



Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin
Monaghan County Council



Tourism Strategy for County Monaghan

2023-2028

Prepared for: Monaghan County Council

November 2023





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By **Alan Hill Tourism Management Consultants**



Alan Hill

Tourism Management Consultants

In association with,

SLR Consulting and Helen O'Leary Consulting Ltd.





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Glossary of Terms

DEDP	Destination Experience Development Plan
ETB	Cavan-Monaghan Education & Training Board
FI	Fáilte Ireland
FTE	Full Time Equivalent (jobs)
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
IAE	Ireland's Ancient East
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
MCC	Monaghan County Council
MCC TU	MCC Tourism Unit
MD	Municipal Districts (of Monaghan County Council)
PESTEL	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal (Analysis)
PR	Public Relations
SDGs	(United Nations) Sustainable Development Goals



SECTION A

Background & Context

1 Executive Summary

In early 2023, Monaghan County Council (MCC) commissioned the development of a new, inclusive and ambitious five-year Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) for County Monaghan, to help address deficits, capitalise upon opportunities, and grow new partnerships within the county's tourism and recreational sectors. A team of tourism experts, led by Alan Hill Tourism Management, was appointed to develop the new strategy.

Objectives

The development team was asked to address five key challenges:

- Maximise existing assets (including infrastructure).
- Improve the visitor experience for existing and new offerings.
- Expand networks and collaboration.
- Grow visitor numbers (and expenditure) within a responsible tourism context and
- Address the marketing opportunities for refreshing the Monaghan tourism brand.



Ballinode Village



Castleblayney Town



Emy Lough

The strategy comes at an important historical juncture as the global economy deals with the impacts of pandemic, war and fundamental climate change, with consequent changes in tourism patterns. This poses considerable challenges and opportunities in delivering responsible tourism experiences and sustainable practice across the county's tourism sector. Whereas job creation and tourism investment will remain as key focal areas, they must be embedded in the integration of the entire Monaghan economy to a sustainable and circular model, in line with national and regional objectives. The tourism sector must embrace this change and be supported in making the transition to a genuinely 'green' offering of tourism products, services and experiences. This approach has informed the core proposals and recommendations of this Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) for Co. Monaghan.

Policy Review

At the outset, a detailed review of current policies and strategies from European to national, regional and local levels was undertaken, to identify core objectives that require to be addressed in the new strategy. These include, *inter alia*, requisite attention to policy objectives for tourism, recreation, climate adaptation, active travel, biodiversity and conservation of heritage, as well as addressing sustainable tourism development within the context of the county's economic development.

The current tourism economy of Monaghan was reviewed to establish baseline data for 2023 and included a review of the existing tourism offering across the county. The very considerable progress made over the last decade was noted in relation to signature tourism projects such as the Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Rossmore Forest Park, Carrickmacross Workhouse and the estate of Castle Leslie, to fledgling projects of scale like the Ulster Canal (Clones) and Monaghan Peace Campus.

Stakeholder Engagement

An extensive process of stakeholder engagement and consultations over four months informed the findings and recommendations. A significant Online Survey enabled the public to engage in the information gathering (180 participants) was followed by considerable one-to-one engagement. The Fáilte Ireland Ireland's Ancient East (IAE) team provided critical insights, ensuring the new strategy is fully aligned with IAE regional policy and the recently developed Monaghan '*Destination Experience Development Plan*'. Other key statutory partners such as Coillte, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries Ireland and An Taisce provided specific inputs to key considerations for tourism development. A number of MCC departments, including executive, tourism, arts, recreation, active travel, climate and community development, provided valuable and practical contributions which informed the key proposals. Inputs from elected members of MCC from all three municipal districts have ensured that the strategy proposes a spatial balance to tourism development across the county.

The consultations identified distinctive 'gaps' that need to be systematically addressed for the ambition of the Council to be realised, including:

- Accommodation gaps (across all types).
- Visitor attractions of national/ international appeal.
- Lack of integration of recreational and tourism offerings (walking/cycling/ kayaking/ angling).
- Capacity and networks of tourism providers.
- Brand recognition.
- Lack of investment.
- Political prioritisation of tourism as a core element of the county's circular economy.



Patrick Kavanagh Centre



Dining in Co. Monaghan



Rossmore Forest Park - Playpark

Issues & Options

Based on the research above, recurring key issues were identified that require to be addressed in the Strategy. Indicative options to address these issues are flagged below.

