Monaghan

Monaghan County Council Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2022





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Foreword

This Tourism Statement of Strategy for County Monaghan sets out the priorities and key actions to be undertaken for the development of the visitor economy in the county and the role of Monaghan County Council, partners, community and industry in achieving this.

The government's national tourism policy document 'People, Place and Policy - Growing Tourism to 2015' commits to 'an enhanced role for local authorities and recognition of the contribution of communities to tourism'. Monaghan County Council has long been active in aspects of tourism such as the funding and organisation of events, the development of tourism infrastructure (recreation and amenity facilities) and in the promotion of the county at a national level.

We have embraced this enhanced role of leading the management of Monaghan as a tourism destination and the development of the tourism experience in the county.

We recognise that as a county we should perform better in tourism terms and in this document, Monaghan County Council has identified opportunities to deliver increased tourism numbers and revenue through:

- Product/Experience Development
- Festivals & Events
- Marketing & Promotion

County Monaghan has a unique drumlin landscape, and is an area rich with tourism assets, natural beauty and cultural heritage. Strengthening this offering and welcoming more visitors to our wonderful county is a key priority for Monaghan County Council and this document is designed to be the road-map to assist us in achieving this.

Eamonn O'Sullivan
Chief Executive

Cllr P.J. O'Hanlon

Cathaoirleach





Introduction

The overall objective of the Co Monaghan Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2022 is to guide the development, inward investment and marketing of the county during the period outlined.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This document has been informed by the County Monaghan Tourism Strategy 2015- 2020 and by the Monaghan County Council LCDC - Local Economic and Community Plan 2016 - 2021 and actions from both documents have been incorporated into this Tourism Statement.

In developing this document for the LGMA, the over-arching theme was to maximize the economic benefits to be derived from tourism. In order to achieve this, the following are the key goals:

- 1. To develop and promote a positive image of County Monaghan as a tourism destination.
- 2. To develop, protect, enhance and maximize the potential of the natural, cultural and heritage resources of County Monaghan.

The tourism section within Monaghan County Council strives to achieve the above by identifying and implementing best practice policy for tourism development and marketing. This work is done in conjunction with local stakeholders and national bodies.

OVERVIEW

County Monaghan's visitor appeal is largely based on its natural resources which provide the county with activities such as angling, outdoor pursuits, golf, equestrian, parks and amenity areas.

Rossmore Forest Park, Lough Muckno and Sliabh Beagh, together with a multitude of angling lakes all provide an opportunity for the county to develop as a multi-faceted destination. Other Selling Points include unique 'products' such as the Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Clones Lace and Carrickmacross Lace which are synonymous with Monaghan and some key national and international festivals such as the Harvest Time Blues and the Monaghan Country Music festival.

PERFORMANCE

Statistics for Co Monaghan in recent years (see below) show a steady increase in the number of overseas visitors into the county and a corresponding increase in the revenue generated by these visitors.

OVERSEAS VISITORS (000S) TO COUNTY MONAGHAN IN THE YEARS 2012 - 2015

2012	2013	2014	2015
46	58	57	65

OVERSEAS VISITORS REVENUE (€MN) IN COUNTY MONAGHAN IN THE YEARS 2012 - 2015

2012	2013	2014	2015
11	19	18	25

In terms of Domestic Visitors, the picture is less positive than the overseas visitor numbers as can be seen in the chart below:

IRISH RESIDENTS' TRIPS (000S)TO COUNTIES LOUTH AND MONAGHAN IN THE YEARS 2012 - 2015

2012	2013	2014	2015
110	148	197	142

IRISH RESIDENTS' TRIP BY EXPENDITURE (€MN) IN COUNTIES LOUTH AND MONAGHAN IN THE YEARS 2012 - 2015

2	012	2013	2014	2015
1	5.2	18.7	30.5	24.3

CHALLENGES

It is clear from the above that there are clearly issues in attracting the domestic market and this will require continuous and concentrated work on the part of Monaghan County Council, Failte Ireland and the tourism trade over the coming years.

