

CHAPTER 10

TOURISM & OUTDOOR RECREATION





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10.0 Tourism & Outdoor Recreation

10.1 Introduction

The County Development Plan, in parallel with County Kerry's Economic Recovery Plan 2021, the emerging Local Economic and Community Plan and the Tourism Strategy strives to retain, promote, and drive Kerry's position as a premier international tourism destination, with a focus on developing green and sustainable tourism. The policies outlined in the Development Plan are supportive of aligning the growth of the tourism industry with the fundamental principles of protecting the environment, safeguarding the needs of host communities, job creation and working with the industry in developing practices that promote the circular economy and climate action.

Kerry has a range of natural, cultural and built heritage resources of outstanding value and the tourism sector is an extremely important driver of economic activity in the county. The tourism sector in Kerry is a job intensive sector, which encompasses a range of economic activities including, aviation, hotels, B&Bs, pubs and restaurants, festivals, sport, exhibitions, outdoor adventure and activities, cultural entertainment, visitor attractions and business conferences. Kerry boasts some of Ireland's most iconic scenery including the Lakes of Killarney, the MacGillycuddy Reeks, the Dingle and Iveragh peninsulas and Valentia Island, Skellig Michael, the Sleah Head Drive, the pristine beaches of North Kerry and has the longest section of the Wild Atlantic Way.

It is the aim of this plan to protect and enhance Kerry's natural environment, built, cultural and linguistic heritage, upgrade existing facilities and provide a world class experience for tourists which will ensure the continued success of the Tourism Sector for the county.

10.1.1 Sustainable Tourism and Climate Action

Sustainable tourism is defined as 'tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities'¹. Sustainable tourism development involves a concern for the impact of the industry on the host community, climate change and on the physical environment. Sustainable tourism planning therefore requires a balance to be struck between the needs of the visitor, the place, heritage assets and the host community. Erosion and damage to pathways and vegetation associated with multiple uses, particularly in relation to mountain trails, is a concern and such uses may need to be managed to protect these areas for current and future generations.

This Plan provides a policy and objective framework for the development of a more diversified and sustainable tourism sector. In the implementation of this Plan however, it is recognised that tourism and heritage policies need to integrate with related policies – such as connectivity, environment, economic development, and settlement policies.

It is also recognised that the development of a diversified and sustainable tourist industry will require a coordinated approach by the local community, public and private bodies in Kerry to support the recovery of the tourism industry. It is the policy of KCC to work with Fáilte Ireland - South West Region to pursue a strategy for the development of a sustainable tourism industry which minimises adverse impacts on local communities, built heritage, landscapes, habitats, and species leaving them undiminished as a resource for the future, while supporting social and economic prosperity.

Sustainable Tourism and Climate Action

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 10-1 Adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism and have regard to its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts on local infrastructure, sensitive areas and sites, water quality, biodiversity, soils, ecosystems, habitats and species, climate change.

¹ United Nations World Tourism Organisation



- KCDP 10-2** Facilitate sustainable tourism development throughout the County and particularly in areas where tourism is currently underdeveloped and where there is a need for local tourism development initiatives including Greenways, Blueways, Peatways, Cycleways, Walkways and Marine Leisure.
- KCDP 10-3** Liaise with strategic partners such as Fáilte Ireland (South West Region), the National Parks and Wildlife Services, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Coillte, other relevant national bodies and the local tourism sector on the identification of land use strategies for areas, focusing on their tourism, environmental and heritage value.
- KCDP 10-4** Facilitate and support the sustainable development of tourism along, or in close proximity to public transport routes.

10.2 Policy Context

One of the challenges in the preparation of this chapter has been the complex and everchanging situation in relation to the re-opening of Tourism related businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic and national health advice. In the preparation of this chapter of the draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028, regard has been had for key policy documents and initiatives including:

- National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040
- National Climate Action Plan 2019
- National Economic Recovery Plan 2021
- Our Rural Future - Rural Development Policy (2021-2025)
- Tourism Recovery Plan 2020-2023
- People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2025 (Department of Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht, 2019)
- Tourism Development and Innovation – A Strategy for Investment 2016 – 2022 (Failte Ireland, 2016)
- Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (2020)
- County Kerry Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2022
- Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan (2016-2021)
- The Economic Impact of COVID-19 on the Economy of County Kerry
- County Kerry’s COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan (2021)

10.2.1 National Policy

National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework (NPF) highlights the importance of tourism. NPO22 outlines the importance of facilitating tourism development focussing on networks of greenways, blueways and peatways. The importance of protecting our natural landscapes from a rural tourism perspective has been highlighted within NPO 23. The NPF has also emphasised the importance of co-ordination and promotion of an all-island tourism initiatives through continued co-operation between the relevant tourism agencies and Tourism Ireland within NPO 49.

10.2.2 Regional Policy

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (2020)

The RSES acknowledges the importance of tourism as a significant economic activity and seeks to increase tourist numbers, support sustainable jobs through targeted tourism initiatives, develop activity tourism and



leverage natural and built heritage assets. In terms of Kerry's tourism assets RSES states that it is an objective to support the utilisation and realisation of the existing and emerging tourism assets outlined in RPO53.

10.2.3 Local Policy

10.2.3.1 Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

The County Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 (LECP) will be reviewed in parallel with the review of the Kerry County Development Plan. This Draft Plan continues to support the Economic Development and Job Creation Higher Level Goals of the 2016-2021 LECP.

