland would like to thank all partners in the preparation and implementation of this ambitious plan for County Sligo.

**In addition to the consultation, a significant number of national and county plans and strategies have informed this plan. These include:**

- ▶ Fáilte Ireland Corporate Plan
- ▶ Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategies – 2023–2027
- ▶ ‘People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025’ Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- ▶ Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025
- ▶ Tourism Action Plan 2019 – 2021
- ▶ Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021 – 2023
- ▶ Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways
- ▶ County Sligo Tourism Strategy (2018–2023)
- ▶ County Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan ‘Sligo 2030 – One Voice One Vision’
- ▶ County Sligo Heritage Plan

A series of local reports and discussion papers on tourism related initiatives were also reviewed and have informed the actions in this plan.



The Model, Home of the Niland Collection

# Appendices



Mountain Biking Trail, Coolaney, Ox Mountains

# APPENDIX ONE – ENVIRONMENTAL

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

**This Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that all existing and future tourism projects and initiatives within the Sligo Destination and Experience Development Plan area are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner.**

The VICE (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) Model for Sustainable Tourism is the approach the Sligo DEDP is developed from and strives to implement. Fáilte Ireland recognises the need to integrate environmental considerations into this Plan in a way that responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment. Environmental considerations including inland and coastal water quality and amenity, climate change, traffic, biodiversity, built and cultural heritage, landscape, critical infrastructure and communities, all play a vital part in our tourism sector. The protection, enhancement and promotion of our most important tourism asset – the natural environment has been an integral part of the formation of this Plan as is evidenced in the following:

- ▶ Environmental assessments and resulting measuring and monitoring,
- ▶ A firm commitment to ensuring sustainable and responsible tourism principles are practiced,
- ▶ Compliance with statutory decision making and consent granting at Plan implementation stage, and
- ▶ Integrating requirements for environmental protection and management.

Environmental Assessment Consideration has been given to the requirement to undertake environmental assessment of this Plan in order to ensure full legal compliance and to further integrate protection, enhancement and promotion of the environment in developing and implementing the Plan. The following sets out the two types of environmental assessments that were considered.

### 1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Plan was examined for the need to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). On initial examination of the Plan it was determined that

full SEA would be required. The assessment process was completed having full regard to SEA Directive 2001/42/EU and to Statutory Instrument No. 435/2004 as amended. The outcome of this process can be referenced in the relevant environmental documents that accompany this Plan.

### 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The Plan was examined for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment (AA). On initial examination of the Plan and in completing screening for AA, it was determined that Stage 2 AA would be required. The assessment process was undertaken having full regard to the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and to Statutory Instrument No. 477/2011. The output and outcome of this process can be referenced in the relevant environmental documents that accompany this Plan.

Having completed full SEA and AA on the Sligo Destination and Experience Development Plan it is evident that these processes have had a positive influence on the evolution of the Plan and will also continue to have a positive environmental influence as the plan enters its implementation phase. The outcome of completing the above environmental assessments has resulted in the following:

- ▶ Identifying and mitigating where relevant potential environmental impacts resulting from the Plan.
- ▶ Identifying relevant positive environmental impacts arising from the Plan and ensuring the implementation of actions that result in environmental protection, enhancement and promotion e.g. visitor management actions, environmental and sustainable education.
- ▶ Developing a suite of mitigatory actions to ensure that any negative environmental impacts are reduced or eliminated at plan implementation stage. This suite of mitigatory actions includes:

- ▶ The requirement to establish the status of the plan and its interrelationship with Statutory Decision making and consent granting frameworks,
- ▶ Integrating the requirements for Environmental Compliance into the Plan.

**Particular emphasis is placed on the following:**

- ▶ Requirements for lower-tier environmental assessment,
- ▶ The Sligo County Development Plan,
- ▶ The Climate Action Plan 2019,
- ▶ Visitor management,
- ▶ Consideration for infrastructural capacity and green infrastructure,
- ▶ Eco system services,
- ▶ Development and execution of an Environmental Monitoring Programme for the Plan during implementation and operation.
- ▶ The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. Section A5a details the measures that have been selected in order to monitor the likely significant effects of implementing this Plan.
- ▶ Monitoring can demonstrate the positive effects facilitated by the Plan and can enable, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action.
- ▶ The occurrence of persistent significant adverse environmental effects which are directly attributable to tourism would necessitate consideration of the effects in the context of the Plan and a possible review of part(s) of the Plan.
- ▶ Environmental monitoring will be based around indicators that allow quantitative measures of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives.
- ▶ A variety of sources of information will be used to run the programme.

Environmental Monitoring will be executed by Fáilte Ireland and will run concurrent with the implementation phase of the Plan itself. It will be reported on to the Plan's implementation group on an annual basis where relevant information sources allow, and the findings of the monitoring will influence the actions of the plan as it progresses. The monitoring will be linked directly to the Plan KPI's, including monitoring of visitor numbers where relevant. Environmental monitoring

for the Destination and Experience Development Plan and other existing/future Fáilte Ireland plans, programmes, etc. may be undertaken and reported on at the same time. Appendix 1 sets out the indicators that will be used in the operation of this environmental monitoring programme.

## Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

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

## Guiding Principles for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

- ▶ Assess the feasibility of developing and implementing visitor management plans where relevant.
- ▶ Encourage the adoption of a responsible tourism approach with ongoing monitoring of environmental impacts.
- ▶ Increase awareness and appreciation of the Sligo unique landscape and environment
- ▶ Increase environmental performance among tourism businesses.
- ▶ Encourage sustainable modes of transport and ensure they are accessible to tourists.
- ▶ Introduce and implement minimum sustainable standards for tour guides.
- ▶ Increase and promote environmental protection and enhancement when progressing actions derived from this plan.
- ▶ Ensure the EPA's Environmental Sensitivity Mapping Webtool is consulted when implementing projects resulting from this plan.
- ▶ Monitor the quality of visitor experiences and local social/cultural impact at key sites
- ▶ Ensure visitor experiences are accessible to all where possible.
- ▶ Support voluntary and community led environmental protection projects, which in turn benefit tourism.



- ▶ Advocate for the protection of key environmental and tourism assets.
- ▶ Improve tourist management, particularly in mature and established tourist areas
- ▶ Encourage tourism related businesses to engage in the Leave No Trace Programme
- ▶ Ensure crucial infrastructure including water and wastewater services are in place and adequate.
- ▶ Harness the importance of ecosystem services and protected sites to encourage sustainable levels of ecotourism growth and awareness.
- ▶ Ensure invasive species management is in place through the promotion of effective biosecurity measures.

## Implementation and Consent

This Plan 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.

Implementing the DEDP 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 existing and emerging plans that have been subject to environmental assessment. The DEDP does not provide consent, establish a framework for granting consent or contribute towards a framework for granting consent.

In order to be realised, projects included in this Plan 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 Plan 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.

## Integrating Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management into the Plan

The SEA and AA team worked with the Plan-preparation team at Fáilte Ireland in order to integrate requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan.

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 the Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer.

In order to achieve funding (including promotion) for land use or infrastructural development or land use activities from Fáilte Ireland, Fáilte Ireland's stakeholders shall be required to demonstrate compliance with measures relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management contained within the following Fáilte Ireland published documents:

- ▶ Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 5 "Site Maintenance Guidelines" and other relevant measures from the Fáilte Ireland visitor and habitat management guidelines series (and any subsequent replacements); and
- ▶ Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme Appendix 6 "Environmental Management for Local Authorities and Others" (and any subsequent replacements).

In order to be realised, projects included in the DEDP (in a similar way to other projects from any other sector) will have to comply, as relevant, with various 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 the DEDP is not part and does not contribute towards. Such legislation, policies, plans and programmes include:

- ▶ Requirements for lower-tier environmental assessment, including EIA and AA;
- ▶ Statutory land use plans that form part of the statutory decision making

and consent-granting framework (e.g. Development Plans, such as the Sligo County Development Plan, and Local Area Plans) and that have undergone environmental assessment, as appropriate, including various provisions relating to sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management; and

- ▶ The Climate Action Plan 2019 and the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework (2018 and any subsequent versions).

## Infrastructure Capacity

With respect to infrastructural capacity (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) the potential impact on existing infrastructure as well as the potential environmental effects of a likely increase in tourism-related traffic volumes along any routes resulting from the relevant initiative shall be considered and mitigated as appropriate, where relevant. The promotion of developing visitor friendly infrastructure where it is required will also be encouraged.

## Visitor Management

Those receiving funding shall seek to manage any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour in order to avoid significant effects including loss of habitat and disturbance, including ensuring that new projects are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities.

Extensive research by Fáilte Ireland has shown improved environmental outcomes (including improved attainment of conservation objectives) in areas with visitor management strategies. Visitor management strategies will be required for proposed plans, programmes and projects that are to receive funding as relevant and appropriate.

## Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services

Those receiving funding shall contribute towards the maintenance of existing green infrastructure and its ecosystem services, taking into account the output of the Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem Services project being undertaken by the NPWS. Proposals for the development of any green infrastructure should demonstrate the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the: provision of open space amenities; sustainable management of water; protection and management of biodiversity; protection of cultural heritage; and protection of protected landscape sensitivities.

