

# **Planning for Tourism**

*Submission by Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism  
Development Authority*

*to*

*Issues and Choices:*

*Ireland 2040 Our Plan*

*National Planning Framework*



**Fáilte Ireland**

National Tourism Development Authority

Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, welcomes the Government's proposals to prepare a National Planning Framework (NPF) which will provide a longer term vision and spatial framework upon which the future of Ireland can be planned at a strategic level. The Authority is also eager to ensure that the tourism sector is recognised within the framework for the value it delivers to the Irish economy and is both represented and leveraged to its full extent to deliver on this plan.

It is to this end that we have prepared this submission to the 'Issues and Choices' document which has been published as part of the initial consultation period. We look forward to engaging further with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government in the preparation of the final plan over the coming year.

## **Overview of Our Submission:**

Within this submission we have identified five key enablers to where and how alignment between tourism and the NPF can best be achieved. We have also identified where possible and appropriate, policies and projects which might support this alignment.

As requested in the Issues and Choices Paper, these enablers and associated recommendations/actions are of:

- National Importance
- Strategic in Nature
- Spatial or place-based in focus.

The five key tourism enablers for the NPF are as follows:

- 1. Tourism as a Key Economic Driver at National, Regional and Local Level**
  - a. The Value of Tourism
  - b. Balanced Regional Development
  - c. Strengthening Urban/ Rural Connections
- 2. Tourism's Regional/ Place Making Propositions (i.e. Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Dublin).**
- 3. Interactions/ Impacts of National Policies on Tourism**
- 4. Access to the Countryside and Coastline**
- 5. Protecting Tourism's Authenticity and Sustainability**

A summary of key points is also presented at the end of this submission.

# 1: Tourism as a Key Economic Sector at National, Regional and Local Level.

## The Value of Tourism

- 1.1 A flourishing tourism industry is vital for Ireland's economic well-being and future growth. It also shapes our image and attractiveness as a great place to live, work and invest. On a global scale the tourism sector has huge potential for Ireland. *"Demand for international tourism remained robust in 2016 despite challenges. International tourist arrivals grew by 3.9% to reach a total of 1,235 million, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer. Some 46 million more tourists (overnight visitors) travelled internationally last year compared to 2015"* (UNWTO, 2017). This sustained year-on-year growth in global tourism (i.e. internationally and not specifically to Ireland) since the economic crash is reflected in the pattern of growth of Irish tourism also.
- 1.2 In Ireland overseas tourism has seen steady growth since 2011 with a 10% jump in 2016 on 2015 figures alone. However, no less than any other sector, tourism is vulnerable to external global forces, a competitive market place and the trends and requirements of an ever more dynamic and discerning consumer. In this context any growth is hard won.
- 1.3 At present in Ireland the tourism and hospitality sector supports in the region of 220,000 jobs. Overseas visitors contributed an estimated €5 billion to the national economy in 2016. Domestic tourism expenditure is estimated at €1.8 billion. This total out-of-state and domestic tourism expenditure represents in the region of 4.0% of GNP in revenue terms.
- 1.4 In 2015 the Tourism Policy Statement ("People, Place and Policy- Tourism to 2025") was published and this set out clear and ambitious targets for the development of Irish tourism. In essence this policy is framed within the context of the tourism sector welcoming **10 million visitors by 2025** with associated **revenues of €5bn** (at 2014 prices) and sustaining **250,000 persons in employment**.
- 1.5 In order to achieve the 2025 visitor revenue target, tourism plans will continue to be formulated strictly on the basis of evidence of regions and consumer segments that have the strongest prospects for revenue growth in the medium to long term.
- 1.6 Despite this strong economic value, tourism is often inadequately represented or appreciated in the development of national policy in favour of more high-tech, skilled and foreign direct investment sectors. It is even sometimes portrayed as a fall-back option or alternative where no other 'weighty' economic activity is considered viable. This is and should not be the case for a sector that is a significant player and economic engine in many cities, towns and villages right across Ireland and which has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland.