10.2.3.2 County Kerry Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2022 (KCC, 2016)

The Kerry County Council Tourism Unit together with the Destination Kerry Forum and other stakeholders, prepared a Kerry Tourism Strategy & Action Plan 2016-2022 to support the development of tourism in Kerry. The Kerry Tourism Strategy sets out in detail the importance of this industry both in economic and social terms.

The Tourism Strategy works to the principles of the National Tourism Policy as outlined in 'People, Place & Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025' and forms an integral part of the County Kerry Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2022.

The Vision for Kerry Tourism is 'to maximise, in a sustainable manner, tourism's contribution to the quality of life, economy, employment and local community development, paying particular attention to nurturing and protecting the natural, built, cultural and linguistic heritage of the county'²

Strategic Priorities include to:

- Protect and enhance Kerry's natural environment, built, cultural and linguistic heritage.
- Ensure the continued success of the Tourism Sector for the county.
- Organise relevant regular research to facilitate the development of sustainable, successful new tourism projects throughout the county.
- Provide a world class experience for the visitor.
- Lead to further collaboration between state agencies, product providers and local communities.
- Embrace new up-to-date technologies for both the visitor and research purposes.

The strategy was developed at a time of optimism and significant economic growth in Kerry. However, recently the tourism sector has been significantly impacted by the COVID -19 pandemic. In response to the unprecedented impact of the pandemic, Kerry County Council launched the multifaceted Safe Destination Programme in 2020, supported by Fáilte Ireland, the Irish Hotels Federation and the Kerry Tourism Industry Federation. It ensured that those who visited Kerry, could do so in the knowledge that it is a safe place to visit and stay which proved successful in keeping the County safe and contributed to Kerry being Ireland's most popular home holiday destination in 2020 and 2021.

In recognition that tourism is integral to the economic recovery and is uniquely positioned to contribute strongly to job creation and reversing unemployment in communities, Kerry County Council established a Tourism Taskforce in 2020. The primary aim of the taskforce is to look at how best the tourism sector can adapt and recover from the pandemic. A primary role of the taskforce is to review the current Tourism Strategy for Kerry (2016-2022) and develop a new plan for the recovery of Tourism. This plan will be launched in 2021 and will identify actions for the short, medium and longer-term recovery.

² County Kerry Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2022



10.3 Tourism in County Kerry

Kerry has a very strong tourism offering with many opportunities to enhance the visitor experience. This plan will facilitate the further development of a tourism industry which will act as a key economic driver in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner by ensuring that tourism developments are built in appropriate locations, and at a pace and scale which ensures that the natural and cultural assets are protected in the long term.

The Kerry tourism sector had been performing very well and the total value of the tourism industry to Kerry in 2019 was approximately €550 million and employment statistics show that 18% of Kerry's work force was employed in tourism and related sectors³. COVID-19 has severely impacted Kerry's tourism sector. The county needs to plan and position itself so that it can rebuild and capitalise on future growth in the domestic tourist market and recover and grow its international markets once international travel resumes. In order to achieve its full potential, the county needs to reopen safely and protect and conserve the natural and cultural assets which have attracted visitors to Kerry for generations. It needs to attract visitors throughout the year and disperse them geographically around the county.

Over the 10-year period to 2019 there was a 56% increase in overseas visitors to Ireland, however, this has been completely reversed as a result of Covid-19. The Ernst & Young Report on the *Potential impact of Covid-19 on Irish Tourism in April 2020*, highlights that the tourism sector was the first to be impacted and likely to be the last to fully recover from the crisis.

Tourist behaviour will undoubtedly be impacted in the long-term by this pandemic, for geopolitical, economic and psychological reasons. Since COVID-19 there has been a growing shift in the nature of tourism demand away from tour led holidays to independent tourists seeking the infrastructure to allow them to move freely and conveniently between attractions in the County. This has particular implications for the integration of tourism, land use and transportation policies. Integrated land use and transport planning will enhance the tourist product and visitor experience and encourage longer term stays in the County. This integration requires transport infrastructure to develop stronger links with the hierarchy of visitor attractions, support the provision of eVehicle charging facilities, access to appropriate accommodation and a well signed and interpreted landscape. Transport and ease of access to the County is probably the most significant factor determining the growth of the tourism sector in Kerry.

10.3.1 Wild Atlantic Way (WAW)

The Wild Atlantic Way is Ireland's first long-distance touring route, stretching along the Atlantic coast from Donegal to West Cork. The overall aim of the project is to develop a long-distance touring route that will achieve greater visibility for the west coast of Ireland in overseas tourist markets.

The Wild Atlantic Way was devised as a new 'experience' and 'destination' by Fáilte Ireland to present the West Coast of Ireland as a compelling international tourism product of scale and singularity. It is an overarching brand which individual destinations and businesses can trade collectively with much greater potential visibility and clarity of message in the international marketplace.

Over 450km of the 2,500km route (20%) is located in County Kerry. Along the route a number of Discovery Points have been identified, consisting of viewing points and lay-bys. These Discovery Points are generally located in remote coastal areas outside of the main towns and villages. As such, they are intended to provide visitors with a viewing opportunity as they travel along the route, and also as a device to entice visitors to the more remote and peripheral areas of the coast, thus potentially increasing overnight stays. Kerry County Council are committed in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland to sustainably improve facilities along the WAW route subject to appropriate environmental assessments.