Table 1: Recurring Key Issues

Issues	Indicative Options
Relatively poor economic performance of Monaghan tourism economy (relative to comparable counties)	Clear plan, enhanced collaboration and sufficient resources.
Constrained capacity of existing tourism operators.	Systematically upskill current and next generation of tourism operators
Insufficient long term tourism planning.	Adoption of the new Tourism Strategy and the provision of the necessary resources to implement it.
Patchy spread of tourism activity across the county.	Strategic approach to addressing spatial imbalances within the county
Insufficient investment in tourism and recreational infrastructure and services to match current tourism trends and expectations.	MCC and its strategic partners need to commit to the provision of the next generation of supporting tourism infrastructure as a priority
Poor brand identity and inconsistent messaging.	Innovative, consistent development and rollout of a fresh Monaghan brand to reflect the vibrant offer to be delivered.
Recognition of the pivotal role of Monaghan County Council in tourism development.	Enhanced support for and cooperation with the Tourism Unit and relevant MCC units e.g. heritage, planning, environment, community, active travel.

To address these issues and to activate the options, actions are proposed in the Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) to significantly enhance the potential of tourism as a key driver of County Monaghan’s economy.

Vision for the Future of Monaghan Tourism

Based on extensive research, consultations and analysis, the following vision statement has been created to underpin the sustainable development and to realise Monaghan’s considerable tourism potential.

“The vision for Monaghan is to create a sustainable, engaging destination, which reflects the rich cultural heritage of this border county and its rolling landscapes of recreational opportunity, creativity and surprising natural beauty. Monaghan will be a destination of choice for those who wish to ‘gentle their footprint’ in the unexplored, providing authentic, place-based visitor experiences to enrich and inspire, while delivering economic benefits across the county.”

This vision has informed the development of the ‘Roadmap’ for tourism development in County Monaghan for the coming term, which is presented graphically and in the table on the following page.



Summary of Road Map to Guide the Tourism Strategy

Based on extensive research, consultations and analysis, the following vision statement has been created to underpin the sustainable development and to realise Monaghan’s considerable tourism potential.

Table 2: Summary Roadmap, Priority Actions, Indicative Timelines: Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028)

Six Pillars of ROADMAP	Actions			S	M	L
	<i>S = short term (1-2yr)</i>	<i>M = medium term (2-3yr)</i>	<i>L = longer term (4-5yr)</i>			
1. Enabling & Resourcing of Tourism Development in County Monaghan	1.1	Review of resourcing of the Tourism Unit in Monaghan Co. Council; Supported by ongoing mentoring by Fáilte Ireland.				
	1.2	Establishment of Monaghan Tourism & Recreation Forum based on best practice national models.				
	1.3	Adopt new Tourism Strategy, provide training and monitor implementation.				
	1.4	Conduct a Mid-Term Review of this Tourism Strategy to measure progress against targets.				
	1.5	In year prior to commissioning of follow-on strategy, MCC to conduct ‘Visitor Survey’ to measure impact from demand side.				
2. Development of Destination Town & Destination Hubs across Co. Monaghan	2.1	Enhanced integration of Tourism, Recreation and Heritage planning for Destination Town (Monaghan Town).				
	2.2	Enhanced Tourism, Recreation and Heritage development and integration of Destination Hubs (Castleblayney, Carrickmacross, Clones, Glaslough) in rural towns & villages.				
3. Enhanced Access & Links to the Great Outdoors of Monaghan	3.1	Use of Monaghan’s Forest Estate for walking/ nature-based activities and experiences.				
	3.2	Reimagining of the waymarked ‘Monaghan Way’				
	3.3	Exploring the potential for outdoor recreation in Sliabh Beagh whilst recognising the fragility of the ecosystems and protecting biodiversity.				
	3.4	Expansion of the Recreational Walk-Cycle Trail network across Monaghan.				
	3.5	Expanded options for Water-based Activities, using rivers and lakes (e.g. Dromore River, etc.).				
	3.6	Develop the considerable Angling potential in the county to match the demands of today’s changing marketplace.				

Table 2: Summary Roadmap, Priority Actions, Indicative Timelines: Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - (Cont.)

Six Pillars of ROADMAP	Actions			S	M	L
	S = short term (1-2yr)	M = medium term (2-3yr)	L = longer term (4-5yr)			
4. Supporting Ongoing Tourism Product Development; 'Hero' Projects and Flagship Festivals	4.1	Continued innovation of the arts, craft & cultural offering at Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Inniskeen, to support its sustainability.		█	█	
	4.2	Realisation of the Peace Campus/ Monaghan Museum at the core of Monaghan Destination Town.		█	█	
	4.3	Explore possibilities for sustainable tourism options at Lough Muckno and Castleblayney in conjunction with local communities.		█	█	
	4.4	Continued support to local actions and activities at Carrickmacross Workhouse / Carrickmacross Lace Museum and the Market House creative outlet.		█	█	█
	4.5	Continued support to local activities at Ulster Canal Store Visitor Centre/ Clones Lace Museum, as part of Clones as a recreation Hub for water- and land- based activities.		█	█	█
	4.6	Support the development of a variety of tourism infrastructure including accommodation & services across the county.		█	█	█
	4.7	Develop and support niche Arts, Culture; Flagship Festivals & Events.		█	█	
	4.8	Visitor Information Points (VIPs) located in Peace Campus, Libraries, Civic Offices, Carrickmacross Market House.		█	█	
5. Building Capacity, Networks & Partnerships; and Diaspora Linkages	5.1	Enhanced trade, community and local partner engagement to 'kickstart' delivery of Tourism Strategy. Supported by ongoing mentoring by Fáilte Ireland for MCC <i>Tourism Unit</i> and <i>Monaghan Tourism & Recreation Forum</i> to mid-term of Strategy.		█	█	█
	5.2	Monaghan Momentum – develop and deliver a Tourism Capacity Building Programme of scale.		█	█	█
	5.3	Progress the tourism potential of enhanced engagement with the Monaghan diaspora overseas whilst recognising that this on-going engagement needs to be suitably resourced.		█	█	
6. Excellence in Marketing, Communications & Branding	6.1	Support of trade partnership Initiatives e.g. marketing and sales; distribution and communications.			█	
	6.2	Cohesive brand development and accelerated alignment with Ireland's Ancient East brand.		█	█	█

The Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) includes a detailed action plan as a **Road Map** to deliver these six core pillars and priority actions.

To activate momentum behind the implementation of the Tourism Strategy the following five initiatives may be commenced immediately to deliver concrete results:

- 1. Establish the Monaghan Tourism and Recreation Forum** - identify a suitable Chairperson, recruit participants, formalise procedures and ensure adequate administrative support and resourcing. The Forum will be critical in driving and maintaining momentum of the Tourism Strategy.
- 2. Continue to resource the Patrick Kavanagh Cultural Centre** appropriately to expand the tourism experience and offering both in the Centre and beyond.
- 3. Continue to enhance the Rossmore Forest Park** visitor experience in line with strategic recommendations, with appropriate expansion and commercialisation.



Patrick Kavanagh Centre



Sliabh Beagh

- 4. Continued development of Clones as a Tourism Hub** - capitalise upon the completion of the Ulster Canal, with linkages into the town, provision of local accommodation, amenities and onward recreational links to the surrounding environs and northwards to Sliabh Beagh.
- 5. Explore the potential of Sliabh Beagh** for outdoor recreation whilst recognising the fragility of the ecosystems and protecting biodiversity.

Adoption of the proposed Roadmap will transform the Monaghan Tourism brand, offering and marketability of a vibrant set of sustainable products, services and experiences over the term of the strategy and beyond.

The plan is costed indicatively to provide guidance based on recent tourism and recreational developments across Ireland; detailed costings will be required on a project-by-project basis.

Destination Marketing Plan

Based on trade and stakeholder engagement, an innovative **Destination Marketing Plan** for County Monaghan has been developed as part of this strategy with a strong focus on digital marketing. The primary features of the new Destination Marketing Plan include indicative ‘actions’ which may be categorised as follows:

1. Enhancing the Offering

- Commitment to a new ‘audience development approach’ in all aspects of marketing;
- Fundamental embrace of delivering an authentic ‘carbon-light’ tourism and recreational footprint;
- Creation of ‘value-led’ propositions across the whole Monaghan tourism economy;
- Delivery of more and enhanced quality festivals and events; and
- Build the marketing and sales capacity of all tourism operators, while practically support emerging networks.

2. Engagement and Communications

- All partners develop and drive a new and innovative ‘distribution strategy’ across all communication channels to reach the optimum target market for Monaghan;
- Create and manage a new and vibrant Monaghan tourism (and related) brand; and
- Ongoing research and analysis to inform decision making and monitor performance.