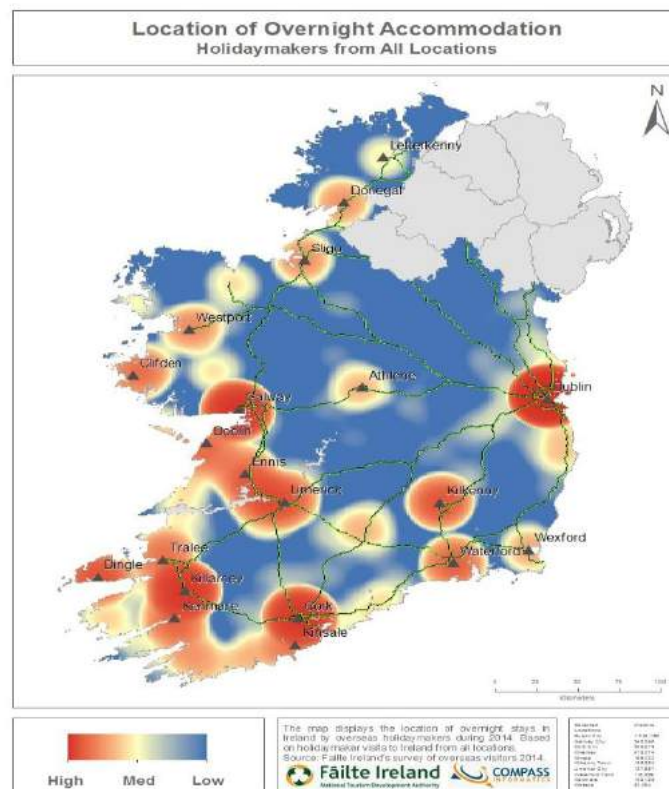
1.7 If benchmarked against other economic sectors it quickly becomes apparent the real value tourism delivers and the reason it should have significant consideration in the development of the National Planning Framework. For example, the 220,000 approx. employment figures for the tourism and hospitality sector compares favourably against the employment figure of 167,500 in the agri-food sector<sup>1</sup>.

**NPF Actions/ Supports:**

- *Tourism’s significance should be adequately represented in the development of national policy and not be portrayed as a fall-back option or alternative where no other ‘weighty’ economic activity is considered viable. The sector is a significant player and economic engine in many cities, towns and villages right across Ireland and has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland.*
- *If understood and planned properly tourism can deliver even further benefits for Ireland and it should therefore have an appropriate position and representation in this NPF.*

**Balanced Regional Development**

1.8 When we ‘geo plot’ the places in Ireland where tourists actually stay (and where as a consequence our industry is located and most revenue is generated), we find that over 70% of Ireland’s tourism accommodation is concentrated within less than 30% of our landmass - and that area typically hugs our coastline from Malin to Mizen and around to Carlingford (Map 1).



<sup>1</sup> [www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/rural-economy/agri-food-business/agriculture-in-ireland/](http://www.teagasc.ie/rural-economy/rural-economy/agri-food-business/agriculture-in-ireland/)

## Map 1- Location of Overnight Accommodation (Holidaymakers from all locations)

- 1.9 This is not to say that the rest of the country resembles a void in the centre from a tourism perspective – there is in fact tourism activity in every county. However a wider distribution of tourism benefits is an undoubted goal for the tourism sector. So while, existing strong tourism areas need to be supported and consolidated, it is a strategic objective of Fáilte Ireland to achieve a greater regional spread of the benefits of tourism to all areas.
- 1.10 If Dublin is excluded from the national tourism and hospitality figures it is apparent that the employment rate is even more important (e.g. 15% of jobs in Kerry in 2013 were in the accommodation and food services sector according to the *County Kerry Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2022*) at a regional and local level than may be apparent from the national figures. Therefore as a development opportunity and tool for balanced regional development tourism has a significant role to play.

### NPF Actions/ Supports:

- The NPF should take account of the value of tourism and its potential to contribute to the national goal of balanced regional development.