# APPENDIX TWO

## Supporting Current Policy and Planning

**In order to support the ambition around sustainable destination growth, the Sligo DEDP is designed to guide the destination and its stakeholders through a five year development focus through continuous improvement and experience innovation. The Sligo DEDP is aligned with a number of existing strategies, policy and industry reports.**

### **They include;**

- ▶ Fáilte Ireland Corporate Plan
- ▶ Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Development Strategies – 2023–2027
- ▶ ‘People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025’ Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- ▶ Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021 – 2025
- ▶ Tourism Action Plan 2019 – 2021
- ▶ Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021 – 2023
- ▶ Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways
- ▶ County Sligo Tourism Strategy (2018–2023)

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

### **FÁILTE IRELAND CORPORATE PLAN AND REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES (2023-2027)**

Fáilte Ireland’s Corporate Plan is the basis for national tourism development supported by Regional Tourism Development Strategies (2023–2027) for each of the four regional brands.

### **PEOPLE, PLACE AND POLICY: GROWING TOURISM TO 2025** **‘People, Place and Policy:**

Growing Tourism to 2025’ includes a focus on growing 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.

### **OUR RURAL FUTURE: RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2021-2025**

The policy provides a framework for the development of rural Ireland over a five year period. The role of tourism in local and regional economies is recognised as being of an importance that ‘cannot be understated’. The aim of growing the tourism offering and developing outdoor activity tourism are highlighted in the policy. Particular relevant policy measures include:

- ▶ Maximising resources and strengths in the Green Economy to support employment opportunities for rural communities across a range of areas including sustainable tourism (Policy Measure 26)
- ▶ Further development of the Fáilte Ireland Experience Brands including the Wild Atlantic Way by strengthening Ireland’s image as an outdoor activity holiday destination for both domestic and international markets (32)
- ▶ Investment in greenways, blueways, walking trails and other outdoor recreation infrastructure to support the growth in outdoor recreation tourism (36)
- ▶ Expansion of the Walks Scheme to achieve a target of at least 80 trails (38)
- ▶ Explore the potential for the development of further tourist trails, including cross-border trails and initiatives (39).

## TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2019 – 2021

The action plan developed by the Irish government's Sustainable Tourism Working Group sets out the ambition that 'Ireland will seek to be amongst the world-leaders in sustainable tourism practices', setting out eight guiding principles for sustainable tourism development in Ireland.

1. All of government will work together with industry towards achieving a sustainable tourism sector.
2. Sustainable tourism growth will be achieved in a manner that focuses on overall economic benefit ahead of the number of tourists.
3. Tourism will support economic growth in communities throughout the country and with a greater spread of demand across the year.
4. In delivering high quality tourism experiences that exceed our visitors' expectations, we will do so in a manner that minimises any negative environmental or community impacts.
5. As custodians of our natural landscape and of our historic and cultural assets, we will protect them for the next generation.
6. Responsible behaviour by our visitors will be encouraged to maximise the mutual benefit of tourism to Ireland's people and place.
7. The tourism sector will support and promote efforts to move to more sustainable forms of transport to, and around Ireland.
8. The tourism sector must play its part to help deliver Ireland's commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

## ACTIONS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES 2021 – 2023

The objectives of this plan are to identify actions which promote sustainable tourism practices, establish new research methods and form a clear narrative for communication about the sustainability agenda. Actions are grouped under the seven themes of policy, evidence base, environmental impact, awareness and education, business planning, destination management, and sales and marketing. As per Action 23 of the plan, the guiding principles for sustainable development are embedded in this DEDP. It is also a further action of this DEDP that local stakeholders are aware of opportunities to maximise the potential of nature based solutions identified by Action 27 of the plan.

## STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF GREENWAYS

The objective of the Greenway strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all Greenway users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over a 10 year period with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.

### NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN (2013-2025)

The NPAP (Get Ireland Active) aims to increase physical activity levels across the population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the country. The Plan sets targets for annual increases in the level of daily physical activity across a range of ages and abilities to achieve the National Guidelines on Physical Activity for the country supported by eight action areas developed to encourage greater participation in physical activity. Key relevant actions in the Plan include:

- ▶ Action 32: Develop and promote walking and cycling strategies in each Local Authority area.
- ▶ Action 36: Prioritise the planning and development of walking and cycling and general recreational/physical activity infrastructure.
- ▶ Action 37: Explore opportunities to maximise physical activity and recreation amenities in the natural environment.

### COUNTY SLIGO TOURISM STRATEGY (2018-2023)

The purpose of this strategy is to co-ordinate an approach to increase the contribution of the County's tourism sector to the economy, to generate and sustain employment and to improve quality of life within County Sligo. It recognises that successful tourism destinations operate in a highly coordinated manner across public and private sector stakeholders. The goal of the plan is to ensure the growth of the industry in an orderly and sustainable way, delivering world-class visitor experiences and achieving the highest possible economic and social return on tourism activities for the County.

### LOCAL PLANS

In developing the Sligo DEDP a range of local tourism development plans were examined, including the County Sligo Local Economic and Community Plan 'Sligo 2030 – One Voice One Vision' and the County Sligo Heritage Plan.



Schoolhouse, Gleniff Horseshoe Trail



Sligo Town

FI-173258-WAW-0324