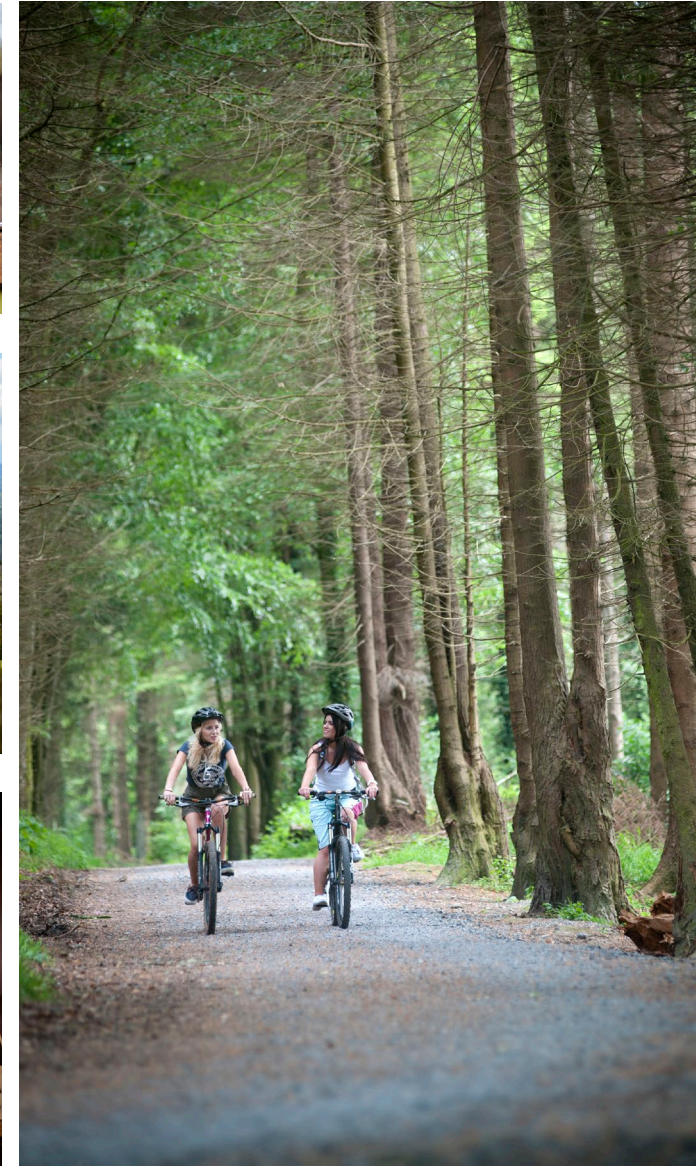
Glaslough Chocolate



Sliabh Beagh - Walking



Andy's Bar & Restaurant



Lough Muckno - Cycling

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Following careful consideration, seven key performance indicators have been established to assist in monitoring the implementation of the new Tourism Strategy and to evaluate progress. Each KPI will be measured against defined tourism industry standards as the term of the Strategy progresses.

- 1 150 – NEW JOBS IN TOURISM SECTOR
- 2 GROW BY 20% - VISITORS (DOMESTIC)
- 3 GROW BY 15% - VISITORS (INTERNATIONAL)
- 4 GROW BY 40% - ENTERPRISES EMBRACING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE
- 5 GROW BY 50% - TRADE PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT
- 6 €25 MILLION – TOTAL INVESTMENT IN SECTOR
- 7 GROW BY 30% - ACCOMMODATION BASE

Future tourism development in Monaghan faces many challenges, with issues to be addressed on both the supply side (e.g. accommodation, staff, supporting infrastructure and investment, sustainable services and products) and the demand side (e.g. brand identify, target markets, responsible purchasing by visitors, technology, sustainable experiences).

The optimal way to overcome these challenges is to grasp the very considerable opportunities ahead through development of a fully integrated and sustainable tourism offer in Monaghan, marked by a spirit of enhanced collaboration, innovation and a total focus on delivering excellence across the entire visitor experience.

To achieve this, it must address the defined gaps in infrastructure, services, experiences, and capacity to ensure that ultimately, the considerable benefits from sustainable tourism are spread across the county, flowing to tourism service providers, entrepreneurs and local communities.

Operational & Resource Commitment

This ambitious new strategy will require additional resources and interventions by all primary partners, especially Monaghan County Council, working in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and trade partners.

Primary interventions will include the following commitments:

- The adoption of tourism and recreation delivery as being a ‘high priority objective’ of Monaghan Council, as embedded in the new County Development Plan.
- Multi-annual investment by MCC of the resources required to adequately deliver on the ambition of the Tourism Strategy (2023-2028).
- In collaboration with a range of partners, identify and secure new funding across multiple public platforms, including national, cross-border and inter-county opportunities.
- Create and support a new *Monaghan Tourism and Recreation Forum* to assist in the rollout and delivery of the Tourism Strategy (2023-2028).

Conclusions

Future tourism development in Monaghan faces a number of challenges, with issues to be addressed on both the **supply side** (e.g. accommodation, staff, supporting infrastructure and investment, sustainable services and products) and the **demand side** (e.g. brand identify, target markets, responsible purchasing by visitors, technology, sustainable experiences).

The optimal way to overcome these challenges is to grasp the very considerable opportunities through development of a fully integrated and sustainable tourism offer in Monaghan, marked by a spirit of **enhanced collaboration, innovation and a total focus on delivering excellence** across the entire visitor experience.

This will require **dedicated and sustained resourcing** of the Monaghan Tourism Unit, as well as the development of a new **Tourism and Recreation Forum** to help guide coordinated development across the county.

Enhanced networking and collaboration among Monaghan County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Coillte, Waterways Ireland and local tourism trade and community partners, supported by **professional training, mentoring and capacity building** across the sector, will be critical to ensuring the targets are reached.

This strategy has developed a robust set of **meaningful targets (KPIs)** which should be monitored and analysed regularly to provide insights into the success of different marketing initiatives and benchmarks performance against those of competitor destinations. This will be of critical importance to informing future activities and ensuring best possible return on investment of time, prioritisation, and money.

The key to success will be the further **differentiation of Monaghan as a destination of choice** through delivery of slower and 'lighter footprint' experiences, encouraging place-based travel, by providing more immersive travel experiences.

By adopting and implementing this Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) for County Monaghan, the county will become a vibrant destination offering a unique blend of its cultural, literary, and cultural assets to the discerning visitor.