³ The Economic Impact of COVID-19 on the Economy of County Kerry – May 2020 (KCC)



Tourism in County Kerry

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-5** Engage and collaborate with strategic partners such as Fáilte Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Services, OPW, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Coillte and other relevant bodies and local communities to develop the tourism sector in Kerry and to ensure that the economic potential of the tourism sector is secured for the benefit of the local economy.
- KCDP 10-6** Promote and facilitate tourism as one of the key economic pillars of the County's economy and a major generator of employment and to support the provision of facilities such as hotels, aparthotels, tourist hostels, cafes, restaurants and visitor attractions.
- KCDP 10-7** Support the implementation of the County Kerry Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2022) including the upgrading and repurposing of existing attractions, the development of the tourism projects and the preparation and adoption of successor strategies.
- KCDP 10-8** Facilitate and support the implementation of the Fáilte Ireland Visitor /Destination Experience Development Plans, Heritage Town and Destination Town Plans.
- KCDP 10-9** Establish destination branding as a marketing strategy tool for Kerry to build market opportunities and attract new visitors.
- KCDP 10-10** Encourage tourism developments, visitor accommodation, interpretation centres, and commercial / retail facilities serving the tourism sector to be located within established settlements thereby fostering strong links to a whole range of other economic and commercial sectors and sustaining the host communities.
- KCDP 10-11** Work with Fáilte Ireland, for the further enhancement and promotion of the Wild Atlantic Way touring route, subject to environmental assessment.
- KCDP 10-12** Facilitate the sustainable development of the Wild Atlantic Way touring route by:
- Facilitating the sustainable development of viewing points and other facilities at appropriate locations along the Wild Atlantic Way,
 - Facilitating road improvement works, the provision of lay-bys/passing spaces and parking spaces at appropriate location
 - Addressing traffic and visitor management issues having regard to environmental sensitivities and designations in the area.

10.3.2 Major Attractions

Sustainable tourism facilities, when properly located and managed and particularly if they are easy to get to by a range of transport modes, will encourage longer visitor stays, help to extend the tourism season and add to the vitality of settlements throughout the year⁴

In order to increase visitor numbers and visitor spend throughout the County, Kerry must upgrade its existing attractions and new signature attractions capable of competing with attractions nationally and internationally.

It is the policy of the Council to support existing and new major attractions in County Kerry.

⁴ Fáilte Ireland-Guidance on Sustainable Tourism (2016)



Major Attractions

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 10-13 Support inter-agency initiatives to secure the establishment of visitor attractions focused around key tourist sites and attractions in conjunction with adjoining local authorities, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and other key stakeholders in appropriate locations and subject to the principles of sustainable development.

10.3.3 Festivals and Events

Kerry is synonymous with festivals and events covering a variety of themes including international gatherings, food fairs, literary and music which provide opportunities for artists, musicians, and food producers to showcase their talents and products. Kerry has a number of festivals including the Rose of Tralee, Listowel Writers Week and Puck Fair in Killorglin, all of which attract visitors not only from all over Ireland but many also from abroad and make an important contribution to the local economy.

It is the policy of the Council to support existing festivals and cultural events which take place in the county and to promote the development of a variety of new festivals and events, especially outside the peak summer months, to appeal to a range of different visitors and to increase and build the profile of the county as a key tourism destination.

Festivals and Events

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 10-14 Support new and existing festivals and cultural events at suitable locations within Kerry subject to the appropriate licensing arrangements, in consultation with stakeholders such as community groups, local businesses and residents where feasible and practical, and to protect and safeguard the amenities and the natural and built heritage of the area.

KCDP 10-15 Promote and support the use of suitable public open spaces in towns and villages for outdoor events of interest to both locals and tourists.

KCDP 10-16 Support and facilitate the adoption of a green standard for environmental sustainability performance for all major festivals held in County Kerry.

10.3.4 Tourism Infrastructure

The provision of well-planned and attractive tourist infrastructure is important to the overall quality of the county's tourism product to create a positive and good experience for visitors. While the county is in the fortunate position to possess some of the best destinations and experiences in the country it is important that the support services and high-quality infrastructure are in place to meet the needs of these visitors when they come to the county. Tourism-related development proposals will be required to demonstrate a high standard of design, potential impact in terms of scale and intensity and the potential for the proposal to add significantly to the quality of the visitor experience.

In order to enhance the tourism offering in Kerry it is recognised that towns and villages in the county provide a range of tourism attractions, facilities and services and are themselves destinations to which tourists come and this plan is focused on directing tourism development to our towns and villages and it is important that tourist destinations are accessible, attractive and vibrant places to visit. While rural based tourism offers significant potential for the county, it is prudent that it is carefully managed to protect these areas which are, in themselves, are a tourism product. Accordingly, tourist development in rural areas will be carefully considered in accordance with the objectives and exceptions set out in this chapter.



The Council will consider proposals for tourist infrastructure on a case-by-case basis having regard to the type of tourist attraction, its setting and character and the ability to successfully integrate the proposal on, or adjoining, the site.

Kerry County Council will continue to liaise with bodies such as Failte Ireland, the tourism industry and other stakeholders to identify visitor services in areas that require enhanced facilities. The Council will support tourist bodies and local community groups in the provision of adequate recreational and tourism infrastructure.

Tourism Infrastructure

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-17** Promote the sustainable integration of land use and transportation policies to ensure that the unique needs of the tourism sector including the provision of public bus services/transport links to visitor attractions are addressed.
- KCDP 10-18** Facilitate and support the provision of tourist related facilities, such as information offices and cultural centres, in town and village locations to support and strengthen the existing economic infrastructure of such centres.
- KCDP 10-19** Promote and support the sustainable development of all weather and family-friendly attractions and amenities in appropriate locations that will contribute to the dispersal of tourism throughout the County.
- KCDP 10-20** Facilitate the development of the necessary tourism infrastructure, visitor attractions and supporting facilities at appropriate locations in the County in a manner that does not have an adverse impact on the locality and environment.
- KCDP 10-21** Facilitate the sustainable provision of parking including coach parking facilities within and on the edge of towns and villages and at appropriate scenic viewing points and tourist facilities.