## Strengthening Urban/ Rural Connections

- 1.11 Outside of the main urban areas such as Dublin, tourism in Ireland for the most part takes place in rural areas. Unlike many other countries such as Spain, Portugal, etc, where city or resort tourism forms the most significant part of the tourism offering, Ireland's proposition is mainly rural in nature. Over the years Fáilte Ireland and other tourism stakeholders, have worked to dial up this natural rural asset and to support the economy. With more and more people living in urban areas all around the world, the appeal of Ireland's rural proposition is likely to increase in response to a greater desire to 'get away from it all' and reconnect with a more natural rhythm and pace of life.
- 1.12 Fáilte Ireland has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the spatial distribution of tourism in Ireland both in terms of the supply side (the location of tourism businesses) and the demand side (where overseas visitors overnight). As previously mentioned this has demonstrated that approximately 70% of tourism activity in Ireland is located in approximately 30% of the geographical area (refer to Map 1).
- 1.13 Planning for tourism, therefore, should be based on an acceptance that not all areas present the same opportunities or are as appealing to visitors, and significant amounts of investment or infrastructure may still not alter that. For tourism, the development of the three propositions provides a 'regional' platform of scale to showcase in the marketplace.
- 1.14 However in order for this to succeed at a spatial level, rural areas outside or adjacent to tourism 'hotspots', which normally comprise urban settlements such as towns and villages,

will need to cluster assets and leverage opportunities presented by the successful tourism hubs in their areas.

- 1.15 Tourism should not create competition between communities but rather a healthy interdependency which galvanises areas to work together to leverage their collective value. Investment of resources and planning for tourism can then reflect this approach to ensure better value for money is achieved and impact is maximised and not duplicated or worse still spread too thinly to achieve any great success. Examples of where this is done particularly well include some of our most successful tourism destinations such as Killarney and Westport, where the town and surrounding environs are inextricably linked for mutual benefit.
- 1.16 In addition, tourism services and facilities should also be clustered within established settlements as this will serve to protect the quality of the Irish environment; foster strong links to a whole range of other economic and commercial sectors and sustain the host communities; and utilise existing ancillary services and facilities such as water and wastewater infrastructure, power supply etc, rather than creating a requirement for further development in the Irish landscape.

**NPF Actions/ Support:**

- *Enable the development of clusters of tourism businesses and providers to work together to provide a more attractive experience to visitors, provide better opportunities for communities, towns and villages and ensure limited resources and support are targeted to where the greatest impact can be achieved. Linkages and services in towns and villages which support economic activity in a wider rural area should be supported by the NPF.*

## 2: Tourism's Regional 'Place-Making' Propositions

- 2.1 Over the last number of years Fáilte Ireland has undertaken significant analysis of where our visitors go, stay and how they spend their time and money. This has led to a spatial and place-based approach to national tourism development, resulting in the creation of three tourism propositions which draw on the various strengths and identities of these areas. This section now outlines these three regional 'place-making' propositions, the strategic spatial objectives which underpin these and how the NPF can support the delivery of these and in turn support the growth of the tourism sector.
- 2.2 Over the last number of years a two pronged approach to tourism development nationally has been developed which involves:
- 1) A strengthening of Brand Ireland by building propositions of scale capable of achieving international cut-through (i.e. standing out among the large supply of alternative tourist destinations that are available internationally) and securing consumer attention. Although we often refer to these as propositions they are grounded in geography and therefore are very much regional tourism propositions.
  - 2) A re-positioning of Ireland's tourism asset base so that it directly mirrors the interests and requirements of the consumers identified in the most promising market segments.
- 2.3 From this our three propositions have been created which comprise a strong suite of **differentiated themed regional propositions** to market under the umbrella of Brand Ireland - the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Dublin.
- 2.4 In addition, we are evaluating the incremental costs and benefits of adding a fourth regional proposition covering the midlands region. We will see the first output of the expert group looking at this in the coming months, and will provide the findings of this in due course.
- 2.5 Any future tourism growth in Ireland will require innovation, adding value and strengthening the appeal of Ireland in international markets. To stimulate innovation and improve international competitiveness, Fáilte Ireland has launched a significant new Tourism Development and Innovation Fund in 2016 which will be the main source of capital funding in the sector over the next five years.
- 2.6 In addition to supporting the growth of the regional 'place-making' propositions Fáilte Ireland will also explore investment opportunities to create a 'new generation' of large/ key attractors of a scale to attract overseas visitors to Ireland.
- 2.7 An overview and identification of the **strategic core spatial objectives** of each of the three regional propositions is outlined here.