“Monaghan tourism can overcome its challenges by grasping the very considerable opportunities ahead through development of a fully integrated and sustainable tourism offer, marked by a spirit of enhanced collaboration, innovation and a total focus on delivering excellence across the entire visitor experience.”



Monaghan Country Music Festival

2 Introduction

Monaghan County Council commissioned the development of a new *Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) for County Monaghan* based on research, evidence, analysis and stakeholder consultations, and to make robust recommendations for its effective implementation, marketing and communications.

Alan Hill Tourism Development Ltd (**Alan Hill TDL**), working with Deirdre Lewis of **SLR Consulting**, and Helen O’Leary of **Helen O’Leary Consulting Limited**, was appointed by **Monaghan County Council (MCC)** in early 2023, to develop a new five-year Tourism Strategy for County Monaghan.

The aim is to develop a vibrant strategy based on recommendations for the effective development of immersive and sustainable experiences to meet tourism demand and expectations for the coming decade.

The findings of the research, analysis, and related recommendations, conducted from March 2023 through to July 2023, to develop an active Roadmap, with a related Marketing & Communications plan, are presented as follows.



Inniskeen Village

2.1 Terms of Reference

Monaghan County Council required the development of an ambitious, evidenced-based and innovative tourism strategy that would present a clearly defined road map for the recovery and development of the tourism sector, as a fundamental contributor to the economy of Monaghan.

The core objectives for the Tourism Strategy are:

- To make recommendations which seek to maximise the usage of available tourism assets in a sustainable and sympathetic way that respects and protects natural assets and which will support the growth of Monaghan's tourism industry, in line with the brand architecture and ethos of *Ireland's Ancient East*.
- To recommend a focused programme of infrastructural product improvements that takes full advantage of existing assets, whilst minimizing any negative environmental or community impacts.
- To identify product development, new and innovative visitor experiences and marketing opportunities which focus on visitor segments and stories, as identified in the Ireland Ancient East brand.

- To identify collaborative destination marketing opportunities with neighbouring counties, key stakeholders, and industry members.
- To increase overseas and domestic visitor numbers to County Monaghan and improve the county's profile and traction in the international and domestic marketplace.
- To leverage opportunities for further development of the festival sector.
- To present a clear, innovative destination marketing plan for County Monaghan with a strong focus on digital marketing.

In response, the new Strategy aims to develop a vibrant and appealing all-year-round tourism offer that will provide rewarding return for private and community enterprises that invest in the sector, as well as meaningful dividends for the communities of Monaghan. Sustainability will be at the core of this Strategy, to enhance both tourism experiences and the public realm, while showcasing the rich built, cultural, and natural heritage and environments of Monaghan.

To achieve these objectives, the new Tourism Strategy aims to position the county within the context of rapidly changing tourism trends and motivations for travel in the domestic and international markets. The climate crisis and transition to a net-zero economy are driving very considerable changes in both demand and delivery of tourism products and services globally and nationally.

The county will require excellence in partnership building, project implementation along with adequate funding/resourcing and focused market awareness in the coming years. With this foundation in place, Monaghan can aspire to achieve its strategic tourism objectives over the duration of this Tourism Strategy and beyond.

2.2 Methodology

An integrated approach to researching and developing the tourism strategy was adopted in three phases, working in tandem with the Tourism Development Unit of Monaghan County Council.

Phase 1: An initial data gathering phase was undertaken to understand the current tourism offer in terms of product and services. A site visit to key attractions and centres was undertaken and an appraisal performed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the offer across the county. It was clear from the outset that a significant level of work was already underway in terms of feasibility studies, master planning and vision development, which greatly assisted the team in the overall appraisal.

An in-depth policy review was conducted, to provide the context for tourism development in 2023, and sustainability must be at the core of future tourism development, with a strong focus on authenticity, immersive experiences of culture, community, and recreational activities, with demonstrable efforts to reduce the impacts of tourism on the receiving environment.



