

Submission to Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 by Fáilte Ireland



Introduction

This submission has been prepared by Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, in response to the invitation for submissions on the Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 ('the Draft Plan') by Clare County Council ('the Council').

Fáilte Ireland welcomes the opportunity to engage with Clare County Council on the emerging Plan for the County and to build on the well-established relationship between Fáilte Ireland and the County Council working together.

The preparation of this submission comes at a time when Fáilte Ireland are emphasising the need for land-use plans to manage all land uses and economic drivers – of which tourism is but one, in a more holistic, strategic and spatial manner to maximise the efficient use of resources and the achievement of greater outcomes for society at large.

Overall the Draft Plan sets out a clear strategy for tourism with numerous references throughout in a number of areas and we welcome the detail included within. Many of the Issues highlighted within Fáilte Ireland's Issues Paper submission have been addressed, as such the following may allow the Council to complete the strategy. We hope that this submission can represent another step in a collaborative process that culminates in the adoption of the new Development Plan.

For ease of reading, we have structured this submission as follows:

- 1. The Objective of the Submission**
- 2. Commentary on the Draft Plan;**
- 3. Proposals for the Clare County Development Plan**
 - 3.1 Additional Tourism Considerations
 - 3.2 Additional Suggested Text Insertions
- 4. Conclusion**

1. The Objective of this Submission

Fáilte Ireland has prepared this submission to support and assist Clare County Council in the formulation of planning policies and frameworks for the period 2023-2029. Fáilte Ireland are seeking to enhance the partnership approach between the County Council and Fáilte Ireland and ensure that the expertise of both organisations is shared.

The submission seeks to enhance the policy coverage in the Draft Development Plan to ensure a meaningful framework is established for the enhancement of tourism in the County, and the wider region, during the Plan period. It has been prepared with inputs from professional planners as well as various strands within Fáilte Ireland. It provides the Council with a concise single submission from Fáilte Ireland dealing with all aspects of tourism, from strategic planning, to visitor experience and destination management.

The submission has been prepared having regard to the tourism profile of the County; the existing policy context in the Draft Plan; and an established template for sustainable tourism policies being used by Fáilte Ireland to guide Planning Authorities.

2. Commentary on the Draft Plan

Fáilte Ireland is generally supportive of the Draft Plan and notes that many of the suggestions included in our Issue Paper submission have been included in the Draft Plan. We again welcome the opportunity to assist the County Council in the important area of policy preparation. Fáilte Ireland is acutely aware of the complex range of issues that a Development Plan must tackle. It is also mindful of both the responsibilities and limitations of the prevailing legislation and the role that the Development Plan plays in a statutory context. Our submission has been fully informed by these considerations.

The importance of tourism to the county is clearly set out and established with multiple references to tourism in the Chapter 1- Introduction and Vision and with particular reference to Goal VIII. We welcome the inclusion of a dedicated and focussed Chapter on Tourism which has a good level of detail and which is cross-reference with many related chapters in the Plan such as retail, rural housing, culture and heritage, economic development among others. The Chapter sets a clear vision and focus, with clear and distinct strategic aims, for tourism development over the period of the Development Plan in line with the County Clare Tourism Strategy 2030 and its Destination Recovery and Strategy Action Plan.

Fáilte Ireland is particularly supportive that underpinning the approach to tourism development is the concept of Sustainable & Responsible Tourism.

We welcome reference to Fáilte Ireland, the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, and Fáilte Ireland's Visitor Experience Development Plan as well as dedicated sections in the Tourism Chapter identifying tourism objectives for all parts of the county.

3. Proposals for the Draft Clare County Development Plan

We have prepared this part of the submission drawing on existing strategies for the enhancement and management of tourism in the County.

Proposed information and statements are based on identified gaps in policy coverage and recommended good practice in the area of sustainable tourism. We have set out explanatory text for discussion among the plan-writing team and in some instances then included suggested text or policies intended for consideration as a direct insert to the Plan itself.

Clare County has a rich built and natural heritage and it is well placed to optimise the potential for tourism through proper planning and development. The Development Plan presents and clearly sets out a strategy for tourism which aligns with Fáilte Ireland and both the Wild Atlantic Way Brands. The following comments may allow the Council to complete the Plan.

The consideration of built and natural heritage resources, strategic planning for accommodation and promotion of inter-agency tourism strategies in the Draft Development Plan will build on the previous success of strong tourism consideration in Development Plans.