## **Dublin**

- 2.8 The newest of the regional propositions, this seeks to reflect Dublin's unique position as a vibrant capital city bursting with a variety of experiences – with sea and mountain at its doorstep. The tagline 'Dublin- A breath of Fresh Air' has been developed to communicate this message and key to this is access to the surrounding bay and mountains.
- 2.9 Dublin welcomed almost 5 million overseas visitors in 2015, spending almost €1.7 billion. Dublin is currently experiencing unprecedented hotel occupancy rates. The additional tourism for Dublin City is to be welcomed because it is generating much needed revenue and employment, however, there is a major threat to its future because of the acute shortage of hotel bedrooms in city centre.
- 2.10 Therefore the main spatial objectives to support the Dublin proposition are to:

- 2.10.1 Incorporate the sea and mountains as key elements of the Dublin proposition and encourage visitor flow outside the city centre. This will require the provision of better access and transport links to the river, bay and mountains, as well as improved visitor orientation supports to facilitate navigation of the area by visitors.**
- 2.10.2 Address the current accommodation capacity issues in Dublin City by ensuring that proactive planning policies are incorporated to all planning policies at both national and local/ City level. Fáilte Ireland has recommended that a proactive policy is included in the new Dublin City Development Plan 'To promote and support the development of additional tourism accommodation at appropriate locations throughout the City'.**
- 2.10.3 Develop a small number of new visitor attractions of scale and significance in Dublin, which will serve to refresh the image of Dublin as a significant cultural destination, and act as strong 'reasons to visit' in their own right.**

## **Wild Atlantic Way:**

- 2.11 The Wild Atlantic Way stretches from Malin Head in Donegal to Kinsale in Co. Cork and is the largest defined coastal touring route in the world. The Wild Atlantic Way contains some of the world's most dramatic coastal landscapes which have shaped the development of its people, communities and settlements, inspired its own particular language, literature, art, song and dance. It's a place of many natural features - seascapes, sea-life, cliffs, mountains, glens, loughs, trails and pathways and where nature can be experienced at its wildest.
- 2.12 However the Wild Atlantic Way is not a homogenous entity and tourism is not spread evenly or proportionately along its entirety. As Map 1 indicates there is significantly more tourism activity in the southern half of the Wild Atlantic Way (Galway City being the dividing line). North of Galway City tourism numbers are significantly lower and apart from large attractors such as Westport and Kylemore Abbey, there are significant parts of the Wild Atlantic Way



where very little tourism activity occurs. Even for some areas where tourism activity does occur such as Achill in Mayo or Mullaghmore in Sligo, the peak season is often no more than six weeks during the summer.

2.13 The southern half of the Wild Atlantic Way, and in particular West Cork and South Kerry, see significant tourism activity especially during the summer, but also in the shoulder months. This activity can also bring with it visitor management challenges such as congestion and overcrowding, which also need to be addressed whilst sustaining tourism growth (through longer stays, season extension and other management solutions) for the region.