Carrickmacross - Market Square



Art Installation – Carrickmacross Workhouse



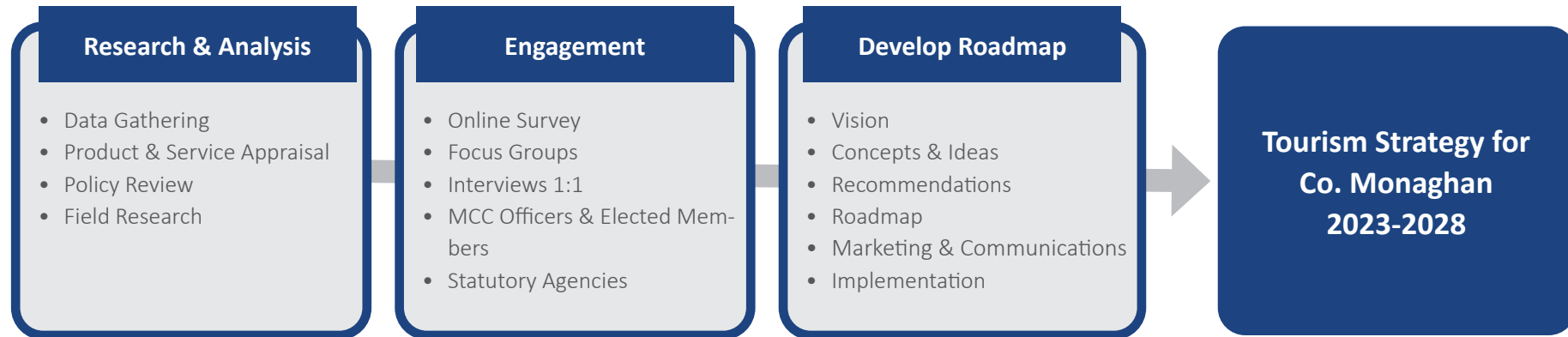
Monaghan Town Farmers Market

In Phase 2, extensive stakeholder engagement was undertaken using a variety of methods, including an online survey; one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders; and five focus groups with tourism trade, community, decision makers, elected members and tourism marketing were held. Additionally, interviews were held with statutory agencies, many of whom are involved in recreational amenity development and environmental management. All the consultee data were recorded and aggregated to provide anonymised responses to the various surveys and engagements (see Figure 1).

In Phase 3, the research and engagement phases allowed the team to develop an integrated vision, concepts, and ideas, which have been considered carefully to formulate recommendations and a roadmap for implementation. In parallel, a review of the County’s current branding, marketing and communications tools was undertaken, and a renewed approach is proposed to promote Monaghan’s vibrant tourism offering to be developed in the future roll-out of the new Tourism Strategy 2023-2028.

The new Tourism Strategy for County Monaghan (2023-2028) aims to build upon a significant tourism and recreational asset base, as well as considerable professionalisation of the offering over the last decade. Detailed background sectoral and existing marketplace research; engagement with all key stakeholders; and application of learnings from good practice elsewhere, have allowed a set of ambitious and interrelated recommendations to be created as a structured roadmap for future development of tourism in Monaghan.

Figure 1: Monaghan Tourism Strategy – Methodology





SECTION B

A Profile of Tourism in County Monaghan (2023)

3 Evidence Base for Sustainable Tourism Development

This chapter reviews the current status of the tourism offer in Monaghan, the baseline performance, and the policy context for tourism development in Monaghan within the wider framework of climate and sustainability measures.

3.1 Tourism Offer in Monaghan Today

A strategic audit of the primary tourism asset base was undertaken as part of this strategy development. Monaghan offers a unique ‘basket’ of tourism offerings across the County, that could be packaged and marketed to a discerning audience, while retaining the true essence of the county.

Based on *Ireland’s Ancient East* regional objectives, and Fáilte Ireland’s destination maturity criteria, the county is currently considered as ‘Aspiring’, while the aim is to move towards destination ‘Maturity’ over the coming decades. An important vehicle to achieve this goal is to build a sound tourism strategy that is fully aligned with the new County Development Plan, as well as several supporting tourism and development policies (see *Section 3.4 below*).

Monaghan enjoys a rich tapestry of natural beauty, with landscapes that enclose drumlins, lakes, rivers, wetlands, forests, and uplands, encompassing environments and habitats that are rich in biodiversity.