A detailed breakdown of the overseas figures for Co Monaghan shows a heavy reliance on British tourists, with the British market accounting for approximately 70% of the overseas visitors to the County for the above years and a corresponding percentage in terms of the overseas revenue.

This has long been a characteristic of the tourism economy in the county but is a particular challenge now in the context of Brexit. The focus for Monaghan County Council, therefore, in terms of overseas visitors will be on widening the base from which they come so as to counteract an over-reliance on the UK market.

Another issue for rural counties like Monaghan is the fact that in 2015, Dublin, Cork and Galway accounted for nearly 65% of overseas tourist revenue earned nationally, with the rest of the country (particularly those counties without a coastline) lagging behind with the financial benefits of overseas tourism being concentrated in these major urban centres.

OPPORTUNITIES

Product development is a key priority for Monaghan County Council in the coming years. The Activity and Outdoor Adventure Sector in the county provides opportunities for growth and improving access to and facilities at our natural resources is hugely important. Further developing our Natural and Built heritage assets will also assist Co Monaghan in attracting both domestic and overseas visitors and will strengthen the county's offering under the Ireland's Ancient East destination brand.

There are several funding programmes in operation currently, or coming on stream in the near future to which Monaghan County Council can apply to assist with the development of our tourism offering.

MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY AND NATIONAL INITIATIVES

In line with national policy, Monaghan County Council has been, and over the coming years, will continue to be the main developer of key public tourism infrastructure and urban and rural heritage in the county. The council will seek development funding through appropriate programmes under PEACE IV, INTERREG V (transnational), LEADER, Failte Ireland and other national schemes. The Monaghan LEO will be well-placed to assist small-scale tourism enterprises which have the potential to attract overseas visitors.

In its promotional efforts, Monaghan County Council will utilize the global and domestic market segmentation models that Failte Ireland has identified namely: Culturally Curious, Social Energisers and Great Escapers. Alignment to this strategy will assist the tourism trade in Monaghan to target and influence best-prospect customers more effectively, and in so doing, drive revenue growth and sector performance.

Monaghan County Council will continue to align its tourism efforts with the newly developed 'Ireland's Ancient East' umbrella destination brand where appropriate and will work with tourism stakeholders and with Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland in this regard.

National Policy

People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025 is the Government's national tourism policy and it sets out ambitious goals for tourism in Ireland. The policy commits to "an enhanced role for Local Authorities and recognition of the contribution of communities to tourism."

Specifically, the policy envisages that Local Authorities will:

- » Continue to act as primary developer of a range of public tourism infrastructure, including outdoor tourism infrastructure and urban and rural heritage;
- » Act as a link between the State tourism agencies and communities by supporting community effort with regard to major national tourism initiatives such as the Gathering;
- » Support community effort in destination development, including assisting communities to align their efforts with the tourism agencies brand architecture and consumer segmentation model;
- » Provide a competitive environment for tourism enterprises through continued focus on high quality maintenance of public infrastructure frequently used by visitors;
- Contribute to capacity building in tourism nationally by co-ordinating exchange of knowledge between established and developing tourism destinations; and
- » Provide a range of advice and support through the Local Enterprise Offices.¹

^{1.} People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, March 2015.

The recognition of tourism as a priority in the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) was identified as a policy priority in People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025. Every Local Authority has developed an LECP and they each have a strong tourism dimension. The LECPs outline each Local Authority's tourism outputs, identify tourism partners and set out specific goals, objectives and actions related to tourism. The majority of the LECPs explicitly reference People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2025.

Furthermore, many local authorities have created detailed tourism strategies which build upon their tourism plans as outlined in their LECP.

All of the LECPs are prepared by the Local Community and Development Committees (LCDC), adopted by the elected members and submitted to the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. Each local authority develops a plan that considers unique local factors through a process that includes extensive public consultation. The strength of the LCDC lies in its composition. This membership of the LCDC is critical to the delivery of the actions set out in the LECP. The Act clearly provides for a role for the local elected members and the Chief Executive of the City or County Council, the voluntary sector, community groups and agencies that are central to the delivery of public services in local areas.