2.14 Therefore the main spatial objective to support the Wild Atlantic Way proposition is to:

**2.14.1 Grow tourism activity in the northern half of the Wild Atlantic Way to take advantage of the capacity opportunities available, and to sustain and manage tourism activity in the southern half, in particular where congestion or overcrowding may in time detract from the overall the visitor experience.**

**2.14.2 Create 'off the Wild Atlantic Way' drives which could help dissipate traffic congestion in problem areas.**

### **Ireland's Ancient East**

2.15 Ireland's Ancient East showcases Ireland's living culture and ancient heritage bringing it to life through stories that create unique visitor experiences, unite stakeholders and support vibrant communities. The goal is to make Ireland's Ancient East the most personally engaging cultural destination in Europe by harnessing the authentic character of the real Ireland, its living culture, lush landscapes and hidden history, opening it up for everyone. This can be achieved through the support of sustained economic growth and community wellbeing whilst valuing our heritage, history and environment.

2.16 The eastern half of the country (excluding Dublin) is an area that currently under performs in international tourism with 37% of international visitors but only 30% of the revenue. This tells us that the area has traditionally been performing as a transit zone for visitors to the west and southwest, rather than succeeding in keeping more visitors in the area for longer, and particularly overnight.

2.17 Therefore the main spatial objectives to support the Ireland's Ancient East proposition are:

**2.17.1 Transform Ireland's eastern and southern regions from a transit and day tripping zone to a touring destination which attracts international overnight visitors.**

**2.17.2 Develop a number of large motivators in the region centred on tourism attractions of scale and significance to act as platform or economic engine to drive tourism to the surrounding towns and villages. An example would be the Boyne Valley in the northern half of Ireland's**

**Ancient East. These attractions will provide an opportunity for surrounding areas to benefit from the strengths/ draw of the larger tourism attractors in their vicinity to deliver maximum impact and benefit.**

## **Alignment of the Regional ‘Place-making’ Propositions with the NPF**

### ***Regional Assembly Areas***

- 2.18 Firstly, Fáilte Ireland recognises the important role of the Regional Assembly Areas and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs) in providing a greater level of focus around the high level strategic policies of the NPF. We also welcome the acknowledgment in the Issues and Choices Paper that policies may look different from one region to another, and that a ‘tailored approach’ to regional development may be required to ensure that spatial development opportunities, which best suit each region can be leveraged.
- 2.19 Each of the three Assembly Areas straddle two of the three regional ‘place-making’ propositions as follows:
- *Northern and Western Region*- Northern sections of Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East
  - *Southern Region*- Southern sections of Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient East
  - *Eastern and Midland Region*- Ireland’s Ancient East and Dublin
- 2.20 Although the Regional Assembly Areas and tourism proposition areas do not align precisely, at a national level the Regional Assembly Areas do coincide with the spatial/ regional differences and objectives of the tourism propositions e.g. the Northern & Western Region and the Southern Regions align with a north-south difference highlighted on the Wild Atlantic Way. Fáilte Ireland will work with the Regional Assemblies to ensure that tourism objectives are considered in the delivery of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies which will support the NPF.

### ***Place-Making***

- 2.21 Secondly, the NPF contains significant reference throughout the document to the value of **place-making**, recognising that rural areas and towns and their place based characteristics support the fundamental assets upon which many sectors, including tourism are based. The NPF advocates for the enhancement and promotion of this authenticity and sense of place, which is something Fáilte Ireland fully supports.
- 2.22 In fact this is the same approach we have taken in the development of the three regional propositions. Each proposition is based upon the unique characteristics of each area, recognising the west for the influence the Atlantic has had on shaping culture and landscape; the south and east for lush green landscapes and a richness of built heritage, and stories; and Dublin for its position as a vibrant city located in Dublin bay and overlooked by the Dublin mountains. In fact place-making by its very definition seeks to identify what makes an area

distinctive and unique and what it can become synonymous for- all of which is very closely associated with brand development.

- 2.23 It is an objective of Fáilte Ireland to promote and facilitate the provision of innovative ways to communicate information on the distinctive characteristics of these places and people to our overseas visitors, in foreign languages and through good orientation, attractive and accessible public realm, signage, interpretation etc.