10.3.4.1 Accessible Tourism

Ensuring that services are more accessible to people with mobility issues, people with learning disabilities, visual or hearing impairment, young children and older people creates a more inclusive society. In order to increase tourism numbers within these groups the appropriate infrastructure, such as ramps, footbridges, lifts, suitable toilet facilities must be in place to cater for their needs and increase access to the countryside and coastline at appropriate locations. Information on accessibility to tourist venues and activities should be readily available so that these groups can plan their trips. Information should be disseminated through all information sources used by holiday makers and in the range of formats required by groups with different types of disabilities.

It is the policy of the Council through its role as a planning authority and a building control authority, to ensure that there is a wide range of accessible tourism experiences available throughout the County. While the Council acknowledges that some existing sites by reason of their environmental sensitivity, historical design, siting or location may have accessibility limitations, the Council will make every effort to ensure tourism developments and ancillary developments are accessible to everyone.

Accessible Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-22** Recognise the importance of universal accessibility to tourist services, facilities, and tourist sites and undertake enhancements to overall accessibility where appropriate in conjunction with key stakeholders.



10.3.4.2 Tourism and Wayfinding Signage

The provision of tourist related signage is important as it allows visitors to travel effortlessly between their destinations and to points of interest along the way. While the Council acknowledges the importance of signage for local businesses, there is also a need to avoid a proliferation of signage for reasons including traffic safety and visual amenity. The proliferation of new signage should be avoided within the rural landscape.

In this regard, there is a need for a co-ordinated and regulated approach to signage. The council will facilitate business and community groups in the provision of tourism and wayfinding signage at appropriate places.

Tourism and Wayfinding Signage

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 10-23 Facilitate Fáilte Ireland in the maintenance and upgrading of the branded signage relating to the Wild Atlantic Way touring route.

KCDP 10-24 Require that existing and proposed tourism and wayfinding signage be improved and/or regularised where possible subject to normal planning and environmental criteria without detracting from the visual amenity of the tourism asset.

10.3.4.3 Tourism Developments and Tourist Facilities

In order to encourage longer stays in the County and to facilitate the achievement of a greater yield per visitor, it is important to maximise the integration of tourism products. This is essential to ensure that visitors can easily access services, attractions and amenities in the County from their accommodation base. It is also important to create greater cohesion and linkages between tourism-based activities and businesses in different parts of the County in order to encourage tourists to visit a wider array of attractions/activities throughout the County.

In this regard it is the policy of the council to support the provision of high-quality information for visitors, for example through local tourist offices, local and national websites, accommodation providers and at attractions themselves.

Tourism Developments and Tourist Facilities

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 10-25 Support and encourage the creation of linkages between tourism activities and businesses in key areas and work with all relevant stakeholders to achieve an integrated and co-ordinated tourism product.

10.3.5 Visitor Accommodation

Kerry is fortunate to have a varied accommodation offering for its many visitors. The Fáilte Ireland Accommodation Capacity Report 2019 states that Kerry has the greatest number of Guesthouses (27) in the Country and the greatest concentration of hotel rooms outside of Dublin. The county has a total of 23,878 bedstock available for guest accommodation in 2019⁵. This accommodation is provided within 79 hotels, 27 Guesthouses, 155 Bed and Breakfasts, 58 Self Catering Units, 14 hostels, 15 Caravan and Camping Parks and 33 businesses accredited with Fáilte Ireland's Irish Welcome Standard.

The Council recognises that the provision of varied accommodation types is essential to enable growth in the tourism sector. Traditionally, tourism growth has followed accommodation growth. The distribution of hotel accommodation in Kerry is concentrated in the towns of Killarney, Tralee, Dingle and Kenmare. The Council supports the development of tourism throughout the county by encouraging the provision of a wide range of tourist accommodation types and will therefore direct new tourist accommodation including hotels,

⁵ Summary of National Accommodation Capacity 2019 – Fáilte Ireland Research



guesthouses, hostels, B&Bs and holiday homes to towns and villages. The provision of tourist accommodation in a given location should be on a scale that a settlement can sustain on a year-round basis and should not interfere with the economic or social viability of that settlement.

The provision of new tourist facilities should respect the outstanding quality and variety of the natural and built environment of Kerry and it is the policy of the council to restrict development that would be likely to impact negatively on the local environment.

10.3.5.1 Camping/Glamping, Campervans and Caravans

Kerry County Council recognises that the provision of suitable sites for camping/glamping, campervans and caravans is an important element in the range of tourist accommodation offers.

Data from the National Vehicle and Driver File, a database of all 2.5 million vehicles in the country, shows the number of campervans in the country rose from about 11,200 in 2018 to almost 12,600 in April 2020 and had reached 13,700 by October of that year.

While the Council considers that camping sites should be located on appropriately zoned land within established/or adjacent to existing settlements, small scale camping sites may be appropriate to complement tourism assets in rural and coastal locations within or adjacent to existing settlements. The planning authority may facilitate proposals for camping sites which support rural tourism initiatives subject to proper planning and sustainable development.

It is the policy of the council to support developments locating in existing settlements where such proposals demonstrate the provision of safe pedestrian links to the settlement or at established centres which provide existing services to tourists, subject to the capacity of the site and the location to facilitate the proposal.