In 'Realising our Rural Potential - Action Plan for Rural Development', tourism is recognised as a key driver of economic development in rural Ireland.

Specific objectives include the following:

- » Support sustainable jobs through targeted rural tourism initiatives
- » Develop and Promote Activity Tourism in rural areas through the development of blueways, greenways and other recreational opportunities
- » Develop and promote our natural and built heritage through investment and development of our Gaeltacht areas, enhanced promotion of our National Parks and Nature Reserves and other natural and built resources



Regional Action Plan for Jobs

In the North East/North West Action Plan for Jobs 2015-2017, key ambitions for the tourism sector in this area are:

- » Explore the potential to develop craft hubs for the region similar to Drumshambo food hub
- Explore potential to develop Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with all counties or groups of counties, as appropriate, on both sides of the Border building on the Newry/ Mourne/Louth initiative, under a number of themes to include Tourism & Recreation
- » Build on Ireland's Ancient East brand in the North East to contribute to the target in the Government's new Tourism Policy Statement to grow employment in the sector by 25% to 2025
- » Establish a cross border historic literary trail building on the Region's literary heritage

This plan also references the 'Borderlands Concept' which is being developed by Monaghan County Council - a concept which seeks to link and market the existing natural and heritage and cultural assets of the border counties, north and south from the Mournes in Co.Down to Ben Bulben in Co Sligo.

LECP Tourism Objectives

The Monaghan County Council Local Economic & Community Plan provides a focus for the shared vision of a better quality of life for local communities and opportunities to address issues affecting community development and economic and enterprise development. The LECP identified six high level Goals, supported by specific Objectives under the respective enterprise and community streams.

The two goals which incorporate the agreed actions for tourism are as follows:

High Level Goal

3

To support the development of social and economic Infrastructure to enhance and sustain economic and community development in the county

High Level Goal

6

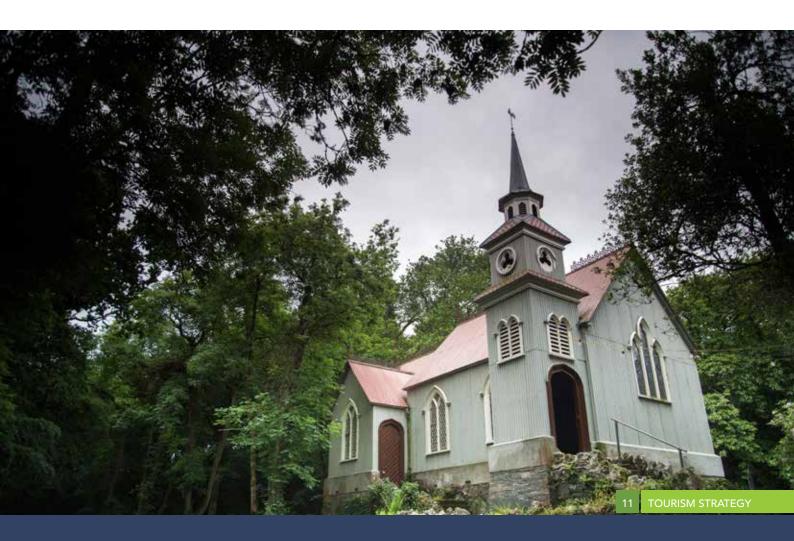
To protect, enhance and maximise the potential of Natural, Cultural and Heritage Resources of County Monaghan

Tourism Work Programme 2017 – 2022

This section sets out the key actions that will be implemented in Monaghan County Council in the period 2017 – 2022.

The actions relating to tourism have been taken from the LECP which was developed by Monaghan County Council's Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development and Enterprise Support and the Local Community Development Committee.

In addition to the LECP, a Co Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2015 - 2020) was adopted by Monaghan County Council in 2015 and the actions outlined in this document have also been incorporated into this Tourism Work Programme.





