

Submission to Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028

by Fáilte Ireland



**Fáilte
Ireland**

**Turasóireacht Náisiúnta
An tÚdara Eorbartha**
National Tourism
Development Authority



WILD ATLANTIC WAY
SLÍ AN ATLANTAIGH FHIÁIN

Introduction

This submission has been prepared by Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, in response to the invitation for submissions on the Draft Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028 ('the Draft Plan') by Kerry County Council ('the Council').

Fáilte Ireland welcomes the opportunity to engage with Kerry 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 Kerry 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 Kerry County Council in the formulation of planning policies and frameworks for the period 2022-2028. 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 Section 1.2 County Overview. 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 overall aim of the Chapter is *'to retain, promote, and drive Kerry's position as a premier domestic and international tourism destination, with a focus on developing green and sustainable tourism'*.

Fáilte Ireland is particularly supportive that underpinning the approach to tourism development is the concept of Sustainable Tourism, as well as the identification that a co-ordinated approach by all relevant stakeholders is critical to the development of a diversified and sustainable tourist industry.

We welcome reference to Fáilte Ireland, the Wild Atlantic Way, and Fáilte Ireland's Destination and Experience Development Plans.

3. Proposals for the Draft Kerry 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.

Kerry 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 Strategy

Fáilte Ireland are in the process of preparing Regional Tourism Strategies 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 Strategies 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 strategy 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 strategies 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 strategies 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.

3.2 Additional Suggested Text Insertions

Chapter 4 Towns & Villages

Section 4.4.2.3 Evening and Late-Night Uses

We welcome identification of the importance of a healthy night-time economy and consider that this section could be enhanced by the inclusion of text regarding The Purple Flag. The Purple Flag Award is an international designation which highlights and celebrates excellence in specific areas of the evening and night-time economy, including; quality of the city centre’s night-time entertainment; ease of movement in and around the city; and the levels of operating partnership between businesses located in the city centre.

Proposed additional text, to be inserted into Section 4.4.2.3:

*A healthy night-time economy contributes greatly to the vitality and viability of a town centre. There is a need to ensure that adequate provision is made for evening and late-night activities such as **theatre, arts, music, cafes, restaurants, public houses, taxi offices, hot food takeaways and other similar uses.** A vibrant night-time economy brings many benefits including increased visitor numbers, passive surveillance, and the creation of a destination for artistic and cultural events. **A number of towns and villages are already in receipt of the Purple Flag Award and the Council will work to achieve designation for additional towns and villages in the County.***

Chapter 5 Rural Housing & Chapter 7 Housing for All

A major issue particularly in rural areas is the supply of housing accommodation for seasonal tourism workers who are on a budget and are competing with visitor accommodation provision. Many of the key towns and villages in Kerry are tourism towns where population levels fluctuate on a seasonal basis. Many of these areas have holiday homes that are unoccupied for many months of the year in the off season and, in the tourism season there is an influx of visitors to these holiday homes and self-catering dwellings. The key challenge is that there is increasing competition between the visitors and, the staff that service the hotels, restaurants, and other seasonal tourism businesses. Business owners are struggling, not just to get staff but to find accommodation for them to stay in during the tourist season.

A challenge is the fluctuating demand for housing and the potential negative impact that it can have in terms of availability in some areas. The development plan should support where appropriate innovative solutions to address this challenge which would support the provision of residential accommodation for seasonal tourism workers.

Chapter 8 Gaeltacht Areas, Culture & Heritage

Section 8.1.3.1- Irish Language Policies

We welcome the policies in respect of the preservation of the Irish Language and request the following text addition:

Suggested text, to be inserted into Section 8.1.3.1:

Therefore, it is of critical importance to maintain the proportion of active integrated Irish speakers above 67% and ensuring that the proportion of young people speaking Irish is increased. It is the policy of the council to:

- *Support and empower younger generations of young Gaeltacht parents to raise their children through Irish.*
- *Ensure that the education system supports parents in raising children through Irish and results in an Irish medium socialisation process.*
- *Engage with young people on the vulnerability of the language and the importance of their language behaviour on the future viability of the language.*
- *Focus on the linguistic rights and needs of native Irish speakers.*
- *Formulate an integrated strategic language planning process for the Gaeltacht and Gaeltacht proofing all activities undertaken by state organisations.*
- *Devise language centred economic development strategies for the Gaeltacht.*
- *Provide incentives and advice to local businesses with regard to good language processes.*
- *Preserve a percentage of multi-unit developments for Irish speakers.*
- *Promote and encourage the increased use of Irish in the accommodation, restaurant, retail, attractions and activity sectors.*

Suggested text amendments, to Policy KCDP 8-9 and 8-10

KCDP 8-9 Facilitate and promote in cooperation with Údarás na Gaeltachta, Fáilte Ireland and all other statutory development agencies, sustainable tourism development in the Gaeltacht areas of the County.

KCDP 8-10 Collaborate with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to sustainably support and promote our Gaeltacht areas as key Irish Language Tourism destinations.

Section 8.1.4.4 - Dingle Peninsula 2030

We welcome the support that the draft plan provides to the Dingle Peninsula 2030 project. Fáilte Ireland supports this initiative and are working with the project partners in relation to the creation of a tourism Energy Master Plan (EMP) and a Tourism Sustainable Energy Community (SEC). Having regard to the ambitions of the project and the success of the project to date in transitioning the peninsula into a low carbon society, it is considered that the project deserves a specific objective to be included as follows;

Suggested new Objective:

Facilitate and support the Dingle Peninsula 2030 initiative which includes the Energy master plan, Precision Farming, Marine-water Quality monitoring and Sustainable tourism & transport.