10.3.5.2 Farmhouse/Farmstay Accommodation

Diversification into suitable alternative on-farm and off-farm activities can offer opportunities while at the same time maintaining and protecting the natural landscape and built heritage which are vital to rural tourism.

Farmhouse/Farmstay Accommodation / self-catering developments on a farm holding shall be provided by farmhouse extension or by the utilisation of other existing dwellings / structures on the property. Only where it has been demonstrated that these are not viable options, will permission be considered for new build development. Any new build development shall be in close proximity to the existing farmhouse.

10.3.5.3 Short-Term Letting

There has been a significant increase in short-term letting and hosting across Ireland in recent years through platforms such as Airbnb and has become an attractive option for many tourists and visitors. However, care needs to be exercised to ensure that the short-term letting of properties does not displace/remove properties from the long-term rental market.

It is the policy of the council to maintain established and newly constructed residential areas as places of permanent residential occupation by owner/occupiers and/or long-term tenants.

The Council will consider on a case-by-case basis the change of use of properties or part of a structure to short-term letting where the structure by virtue of its location, condition and/or layout would not ordinarily be suitable as a place of permanent residential occupation. It will be necessary to demonstrate that any such proposed development will not have a negative impact on the long-term rental market or the residential amenity of adjacent properties in the vicinity.

Under the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) No.2 Regulations 2019 reforms have been introduced to the short-term letting sector. These reforms are aimed at addressing the impact on the private rental market by the use of residential



homes for short-term tourism type letting in areas of high housing demand. These provisions only apply to areas designated as 'Rent Pressure Zones' under the Residential Tenancies Act (as amended).

Visitor Accommodation

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-26** Support best practice environmental management including energy efficiency, e-charging, waste management and recycling in accommodation providers and tourism enterprises in the County.
- KCDP 10-27** Direct tourism-based development including Hotels, Guesthouses and B&Bs to towns and villages where there is adequate infrastructure to service the development, except where the proposal involves the re-use or diversification of an existing building, subject to normal planning criteria.
- KCDP 10-28** Encourage the sensitive redevelopment and / or return to suitable use, of derelict, vacant or redundant buildings, in appropriate locations in order to provide for visitor accommodation and tourism development.
- KCDP 10-29** Support the development of appropriately scaled camping/glamping, campervan and caravan type accommodation located within/or adjacent to existing settlements, established tourism assets or adjacent to a main farmyard complex on suitable sites and at an appropriate scale subject to normal planning considerations.
- KCDP 10-30** Ensure that future caravan, camping and parking facilities in coastal areas will not be visually intrusive or impact on sensitive coastal environments (e.g., sand dune systems).
- KCDP 10-31** Prohibit the change of use of residential properties to short-term letting in established residential areas and newly constructed residential developments.
- KCDP 10-32** Consider the change of use of derelict/vacant buildings to short-term letting where such buildings are not suitable for long-term residential accommodation and will not have a negative impact on the long-term rental market or the residential amenity of the area.

10.4 Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Categories

10.4.1 Adventure Tourism

County Kerry has excellent natural outdoor recreation assets including mountains, forests, lakes, rivers, and beaches and has the capacity to become a year-round international outdoor activity destination. Other assets include internationally renowned golf courses, adventure centres and marine based water activities. It is recognised that such uses often require a rural location which may be high in natural and cultural heritage values which must be protected.

10.4.1.1 Walking and Cycling

Walking is Kerry's signature activity product, and the county has successfully positioned itself as a walking and cycling destination. Infrastructural developments include the consolidation, development and enhancement of trailhead facilities, combining with other activities such as cycling and water-based activities, to optimise the infrastructural investment. The Council will facilitate ongoing investment in the maintenance and upkeep of existing trails to international best practice standard. The Council will facilitate the sustainable development of the trailheads, subject to environmental assessment. The provision of recreational and leisure facilities and



limited commercial services will be facilitated at the trailheads. Limited commercial facilities and services may be considered along the greenway route and will be dealt with on a case-by-case manner.

Kerry is internationally and nationally renowned as a centre for walking and cycling holidays and has a well-established network of long distance walks; including The Beara Way, The Kerry Way, The Dingle Way, The Saint's Walk (Cosán na Naomh), The North Kerry Way and The Shannon Way, which combined, extend to a network of over 500km. Kerry County Council will continue to support the sustainable development of additional walks within the County and facilitate where appropriate, recreational activities that will enhance the outdoor recreational tourism experience.

In addition, the Macgillicuddy Reeks, Mount Brandon, Caha Mountain, and the Slieve Mish range provide a stunning backdrop to many of the County's towns and villages. The Council recognises that sustainably developed and maintained walking routes are of considerable benefit to the economies of the areas through which they run as well as providing an invaluable educational, recreational and conservation role. The Council recognises that these routes cannot come into existence or remain in existence without the full co-operation of the owners of private property on the routes.

Cycling and active travel are growing in popularity as safe routes are being developed throughout the county. There are a number of initiatives both nationally and internationally that can be used to promote and develop cycling tourism within the County including the promotion of the EuroVelo Route 1 which passes through Abbeyfeale-Listowel-Tralee-Dingle (Slea Head) along the Ring of Kerry to Beara. There are a wide range of opportunities across all parts of the County to further expand the network of walking and cycling trails available. The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 is currently under review.

It is the policy of the Council to support and facilitate the development of an integrated network of walking trails and cycleways along suitable corridors with local connections to villages and tourist attractions and to take account of the environmental sensitivities along these corridors. (See also Chapter 14 Connectivity and Volume 3 including Public Rights of Way).