### 3: Interactions/ Impacts of National Policies on Tourism

- 3.1 Over the last number of years, Fáilte Ireland has worked closely with Local Authorities and Government Departments throughout Ireland to promote the spatial management of tourism. This move away from the traditional objective-based approach has seen tourism increasingly thought of as a 'land-use' – one which must be considered and planned for in the context of a whole range of other uses all of which compete for resources, space and priority.
- 3.2 There is a fundamental link between tourism and many other sectors which needs to be acknowledged, which should result in an increase in the level of policy cross-compliance and consideration of potential benefits and impacts on tourism in the development of policy. The tourism sector does not directly own or manage the tourism assets which underpin the sector and therefore is reliant on this alignment of policies for the sustainability of the sector. These sectors include agriculture and food, transport, rural development, and fisheries, etc.
- 3.3 For example, tourism and agriculture are inextricably linked given that agriculture has largely produced and continues to maintain the landscapes upon which tourism trades. The formulation of policies which acknowledge and support the positive role that agriculture plays within tourism will benefit both agriculture and tourism. The maintenance of access to our landscapes and the creation of new access is entirely dependent on maintaining good links with the agricultural sector. Likewise, the built, cultural and natural assets which constitute the 'raw material' of the tourism industry, are also essential to the 'production capability' of the sector. However, as with our rural landscapes, tourism has no direct control over these raw materials and so depends on strong working relationships with the likes of the OPW, NPWS, Coillte, Waterways Ireland and the Local Authorities, as the owners and managers of these assets, to ensure that their tourism dividend is optimised.
- 3.4 Public access and transport is key to enabling visitor movement and transit to and between our key heritage attractions. Fáilte Ireland or the tourism industry has no control over where our major heritage attractions are located, yet in order for visitors to experience these accessibility is key. Ensuring a high degree of policy convergence between the tourism and transport sectors is, therefore, crucial.

#### NPF Actions/ Supports:

- *Appraisal criteria/ matrix should be developed to identify and mitigate against potential negative impacts on tourism as a result of other sectoral/ policy development. This is to ensure that other sectoral policies do not result in unintended negative consequences for tourism by undermining or damaging the tourism offering.*
- *Projects which look at sustainable modes of transport and infrastructure required to provide improved accessibility to key tourism sites which are often located (due to their nature, age, purpose) in remote rural areas should be supported.*
- *Walking and cycling trails, greenways etc, or public transport 'hop- on hop-off' services which operate between attractions and not just between towns and villages, should be supported where possible. In Dublin for example a bus service from O'Connell Street to the Dublin Mountains, allowing visitors to be collected at numerous locations along the way, operating to*

*a schedule that encourages usage and opens up access to the Mountains for visitors, is key to supporting the Dublin proposition. A coastal path along the Wild Atlantic Way would provide a sustainable mode of transport but also connect rural towns and villages.*

- *Agriculture policies/ plans which recognise and support landowners who provide a recreational amenity should also be encouraged and planned for where possible.*