Product / Experience Development

Co Monaghan, with its extensive natural resources and the quality of its rural landscape, is well placed to take advantage of the recent upturn in the tourism sector.

These advantages, combined with its attractive towns and cultural heritage, provide a significant opportunity for the development of tourism, particularly in terms of the following offerings:

VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

The county has a small number of visitor attractions - some of which are unique to the county such as The Patrick Kavanagh Centre in Inniskeen, the Carrickmacross Lace Gallery and the Clones Lace Exhibition in the Canal Stores in Clones and these serve to demonstrate the uniqueness of the visitor attraction product in Co Monaghan. The downside is that they are without exception small facilities and this has always been a challenge for the county. The priority therefore is to develop and enhance these facilities and the actions below reflect this.

PARKS AND AMENITY AREAS

Parks such as Rossmore Forest Park, Lough Muckno and the Sliabh Beagh Mountain area are key natural resources in the county. All, without exception, require substantial investment to develop the amenities so as to bring the facilities up to the standard expected.

ANGLING

The county has a multitude of lakes and rivers and so is a renowned angling area for Coarse, Pike and Game anglers. Substantial investment in the angling product in the recent past has greatly improved facilities and access and has led to an upsurge in the angling numbers in the county. It is now a priority to build on this momentum and to re-establish Monaghan as a premier destination for anglers.

HERITAGE

The cultural and heritage offering in Co Monaghan is strong but may be perceived as being under-exploited in terms of its tourism potential. A priority for the coming years will be to develop the heritage offering and improve access, signage and interpretation at key sites.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation base in Monaghan is quite low in comparison to other counties in the Border region and there is a lack of budget accommodation in the county in terms of Caravan & Camping facilities, Hostels and Aire de Service type facilities (which cater for camper vans). There are development opportunities here particularly for the private sector and the LEADER programme will be important in this regard.

Ľ	OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
F	LECP Strategic Objective 3.3 Promote development in town and village centres	3.3.6 Pilot a Heritage Towns Initiative in Clones and Castleblayney	MCC	Town Teams	2017
		3.3.7 Support the development of guesthouses, B&Bs, selfcatering and residential accommodation in rural towns	MCC	MID (LEADER)	2016 - 2020
		3.3.8 Support the development of Arts & Community Buildings in each town	MCC	MID (LEADER)	2016 - 2020
á	LECP Strategic Objective 3.8 Support the development of a Border Regional Museum facility in Monaghan	3.8.1 Develop a new museum facility in Monaghan supporting heritage and culture for the border area	MCC	Friends of County Museum Committee	2016 - 2021
I	LECP Strategic Objective 6.2 Improve access to water resources within the county	6.2.1 Encourage and enhance access to our waterways and lakes	MCC MID (LEAD- ER)	Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Private Landowners	2017 - 2018
E	LECP Strategic Objective 6.3 Enhance contribution of tourism to the rural economy	6.3.1 Provide R&D support to expand existing tourism product offering, amenity sites/trails, festivals, adventure tourism product and visitor attractions	MCC	MID (LEADER)	2016 - 2020
		6.3.2 Support continued development of Ulster Canal project and expand Greenway from Clones to Armagh	MCC	MID (LEADER), Waterways Ireland	2016 - 2020
(Tourism Strategy Priority 2 Continue to lobby for and work on the re-opening of the Ulster	Consolidate existing works in Clones Erne East Area			2016-2020
3					
	MALE				

	OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME	
	LECP Strategic Objective 6.4 Develop and promote key sites of multi-layered significance	6.4.1 Improve access and infrastructure at: Lough Muckno Dartrey Forest and lakes Rossmore Park Ulster Canal Patrick Kavanagh Country Black Pigs Dyke Sliabh Beagh	MCC	MID (LEADER), Coillte, Waterways Ireland	2016 -2020	
	Tourism Strategy Priority 1 Focus on the development of the key Amenity sites and on Walking & Cycling Trails	Re-establish Kingfisher Cycling Trail Loop			2018	
Taring and the same	LECP Strategic Objective 6.7 To improve the accessibility to and awareness of the key archaeological and heritage sites in the county	6.7.1 Conduct an audit of access and signage issues in the key national archaeological and significant heritage sites in the county	MCC		2016 - 2021	
は、これにはなり		6.7.2 Develop and implement a plan to address access and signage issues identified in the above plan	MCC	MID (LEADER)	2016 -2021	8
W. T.	Tourism Strategy Priority 4 Develop the Potential of Heritage Tourism	Support the Patrick Kavanagh Centre to update and enhance its product offering			2016-2020	
一大子 一		Establish and promote a 'First Point of Contact' for Genealogical enquiries			2017	i
2000年の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の大学の	Tourism Strategy Priority 10 Provide information on funding opportunities to existing tourism businesses, community groups or potential start-ups	Inform Trade of Funding Opportunities	MCC	MID (LEADER)	2016-2021	
		Provide on-going advice and support to tourism start-ups	MCC			1



Festivals & Events

There is a wide range of festivals and events in the county. A small number of these festivals have national or indeed international recognition and attract significant attendances and generate bednights which is a key priority when attracting funding. However, the majority of the festivals/events in Co Monaghan attract local attendees or are aimed at niche target markets (e.g. angling festivals).

Key festivals, both existing and new, need to be supported as they can be significant generators of visitor numbers and revenue. Such festivals would include the Monaghan Rhythm & Blues Festival, Monaghan Country Music Festival, Muckno Mania (including Muckno Autumn Angling Festival), Clones Film Festival, Patrick Kavanagh Weekend, Carrickmacross Arts Festival etc. Smaller angling festivals which generate substantial bednights as the majority of competitors are from overseas should also be supported.

It will also be important to encourage more established events to share their expertise with developing events in order to maximise the overall effectiveness of this sector to Co Monaghan.

In addition to the above, increased linkages between festival organisers and accommodation providers will be important so that packages can be developed to assist in addressing this bednight issue.



OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
LECP Strategic Objective 6.3 Enhance contribution of tourism to the rural economy	6.3.1 Provide R&D support to expand existing tourism product offering, amenity sites/trails, festivals, adventure tourism product and visitor attractions	MCC	MID (LEADER)	2016 - 2020
Tourism Strategy Priority 3 Assist Festivals and Events to increase numbers and deliver bednights	Provide a high level of support to festivals with a potential to deliver substantial bednights	MCC	MID (LEADER)	2017-2022
	Develop print copies of annual Calendar of Events for Co Monaghan and develop and update on-line version	MCC	Festival Organisers	2017-2020
	Provide on-going promotion for festivals through socialmedia			2017-2020

Marketing & Promotion

Consultations with key stakeholders for the Co Monaghan Tourism Strategy and for the LECP confirmed the view that Monaghan is seen as a peripheral county and that not being an integral part of a Failte Ireland/Tourism Ireland 'destination' was having a very detrimental effect on the tourism industry in the county.

A key priority therefore, is to work to develop the Central Border Area as a destination in its own right and to highlight the wealth of culture, heritage, landscape, attractions and activities that this area has to offer.

Another key priority is the use of new and emerging technologies, both web and mobile based to promote and market Co Monaghan to visitors. Recent data indicates the rapid growth in ownership of smartphones and tablets and this has a knock-on effect in terms of the expectations of the more digitally aware visitor. The challenge for the tourism trade in the county is to convert our assets into marketable tourism products and tell our 'story' in new ways to match these expectations

The idea of a 'Monaghan brand' came up several times in recent consultations and perhaps ties in with the 'lack of profile' issue which was also identified. The landscape, people and heritage all make Monaghan unique and it will be important to convey these themes in future promotions/marketing collateral. In 2016, Monaghan County Council delivered a 'My Monaghan' campaign which used videos of locals to promote the county. Over the coming years, the council will build on the momentum of this campaign and develop more videos and podcasts for use on social media sites.