10.4.1.2 Greenways/Blueways/Peatways

In addition to the County's existing walking and cycling infrastructure, the Council recognises the potential of Kerry's old railway lines, riverbanks and other potential linkages to act as Greenways for walking and cycling tourism. The Council will therefore continue to protect the routes of such potential greenways through the policies of this plan and will actively work with all stakeholders to facilitate the development of Greenways and walking and cycling routes throughout the County.

The revitalisation of the rural economy is a critical component of continued and sustainable growth in the County. The opening of the Greenways in Kerry provides the opportunity for positive economic benefits to communities based along the routes. Kerry County Council will work closely with local business, the wider community and Failte Ireland to promote the Greenways to tourists within Ireland and internationally. See Chapter 14 for further information on Active Travel.

Blueways are a relatively new water-based tourism and outdoor recreation alternative to Greenways in Ireland that aim to encourage more people to experience and enjoy our inland waterways, lakes, rivers and coastal areas around the island of Ireland. Blueways and associated infrastructure need to be developed in sustainable manner with minimal impact on sensitive habitats and sensitive species.

Peatways are walkways which can be developed through bog lands and offer a unique alternative walking experience for both locals and tourists in rural Kerry. It is the policy of the council to promote tourist development potential of peatlands for recreation and environmental protection.

The Council actively supports the provision of greenway, blueway and peatway infrastructure within the county and recognises the benefits from a tourism and an active travel perspective. Pillar 3 of the National Action Plan for Rural Development focuses on 'Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreational



Potential', with a specific recommendation to promote the development of greenways and blueways, and other recreational opportunities, and to support sustainable rural jobs through targeted tourism initiatives. The Council will continue to support and facilitate the provision of greenways/blueways/peatways where appropriate within the county where it can be demonstrated that such development will not have significant adverse effects on the environment including the integrity of Natura 2000 sites. These are further examined in Chapter 11 Environment.

Adventure Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-33** Promote and facilitate the sustainable development of outdoor activities, in appropriate locations, such as walking, rambling, cycling, land and sea-based activities with specialised centres and facilities in association with Munster Technological University, Fáilte Ireland, National Trails Office, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Local Development Companies, Sport Ireland, Healthy Ireland, Local Development Companies, Kerry Education and Training Board and other relevant national and County based departments and agencies.
- KCDP 10-34** Promote and facilitate opportunities to create an integrated pedestrian and cycle network linking key tourist destinations in the County and to the national network.
- KCDP 10-35** Facilitate and support community groups in the development, maintenance and enhancement of sustainable walking routes at appropriate locations throughout the County.
- KCDP 10-36** Facilitate and promote a link between The Beara Way, The Kerry Way, The Dingle Way, The Saint's Walk (Cosán na Naomh), The North Kerry Way and The Shannon Way to create a walking trail subject to ensuring that no significant adverse effects on the environment and the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.
- KCDP 10-37** Support the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum and initiatives in addressing aspects of social, environmental and economic development of the MacGillycuddy Reeks while ensuring no significant adverse effects on the environment including the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites.
- KCDP 10-38** Support the provision of sustainable mountain bike facilities at suitable locations subject to compliance with the policies and objectives of this Plan particularly as they relate to the protection of the natural environment.
- KCDP 10-39** Support the sustainable development of a National Cycle Network and the development of the EuroVelo project, in particular the Atlantic Coast Route where it passes through the County.
- KCDP 10-40** Support and facilitate the development of new greenways and protect the functionality of existing greenways as keys components of an overall green tourism infrastructure and as standalone tourism products in their own right.
- KCDP 10-41** Support the linking and extension of existing greenways, long distance walking routes, blueways, and peatways within the county and the integration and linkage of them with other existing / proposed greenways, long distance walking routes, blueways and peatways both within and outside County Kerry.
- KCDP 10-42** Facilitate and support the sustainable development of tourism infrastructure and recreational developments at appropriate locations along greenway routes and trailheads subject to normal planning conditions.



KCDP 10-43 Support and facilitate stakeholders, agencies and community groups with regards to tourism related uses of cut-away bogs and support the development of peatways at appropriate locations.

10.4.1.3 Water-Based Tourism

County Kerry has an extensive coastline of over 1000km which is a major tourist and environmental asset. The county has 14 blue flag beaches which are a popular resource for a number of water sports activities including surfing, swimming, paddle boarding and kayaking and also for activities such as walking and wellbeing in a coastal setting. The protection of the coastline as a tourism asset is of huge importance to ensure long-term benefits from tourism activities.

The waterways, rivers and lakes of County Kerry are rich natural resources that attract many visitors to the County each year. In addition, they provide significant leisure and amenity opportunities including fishing, sea-angling, sailing, birdwatching and pleasure boating. Ensuring access to the lakes and waterways and the sustainable management of activities taking place on the water, on the lakeshore and in the riparian zone of waterways is essential to ensure a balance between tourism development and conservation of natural heritage in these areas. The importance of biosecurity and protection of our watercourses from invasive species is particularly recognised due to the potential negative impacts on fisheries, water quality and angling/other water-based amenity tourism.

Given the extent of the County's marine heritage and the indigenous strengths of the region's coastal environs it is an objective of the Council, to encourage the sustainable development of waterways, rivers and lakes for marine tourism related uses.