3.1 Additional Tourism Considerations

Regional Tourism Plan (RTPs)

Fáilte Ireland are in the process of preparing Regional Tourism Plans for each of the four Regional Experience Brands (Dublin, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands). The purpose of the Regional Tourism Plans is to identify the sustainable tourism development priorities that will help to unlock the commercial potential of the region bringing benefits to all stakeholders and industry. Each plan will be prepared based on the VICE model which is a methodology for working towards sustainable tourism that seeks to strike an appropriate balance between the needs of the **V**isitor, the **I**ndustry and **C**ommunity and the **E**nvironment. The plans will be for the period to 2025 and will be grounded in the Fáilte Ireland's new Corporate Strategy. There will be a strong spatial element to the plans which will seek to identify where development should take place in order to unlock the tourism potential of the region.

The Regional Tourism Strategy will also provide a strategic framework for a suite of Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) which will sit underneath them. They will set out the overall goals of each of the proposed DEDPs as well as the timing and sequence for the preparation of these plans. A number of DEDPs are already in progress. Once the Wild Atlantic Way Regional Tourism Strategy is finalised, it will become a primary reference document to inform Fáilte Ireland's submissions on County and City Development Plans. This will ensure that

our submissions on County and City Development Plans are informed by a strong regional context in addition to the agreed tourism needs of each county or city.

We request the inclusion of an objective supporting the implementation of the Wild Atlantic Way Tourism Plans in the County Development Plan, to support the continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and tourism stakeholders to ensure successful implementation and delivery of these tourism plans.

Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan

We welcome reference to the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP) in the Draft Plan, in Section 9.2.5, as well as identification of the Burren as an important tourist attraction, in Section 9.3.4, relating to Tourism in North Clare and the Burren however it is considered given the importance of the Visitor Experience Development Plan as prepared by Fáilte Ireland, with the support of Clare County Council, that greater reference to the plan, including objectives supporting its primary aims should be included in the Development Plan.

We request an objective acknowledging and supporting the Visitor Experience Development Plans. We wish to see an objective supporting continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and tourism stakeholders to ensure successful implementation and delivery of the VEDP.

This section should include specific objectives relating to:

- Traffic & Transport – this is a critical challenge to the success of the Burren and is not called out enough in the plan. The Burren by its nature is restricted with the road network and adapting it, but it is considered that the Plan could support the identification and implementation of measures to improve this constraint.
- Burren Discovery Trail –is key to visitor dispersal and dwell time and important to highlight throughout the plan.

Ardnacrusha Power Station

While Ardnacrusha is referred to in the Development Plan, in respect of its role as an infrastructure installation, Clare County Council might be aware that ESB are undertaking a feasibility study with regards to the potential for a new visitor experience to expand the visitor offering at Ardnacrusha Power Station which would assist increasing visitor footfall into the area.

Destination Towns

Fáilte Ireland has published ‘Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns’ to provide a framework to support communities and Local Authorities and set out the key drivers of what makes a town appealing to the international visitor. Ennistymon has been granted investment under Fáilte Ireland’s Destination Towns funding programme which will assist in

boosting the tourism appeal and attractiveness of the town. It is considered that this should be referenced in Chapters 17 and 18 in reference to Ennistymon.

3.2 Additional Suggested Text Insertions

Chapter 9- Tourism

Section 9.2.5- Wild Atlantic Way

We welcome the identification and supporting policies relating to the Wild Atlantic Way as one of the most important tourism brands and assets in Ireland.

Additionally as per Section 3.1 above we would request the inclusion of a specific objective in CDP9.6 supporting the implementation of the objectives of the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience Development Plan.

Section 9.2.7 Ireland's Hidden Heartlands

We request a minor amendment to text in Section 9.2.7 as follows:

Suggested text addition to objective CDP9.6:

Insert new objective as follows;

To work with Fáilte Ireland and other key stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation and delivery of Lough Derg Visitor Experience Development Plan 2020-2024

Section 9.2.14 Lakeland and Waterway Tourism

The Fáilte Ireland 'Platforms for Growth' identifies the development of facilities centres for water-based activities including ones located at Ballycuggeran Sports Activity Facility, Ogonnelloe, Killaloe as well as facilities along Lough Derg and the River Shannon. It is considered that these should be identified in the Plan as follows:

Suggested additional text, to Objective 9.13:

It is an objective of Clare County Council:

a) To support the development of tourism activities in lakeland areas and along waterways subject to normal planning and environmental requirements. All proposed developments shall be in accordance the Birds and Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and all other relevant EC Directives.

b) To encourage the development of shared facilities centres, at inland water bodies including Ballycuggeran Sports Activity Facility, Ogonnelloe, Killaloe, Lough Derg and the River Shannon, to facilitate greater access to water for areas such as water sports and water-based activities and events subject to normal planning and environmental criteria.