OBJECTIVES	ACTION	LEAD	PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
LECP Strategic Objective 6.3 Enhance contribution of tourism to the rural economy	6.3.3 Develop Borderlands marketing concept	MCC	Failte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, other local authorities	2017
	6.3.4 Develop Monaghan as the Premier Angling County in Ireland	MCC		2016 - 2020
	6.3.5 Redevelop and launch new county tourism branding	MCC		2017
LECP Strategic Objective 6.5 Improve public awareness of the natural resources of County Monaghan	6.5.7 Increase presence on national social media to promote heritage and culture of County Monaghan	MCC	Tourism Trade Providers	2016 - 2021
Tourism Strategy Priority 6 Increase on-line presence and engage with Social Media	Update web presence of county Monaghan tourism website	MCC	Tourism Trade Providers	2017-2020
	Prepare and execute Public Relations Campaign			2017-2020
	Encourage an increase in the availability of Wi-Fi for visitors	MCC		2017
LECP Strategic objective 6.6 Develop and expand the understanding of history & heritage in the county	6.6.1 Collate and develop the local knowledge of the people of the county into a local tourism itinerary in specific areas	MCC	Tourism Trade Providers	2016 -2021
LECP Strategic Objective 6.7 To improve the accessibility to and awareness of the key archaeological and heritage sites in the county	6.7.3 Develop Heritage Website	MCC		2016 - 2021
Tourism Strategy Priority 7 Improve Visitor Servicing	Ensure that up to date county promotional brochures are available in key attractions and civic buildings			2017-2020
	Engage with Failte Ireland in terms of exploiting Monaghan's inclusion in Ireland's Ancient East			2017-2020
Tourism Strategy Priority 9 Develop Networking among trade providers and encourage cross-selling	Encourage networking among the tourism trade			2017-2020
	Improve the 'weekend' experience for the visitor in our main towns			2017-2020

Regional Collaboration & Bespoke Initiatives

As Monaghan is a border county, Monaghan County Council has long worked with our counterparts along the border and our colleagues in Northern Ireland to strengthen the tourism offering in the cross-border region.

Monaghan County Council is a member of East Border Region (EBR) and Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) and has accessed EU cross-border funding for tourism projects in the past. An ICBAN application for a Tourism Literary Initiative has been submitted to the transnational INTERREG V programme through which Monaghan County Council is hoping to develop the Patrick Kavanagh experience in Inniskeen.

Monaghan County Council is actively participating in the Ireland's Ancient East initiative and is seeking to develop product and access to heritage sites so as to further benefit from this initiative.

Finally, work is underway with neighbouring councils both North and South of the border to develop an alternative tourism experience to link and market the natural and cultural assets of the border counties. A submission to the LEADER Co-Operation Programme is envisaged for the project/elements of the project.





Monitoring & Review

This work programme is aligned with the objectives of the LECP. In doing so, it is agreed by the Local Community and Development Committee. Importantly, it will form an important element of the part of the annual presentation made to the Council on the status and delivery of the LECP.

The Actions in the Monaghan County Council Local Community Development Committee LECP are SMART: specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time bound. Actions will be delivered through a range of stakeholders in partnership and progress will be monitored independently. The implementation of the LECP will be monitored through an annual work plan and annual report which will describe the achievement of SMART actions. The LECP will be subject to a midterm review no later than the end of 2018.

All actions in the Monaghan LECP are assigned a lead organisation/s and in many cases a number of support organisations are identified. Each lead organisation is responsible for implementing the action and reporting on progress to the LCDC.

The LECP Advisory Committee will have primary responsibility for ensuring that progress milestones are being met in a satisfactory manner, and that performance indicators are monitored. The SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise Support will take a lead role in monitoring the economic actions.

As provided for in the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, the community and economic actions will be monitored and reviewed on an on-going basis and if the local authority considers it appropriate, it will revise the actions, plans and strategies set to achieve its objectives.



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