Water-Based Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-44** Sustainably promote, in co-operation with the various statutory and relevant organisations, at appropriate locations the more extensive use of the coastal strip for such activities as touring, sight-seeing, walking, pony trekking as a sustainable tourism and recreational resource for the residents of County Kerry and other visitors.
- KCDP 10-45** Promote opportunities for enterprise and employment creation in marine tourism where it can be demonstrated that the development will not impact negatively on the marine environment.
- KCDP 10-46** Support and facilitate the maintenance, enhancement and promotion of Blue Flag beaches, and seek to identify any additional locations which may satisfy the criteria for Blue Flag status.
- KCDP 10-47** Promote the Green Coast award schemes in association with An Taisce.
- KCDP 10-48** Support the sustainable expansion of non-commercial fishing activities in coastal communities and the development of complementary on-shore landing and hospitality facilities/services.
- KCDP 10-49** Support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners improved access to the coastline where sustainable and appropriate and in line with the objectives of this Plan.
- KCDP 10-50** Facilitate the sustainable development of improved access and associated facilities to the waterways and islands of Kerry.



- KCDP 10-51** Work in partnership with local community organisations, angling clubs, Inland Fisheries Ireland and other relevant bodies to sustainably upgrade angling related infrastructure including access, stands and signage at appropriate locations.
- KCDP 10-52** Support in collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant stakeholders, the management and monitoring of aquatic vessels in relation to the spread of invasive alien aquatic species by leisure craft.
- KCDP 10-53** Support the provision of appropriately designed and located toilet and changing facilities at blue flag beaches in the county and at other locations subject to need assessment and environmental compatibility.

10.4.2 Arts, Craft and Food Tourism

Kerry is home to many artisan food producers, artists and craft makers located throughout the county. Many crafts workers and artists reside and work in more rural parts of the County and are supported by the Original Kerry and Taste Kerry trails which promote and support these enterprises.

Food tourism and the Agri-Food sector is one of Kerry's most important industries and plays a vital role in the local economy. Internationally, food related activities and events are viewed as a key factor in attracting increased numbers of visitors to particular localities and Kerry is well positioned to maximise the potential of this market.

In Kerry, the Dingle Peninsula Food Festival (host of the Blás na hEireann food awards), the Listowel Food Fair, the Kenmare Food Festival, the Grow Your Own movement and Transition Town Tralee are all capturing the growing interest in local food. The availability of good quality local restaurants can be a deciding factor in destination choice for many independent visitors. Food and drink represent the largest amount of visitor expenditure and exceeds the average spent on accommodation.

Kerry County Council supports the development of artisan food production hubs and the sustainable development of the food tourism sector and will facilitate relevant agencies to ensure further growth within this sector.

Arts, Craft and Food Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-54** Support the development of arts performance spaces through the adaptation of suitable outdoor public spaces and also the use of existing vacant properties for arts and performance projects, taking into account the potential for undue wildlife disturbance and impact.
- KCDP 10-55** Support the sustainable development of the arts and crafts sector and liaise with other relevant agencies to facilitate growth within this sector.
- KCDP 10-56** Support the sustainable development of Kerry's food and drink sector, especially locally sourced organic food, and liaise with other relevant agencies to facilitate growth within this sector.
- KCDP 10-57** Support and promote the development and marketing of foods and crafts of Kerry through networking and developing trade links with regions, locally, nationally and internationally.

10.4.3 Culture and Heritage Tourism

Kerry has established itself as a significant destination for culture and heritage-based activity holidays through the appropriate development of our built, cultural, and natural assets. The unique arts, culture and heritage



of Kerry form a significant element of the tourism industry in the County and often supports other holiday experiences and can result in greater visitor spend and increased length of time visitors stay in the County.

Kerry has many renowned historic sites, castles, houses and gardens notably the internationally recognised heritage site Sceilg Mhichíl which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996 and Valentia Trans-Atlantic Cable Ensemble has begun its journey towards eventual World Heritage inscription. Throughout the County there are a number of centres for traditional culture and music.

Museums and interpretative facilities are an important part of the holiday experience providing a cultural, historical, and educational aspect to the tourist experience. Throughout the County there are a range of museums and heritage centres, which offer audio-visual presentations on the County's landscape, monuments, towns, and traditions.

County Kerry has a number of important tourist towns which are in themselves destinations to which tourists come because of their unique historic qualities. Retaining the character and uniqueness of these towns is important in differentiating the County's tourist product and also promoting the 'Kerry – Your Natural Escape' tourist brand. There are 2 Gaeltacht areas in Kerry which are home to a range of heritage attractions, arts, traditional music and cultural activities. The arts, culture, heritage and the unique linguistic heritage of Kerry form a significant element of the tourism industry in the County.

While it is important to recognise the economic contribution that is made through heritage tourism, there is the potential to further enhance heritage tourism development in the county. The integration of activities, including our heritage assets, our unique culture including linguistic, and the local history can further enhance this area. The Council will support the protection and appropriate enhancement of our heritage tourism sites for the advancement of the tourism sector.

The Council acknowledges the importance of and wealth of heritage tourism which is located within the county and supports stakeholders and local communities to maximise their potential to sustainably expand built, natural and cultural heritage tourism throughout the County.