## 4: Access to the Countryside and Coastline

- 4.1 Each of the three regional 'place-making' propositions – Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Dublin, have the access to the countryside and/ or coastline as a core tenet of the visitor offering.
- 4.2 We know that a key motivator for our visitors in choosing to come to Ireland is our landscape and scenery, and access to this is imperative to support the work that Fáilte Ireland, tourism stakeholders and the industry is undertaking to both maintain and grow the tourism sector in Ireland.
- 4.3 In the last number of years Ireland has seen the development of a number of greenways and blueways across the country which provides increased access to Ireland's countryside, rivers, lakes and coastline. These developments are very welcome, but the quantity, variety and indeed investment at a national level in these assets lags well behind our competitor and indeed best in class destinations. There are many reasons for this including access, land ownership, environmental and liability issues, all of which need to be considered in the sustainable development of this access network and many of which the NPF cannot address. However the NPF should seek to set the context for any future enhancement of access to the countryside and coastline to ensure at a minimum we maintain the network we have, but also seek to develop and add to our offer where appropriate.
- 4.4 A huge game changer for the west of Ireland would be the development of a coastal path along the Wild Atlantic Way and this should also be considered (where suitable within the existing environment) as priority within the NPF as a means of opening up access to Ireland's coastline and marine areas. We've seen the success of the Clare coastal path and the Great Western Greenway and what this can do for local communities, and something of even greater scale and ambition could be of particular benefits in dispersing visitors along the Wild Atlantic Way, and addressing the spatial objective to increase visitor share north of Galway City.
- 4.5 As previously mentioned we know that over 70% of Ireland's tourism accommodation is concentrated (and consequently where revenue is generated) within less than 30% of our landmass - and that area typically hugs our coastline from Malin to Mizen and around to Carlingford (Map 1).
- 4.6 It's no surprise visitors are drawn to our coastal areas, as an island nation we have some of the best natural assets in the world. Yet in many areas access to the coastline, islands and marine environment can be quite limited and addressing this should be a priority in this plan.
- 4.7 Access to the coastline can be poor in many areas for a number of reasons, including landowner issues, insurance, planning, a perceived conflict in business activities, etc. Increased access to our shoreline is required, be it through existing or new infrastructure, or by establishing new ways of working so that public resources such as ports, harbours, piers, marinas etc, can be shared with private enterprises.

4.8 Marine planning is also a huge obstacle to the tourism development of marine areas and will also have to be tackled to enable future growth in the sector. At present this is an extremely complex process, particularly where the Foreshore is involved and greater transparency and clarity is required around this in order to support innovation and development, and ultimately the creation of jobs and revenue in rural coastal areas. Fáilte Ireland has in the past advocated for a statutory marine planning process to replace the Foreshore licencing system, and to complement the terrestrial planning system.

**NPF Actions/ Supports:**

- *The NPF should seek to promote and enable access to the countryside, inland waterways, coastline, islands and marine waters, where appropriate and in line with all proper planning and environmental designations, and in conjunction with all relevant stakeholders.*
- *A coastal path on the Wild Atlantic Way has the potential to become a game changer for the West of Ireland.*
- *Marine planning policy needs to be streamlined as a matter of urgency in order to enable the potential of the marine and foreshore areas to be explored and sustainably developed.*

## 5. Protecting Tourism’s Authenticity and Sustainability

5.1 Ireland has a reputation and image abroad as a clean, green country, with beautiful scenery and natural unspoilt environment. We know this because each year Fáilte Ireland carries out visitor attitude surveys. We recently published our 2016 Fáilte Ireland Overseas Holidaymakers Attitudes Survey which confirms that overseas holidaymakers’ expectations were largely met or exceeded last year. People, scenery and culture were important factors in delivering so many happy customers and generating growth. The crucial factors at play where holidaymaker expectations were exceeded included:

Rank	Reason for Exceeding Expectations
1	Irish People
2	Scenery
3	History/Culture
4	Nature and wildlife
5	Good quality and variety of food
6	Weather better than expected

5.2 Meeting and exceeding visitor expectations, and ensuring the image vs reality of Ireland is key maintaining growth in the sector as any potential divergence between the two could serve to undermine our reputation and attractiveness as a country in which to do business and visit.

5.3 Irelands’ authenticity and sense of place is also central to our attractiveness and the Issues and Choices Paper recognises that rural areas and towns and their place-based characteristics support the fundamental assets upon which tourism (and indeed many other Irish sectors) are based, and the protection, enhancement and promotion of this authenticity and sense of place should be at the core of the proposed NPF 2040.

### NPF Actions/ Supports:

- *Protect and promote the quality, character and distinctiveness of the Irish landscape, the sense of place and culture that make Ireland authentic and attractive to visitors. Any future development should be considered in this context and is key to the sustainability of the tourism sector.*
- *Central to this will be the need to ensure a national approach to Landscape Character Assessment for Ireland is developed before the finalisation and implementation of the NPF and that this underpins and guides decisions made at a strategic level.*