Chapter 10 Tourism & Outdoor Recreation

Section 10.1 Introduction

We request the inclusion of the Beara Peninsula, part of which sits in Kerry. Include in this section as an important tourism location.

Suggested text amendments, to Section 10.1

*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 Slea Head Drive, **the Beara Peninsula**, the pristine beaches of North Kerry and has the longest section of the Wild Atlantic Way.*

Section 10.1.1-Sustainable Tourism and Climate Action

We welcome the inclusion of a section on Sustainable Tourism however consider that it could make more explicit reference to sustainable transport 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/neutral transport modes
- provision of good quality and safe cycle lanes along many of the transit routes and access routes particularly between tourism towns, villages and attractions

Section 10.3.1- 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.

It is considered that one of the critical pieces of work being completed by Fáilte Ireland and Kerry County Council relates to traffic management on the Dingle Peninsula, funded via the Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF). A key component is visitor dispersal of visitors around the Dingle Peninsula (further west and to the northern side of the Peninsula) as there are concentrations of visitors in Dingle town and on Sleah Head. It is considered that this should be identified in Objective 10-12 as follows: Continue to stress the importance of integration of public transport timetabling etc. to insure seamless travel.

Suggested text amendments, to Objective 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, with specific focus on integration of public transport timetabling to facilitate improved visitor dispersal, having regard to environmental sensitivities and designations in the area.*

It is considered a similar reference could be included in Objective KCDP 2-11.

We also request a minor amendment to Objective KCDP 10-6 as follows:

Suggested text amendments, to Objective 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, **guesthouses, bed and breakfasts**, tourist hostels, **caravan and camping**, cafes, restaurants, visitor attractions and **activity tourism**.*

Section 10.3.3- Festivals and Events

We request a minor amendment to text in Section 10.3.3 as follows:

Suggested text amendments, to Section 10.3.3:

*Kerry has a number of festivals including the **St. Patrick's Festival Killarney**, 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.*

Section 10.3.4. Tourism Infrastructure

We request a minor amendment to Objective KCDP 10-18 as follows:

Suggested text amendments, to Section 10.3.4:

*Facilitate and support the provision of tourist related facilities, such as ~~information offices~~ **Tourist Information Centres, self-service brochure units/kiosks** and cultural centres, in town and village locations to support and strengthen the existing economic infrastructure of such centres.*

Section 10.3.4.3- Tourism Developments and Tourist Facilities

We request a minor amendment to text in Section 10.3.4.3 as follows:

Suggested text amendments, to Section 10.3.4.3:

*“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~~ **Tourist Information Centres, local and national websites, self-service brochure units/kiosks and the frontline of tourism including** accommodation providers, and **staff** at attractions themselves and the broader community.”*

Section 10.3.4.1- Accessible Tourism

We welcome a dedicated section on Accessible Tourism, as requested in our pre-draft submission however we note that agencies like CARA who promote activities for people with disabilities have identified that there is a lack of promotion by attractions / activities to inform people of the tourist services/facilities available. As such we would request that the following additional text is included in Objective 10-22.

Suggested text amendments, to Objective 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 **and to ensure that information on these facilities are clearly promoted and publicised.***

Section 10.3.5- Visitor Accommodation

We request a minor amendment to text in Section 10.3.5 as follows:

Suggested text amendments, to Section 10.3.5:

*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, guesthouses, hostels, B&Bs ~~and~~ holiday homes, **glamping/camping/caravan and campervan sites** to towns and villages **with good spatial spread throughout the county.***

Section 10.4.1.2- Greenways/Blueways/Peatways

We welcome the significant work done by Kerry County Council with regards the development of greenways in Kerry, and in particular the North Kerry Greenway which has an opening date of June 2022. Many users of Greenways cycle to the trail heads, and as such there is a need for cycle lanes on the main access routes to Greenways and to ensure that the trail head and towns/villages on route have suitable 'cycle friendly infrastructure' like bike parking facilities at accommodation, attractions, town areas. Routes should link to town and village centres with larger cycling/walking networks and/or other activities/locations and where possible, provide safe cycling corridors from local train/bus stations etc. Greenways have the potential to provide a car free experience from start to finish combining public transport with cycling.

We request the following text amendment to Objective KCDP 10-40:

Suggested text amendments, to Objective KCDP 10-40:

*Support and facilitate the development of new greenways, **maintain** and protect ~~the functionality~~ of existing greenways as key components of an overall green tourism infrastructure and as standalone tourism products in their own right.*

Chapter 14 Connectivity

Section 14.7- Ports Harbours & Piers

We request the inclusion of a new objective under Ports Harbours & Piers as follows:

Suggested new Objective:

Facilitate and support the improvement of visitor access at landing facilities to the islands such as the Great Blasket Island and the Maharees.

Section 14.4.3- Parking Provision

We request the inclusion of a new objective under Parking Provision:

Suggested new Objective:

Support and facilitate the sustainable provision of adequate public parking facilities for all users at identified loop walk trail heads and mountain trail heads, including at Mount Brandon trail head subject to compliance with any environmental designation requirements.

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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