Section 9.2.18 -Sustainable & Responsible Tourism

We welcome the inclusion of Section 9.2.18 in respect of Sustainable & Responsible Tourism however consider that it could make more explicit reference to sustainable transport, which is a key challenge, including reference to:

- e-charging,
- specific parking allocations for electric vehicles,
- access restricted in certain areas to sustainable modes of transport,
- reduced parking charges at publicly owned sites for low carbon,
- carbon neutral transport modes,
- provision of better and safer cycle lanes along many of the transit routes and access routes particularly between tourism towns, villages and attractions.

Section 9.3.3 Tourism in East Clare

It is considered that East Clare, while being an area of the County which is lesser known, is an area with significant potential. It has an attractive landscape stretching east from the M18 motorway over to the River Shannon and Lough Derg and its fine towns/villages i.e. Killaloe, Tuamgraney, Scarriff and Mountshannon however there is a lack of tourism accommodation, a limited variety and supply of restaurants/cafes and a lack of accessibility by public transport.

Potential new development/investment in tourism, in the area should be fully facilitated and supported by Clare County Council. It is a proven fact a thriving tourism industry has major benefits for the food and drink, accommodation and retail sectors.

As such the following additional objectives are requested in Objective CDP9.23:

Suggested new objective, in Objective CDP9.23:

It is an Objective of Clare County Council...

k) to encourage the development of additional visitor accommodation and food and beverage offering in East Clare.

l) identify potential upgrades or new public transport routes and greenways to encourage sustainable tourism options for visitors to East Clare.

Section 9.3.4 Tourism in North Clare and The Burren

As identified in Section 3.1 above the Burren Discovery Trail is an important asset for both visitor dispersal and the increase of visitor dwell time in this area and should be referenced in this section with an objective supporting it.

Section 9.3.5 Tourism in West Clare

As Clare County Council will be aware Fáilte Ireland are currently preparing the Cliff Coast Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP). This plan will cover the geography of North Kerry and West Clare renowned along the Wild Atlantic Way for its rich coastal cliff scenery. The vision for the plan is the development of a sustainable tourism destination where every tourism experience connects the visitor with innovative approaches to rural, responsible, regenerative and restorative tourism experiences.

The Plans objectives will be as follows;

- Address the challenge of the area perceived as a transient destination located between more mature tourism destinations.
- Develop the international profile of the destination through its credibility as a responsible tourism area and the potential for 'green' experience innovation.
- Maximise the destination opportunity provided by the capital investment in Greenways and prepare the communities to build on the opportunity.
- Examine how to develop authentic community experiences to disperse visitors across the destination and meet local people through culture and heritage experiences.
- Create destination clusters for water adventure activities building on the existing potential of West Clare.
- Develop cliffs and coastal trails experiences to disperse visitors across the Cliff Coast and preparing for the future development of the Wild Atlantic Way Coastal Walk.
- Develop the cultural opportunity across the Cliff Coast to create vibrant evening economy hubs for visitors.

As such the following objective is requested as part of Objective CDP9.25:

Suggested new objective, in Objective CDP9.25:

It is an Objective of Clare County Council....

m) to work with Fáilte Ireland in the preparation and implementation of the Cliff Coast Destination Experience Development Plan

Chapter 12 Shannon Estuary

Section 12.2.2.1 Inishmurry / Cahiracon

We request the following text amendment to Section 12.2.2.1

Suggested text amendments, to Section 9.2.6:

*With its location on the **Shannon Estuary Way which is a route off the** world-famous Wild Atlantic Way – the longest defined and among the most stunning coastal routes in the world – with natural deep and sheltered waters, County Clare and the Shannon Estuary is a welcoming and attractive destination for cruise liners and their passengers. The Shannon Estuary is bounded by three of Ireland's most scenic and historic counties, Clare, Kerry and Limerick, each of which has significant tourism offerings.*

4. Conclusion

We wish to take this final opportunity to commend the County Council on the Draft Development Plan and reiterate the commitment of Fáilte Ireland to working with the Council on achieving the Plan objectives over the coming years.

In relation to any follow up to this submission please contact:

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