Lough Muckno

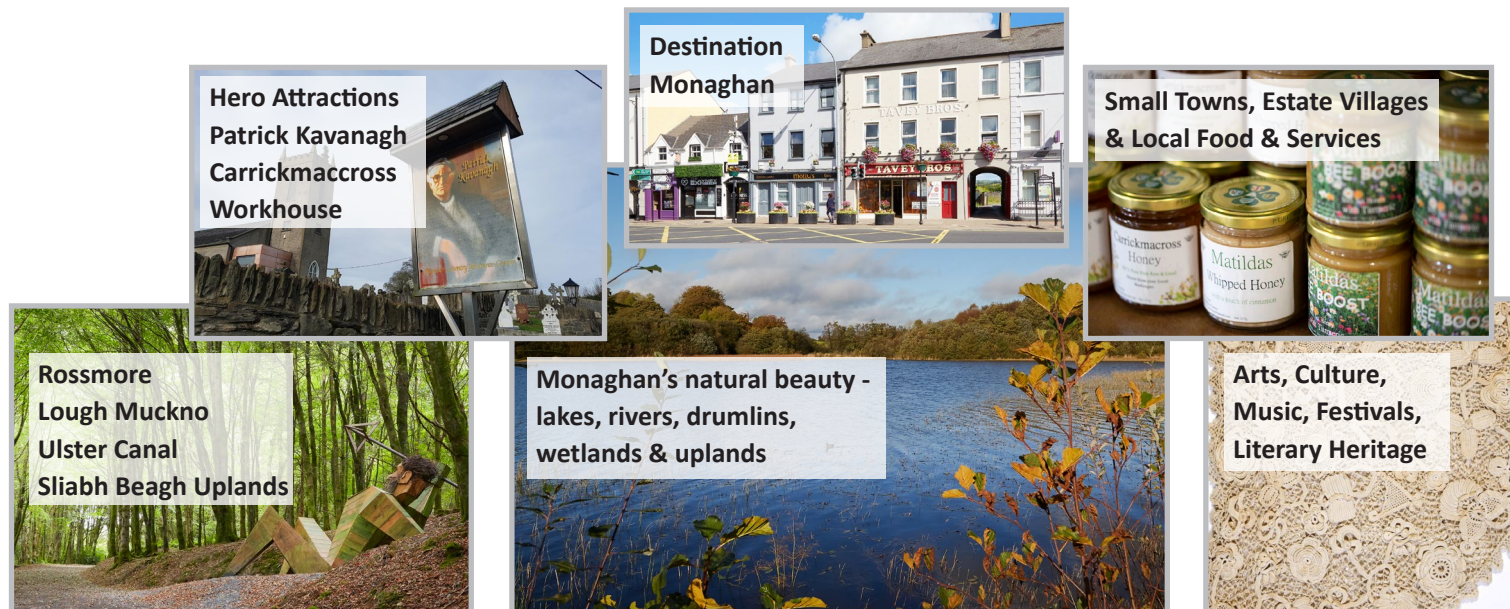
Based on these natural assets, Monaghan offers an enviable array of accessible outdoor activities, including walking in Rossmore, Dartrey or Derrygorry Forests respectively; lakeshore walking and nature viewing at Lough Muckno; kayaking on the Dromore River; world class angling in any of the many lakes and rivers; or walking/ cycling along sections of the Ulster Canal (Figure 2).

Due to its distinctive Borderlands setting, Monaghan enjoys opportunities for cross-border recreational collaborations such as the restoration of the Ulster Canal as a greenway/ blueway through Clones and Monaghan; the development of hiking trails across Sliabh Beagh; and the development of a network of walk/cycle greenways through Mid-Ulster.

Allied to its natural assets, Monaghan offers an array of cultural and creative experiences, such as the Patrick Kavanagh Centre in Inniskeen, an homage to Ireland’s foremost rural poet; the country music festivals that celebrate the legacy of Big Tom at Castleblayney; and the living craft traditions of lacemaking to be seen in Carrickmacross and Clones. The Ulster Canal Stores at Clones and the Carrickmacross Workhouse provide glimpses into the industrial and famine past of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The award-winning estate village, Glaslough, with the internationally significant Castle Leslie Estate, is a destination of unique character in the north of the county.

There is significant potential for Monaghan Town to reimagine itself as a distinctive destination town, with significant enhancement of the public realm, redevelopment of the County Museum within the new Peace Campus, and scope for outdoor performance spaces. The town has a wonderful blend of forest activities at Rossmore Forest Park and walks along the Ulster Canal Greenway, with future potential for onward recreational linkages to other parts of the County.

Figure 2: Monaghan’s Elemental Attractions



By the development and enhancement of many of the cultural assets, tourism will allow towns such as Clones to grow in relation to the Ulster Canal restoration; Knockatallon could become an outdoor recreational hub at Sliabh Beagh, home to the country’s only community-owned hotel offering; while the ongoing expansion of cultural activities, music and small festivals will attract a sustainable number of visitors to the county on an all-year-round basis.

The combination of these elements of the tourism offering may be summarised as follows (Table 3).



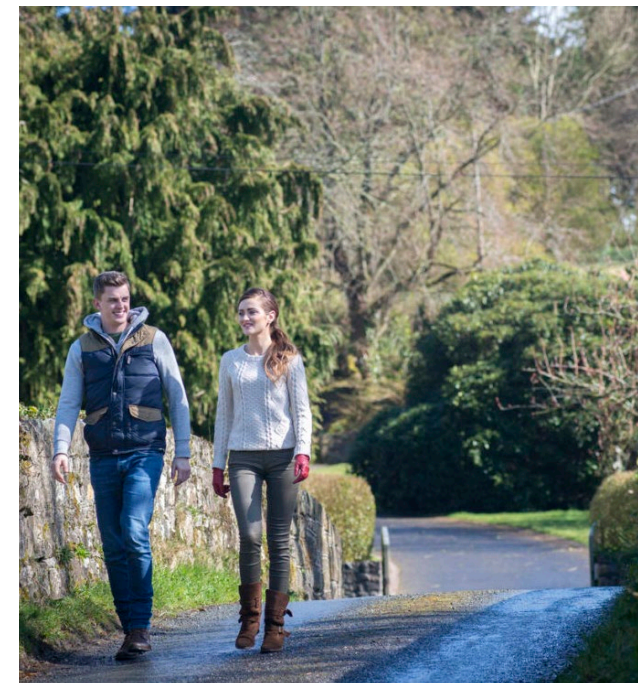
Concra Wood - Golf



Harvet Time Blues Festival

Table 3: Monaghan’s Overall Tourism Offering (2023)