Culture and Heritage Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-58** Protect and promote the County's built heritage assets and towns and villages that are the focus for tourism development and seek opportunities to sustainably enhance their tourism potential while adhering to best practice standards in relation to the environmental management of tourism enterprises.
- KCDP 10-59** Sustainably support and promote, with the co-operation of landowners, public access to heritage sites and features at appropriate locations.
- KCDP 10-60** Support and promote the sustainable development of architectural and heritage trails, at appropriate locations ensuring that development does not result in negative impacts on the fabric or setting of Kerry's heritage assets.
- KCDP 10-61** Support and facilitate relevant stakeholders including the OPW, the Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, Údarás Na Gaeltachta, the Arts Council, Waterways Ireland, local communities and businesses to support the development of heritage and cultural tourism in Kerry.
- KCDP 10-62** Facilitate and support measures to secure the designation of Valentia Trans-Atlantic Cable Station, Cable Terrace, "First Message" Building, Structure in the Telegraph Field and ensemble of associated sites as a trans-national serial UNESCO World Heritage Site with its partner site in Hearts Content, Newfoundland, Canada.



10.4.4 Rural Tourism

The tourism industry makes a significant contribution to the vitality and sustainability of a wide variety of local enterprises, particularly in rural areas, and has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Kerry.

The importance of tourism to rural economies is growing and in some instances is critical to the economy of these areas and the support and buy-in of local communities, landowners, local authorities, and other State agencies is critical to the successful implementation of rural tourism initiatives. The Plan seeks to facilitate and enable an integrated and sustainable high-quality, year-round tourism product.

There are two official Gaeltacht areas in the County –Gaeltacht Chorca Dhuibhne on the Dingle Peninsula and Gaeltacht Uíbh Ráthaigh on the Iveragh Peninsula. These Gaeltacht areas are rich in language, tradition, literature, folklore, music, historical and archaeological sites. It is the policy of the Council to support tourism initiatives in these areas. See Chapter 8 for more information on Gaeltacht areas.

Rural Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-63** Promote opportunities for enterprise and employment creation in rural-based tourism where it can be demonstrated that the development will not have a negative impact on the rural environment.
- KCDP 10-64** Support sustainable agri-tourism initiatives in the form of on-farm or farm related tourism developments such as health and wellbeing, craft villages, organic food production, food centred activities, heritage and nature trails, pony trekking and boating.
- KCDP 10-65** Encourage appropriately scaled agri-tourism on- farm accommodation development to locate within existing or adjacent to farmyard complexes, such as the renovation of barns, outhouses or other existing structures or the siting of appropriately scaled camping, [glamping or similar] type accommodation within existing farmyard complexes for owner run agri-tourism / rural business use as short-term holiday home accommodation, subject to normal planning considerations.

10.4.4.1 Plantation Forest Recreation

While the county's plantation forestry's primary role is a natural renewable resource some forested areas due to their topography and location can be utilised in a secondary role as an amenity for the local community and / or visitors to an area. Using the forest for simple quiet enjoyment or for a particular sport or adventure activity promotes fitness, health and a sense of well-being. Forest recreation also creates the basis for a wide range of related enterprises and opportunities for income generation. The Council recognises the tourist and recreational benefits of forested areas and will seek to encourage the sustainable management of forest lands for recreational and tourism purposes.

Plantation Forest Recreation

It is an objective of the Council to:

- KCDP 10-66** Encourage the sustainable development of forest parks and other tourist related facilities and amenities at appropriate locations within forested areas.

10.4.5 Business, Education and Conference Tourism

Kerry continues to grow in popularity as a destination for hosting international conferences, conventions and events. The Council will continue to work with hotels across the county that offer conference facilities to ensure that they can maximise the potential of this sector. Business tourism offers many potential spin-offs



for the local area and economy and it is important that local tourist activities and facilities are supported by marketing and promotion by these venues. The growth of business tourism is seen as a key ingredient in extending the season and generating sustainable employment opportunities throughout the year.

It is the policy of the council to promote tourism as a key driver for the county's economy, particularly through making the county attractive for visitors, international education, business tourism and conventions.

Business Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 10-67 Work with key stakeholders, businesses and the Kerry Convention Bureau to sustainably support and facilitate the growth of Kerry as a destination for business and conference tourism by maximising Kerry's strong and competitive brand value and extend the tourist season.

KCDP 10-68 Support and facilitate the development and promotion of education tourism in Kerry e.g., language schools, Gaelcólaiste /Cólaiste Samhraidh, Gaeltacht experience, academic conferences and environmental studies.

10.4.6 Niche and Innovative Tourism

Niche tourism has the capacity to develop in locations throughout the County and as such can contribute to the sustainable economic development of peripheral and rural areas. This includes tourism initiatives including but not limited to eco, astro, and film tourism.

Ecotourism is suited to tourism development in scenic, un-spoilt locations focusing on nature conservation, biodiversity and reduced environmental impacts.

The film industry is hugely important from both a local and national perspective and generates significant positive spin-offs in terms of the provision of support services and the tourism generated from international spotlight on an area. The future expansion of the film industry in Kerry has the potential to have a significant positive impact on job creation and economic growth in the County.

The Council will consider development proposals for these unique tourism offerings subject to the protection of the integrity of the built and natural heritage of the County.

Niche and Innovative Tourism

It is an objective of the Council to:

KCDP 10-69 Facilitate and support the sustainable development of the tourism sector and provide for the delivery of a unique combination of niche tourism opportunities and potential future attractions in County Kerry.

KCDP 10-70 Support astro-tourism initiatives, including the extension of the Kerry Dark Sky Reserve, to leverage the economic benefits of the International Gold Tier Dark Sky Reserve Designation for the local communities and County.

KCDP 10-71 Facilitate and support the growth of the film industry in Kerry by maximising the opportunities for screen tourism through the development of tourism facilities and infrastructure related to the film industry, including appropriately located film trails / routes, signage and visitor attractions with the potential to portray the county in a positive light and generate economic activity and employment.