<p>Celebrating Heritage Built, Cultural, Industrial Landscape, Biodiversity Literary, Artistic</p>	<p>Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) and linkage with Diaspora Genealogy and Ancestral Research</p>	<p>Festivals and Events Music/ Gigs Concerts Exhibitions</p>
<p>Recreational Experiences Greenway Walking Cycling Canoeing, Kayaking Hillwalking Forest walking Coarse Angling Equestrian</p>	<p>Built Visitor Attractions Patrick Kavanagh Centre Carrickmacross Workhouse Carrickmacross Market House Peace Campus Ulster Canal Stores Visitor Centre & Clones Lace Museum</p>	<p>Agritourism Ecotourism Family Fun Health & Wellness Arts & Crafts Artisan Production Galleries Specialist retail outlets</p>
<p>Specialist Sports and Activities Golf Motorsport Outdoor Adventure</p>	<p>Heritage Towns & Villages Business & Conference Evening Economy Food, Retail, Crafts</p>	<p>Accommodation (multiple forms, servicing multiple markets and budgets)</p>



Walking the Ulster Canal Greenway

3.2 Identified Deficits & Gaps in the Tourism Offering

Following the review of the current offer available in Monaghan, it is clear that a number of gaps require to be addressed within the tourism and recreational asset base (including supporting infrastructure and services). These are largely identified from first hand observations and consultations with key stakeholders across agencies, trade and community enterprises. Many are historical in nature, due to Monaghan’s geographical location as a border county and the long shadow of the Troubles, while others may reflect a lack of confidence in the vision of Monaghan as a vibrant tourism destination.

The key gaps include:

- Accommodation is lacking across all types, capacity, and locations.
- Physical access into and around the county is weak (e.g. poor public transport connectivity, no rail linkage, no active travel links to the East Coast Corridor).
- Historical lack of vision and inadequate resourcing of the county’s built visitor attractions, leading to significant under-performance, relative to competitor counties.

- Under-investment in recreational facilities around the county, including trailheads, car parking, signage / information points, and universal accessibility.
- Unequal spatial spread of tourism across the county with smaller towns and villages receiving few dividends- for example, the shrinking of angling tourism over the last generation has led to further tourism decline in the more peripheral rural villages.
- Evening Economy – there is an absence of co-ordination (at county / town / village levels) of a range of evening activities for visitors.
- Weak commercialisation and tangible examples of added value to the county’s tourism sector (with rare stand-out examples).
- Absence of research and suitable benchmarking material across the county’s tourism and recreational sectors (the county still awaits its first recreational strategy).
- Deficit in supportive capacity building and networking platforms for all service providers.
- Insufficient investment in both consistent brand building and clear messaging to help differentiate Monaghan as a tourism destination of distinction.

In summary, the identified deficits to be addressed may be summarised as follows (*Table 4*).

Table 4: Monaghan Tourism: Key Deficits to be Addressed

Developing a Shared Vision & Clear Brand
Spatial Distribution of Tourism
Supporting Infrastructural Deficits
Trade Capacity & Networks; Coordination
Adopting sustainability & the circular economy at every level of Tourism delivery
Tourism Services (including Accommodation) & Experience Development

These elements are reflective of a county in transition from where tourism is perceived as a secondary priority to one where tourism is seen to play a vital role in sustainable economic and social development of communities across Monaghan.

Tourism is primarily an economic function, which provides employment, spawns investment (often in less well frequented locations) and positively enhances a rural county like Monaghan as a place to visit and in which to live. In addressing the defined deficits of the tourism sector, as with any sector of the economy, change will be incremental and investment in key projects may take time to realise the full benefits.

3.3 Tourism Baseline Performance

The current tourism performance data for Monaghan were gathered and reviewed to provide a snapshot of the baseline performance in 2023. Such data will allow progress to be measured and monitored over the term of the strategy and permit enhanced planning and management of core tourism assets.

The most recent national tourism data (2022 / Fáilte Ireland) confirms that domestic visitors took 13.3 million trips, which resulted in 34 million bed nights and a spend of €2.9 billion. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) combine related results for certain counties due to the small sample sizes of each, so Monaghan and Louth are published together¹. In addition, the most recent information on overseas trips by county is 2019 due to the pause in surveying arising from the pandemic (Table 5).

Table 5: Baseline Tourism Performance: Monaghan 2019/ 2022

Monaghan & Louth (2022) – Domestic Visitor Performance		
Domestic Performance Measure	Numbers	Notes
No. of Trips to Monaghan/Louth	336,000	
Bed Nights	750,000	
Average Stay	2.2 days	The length of stay in Monaghan / Louth was 2.2 days, whereas Cavan/Leitrim was 2 days; Roscommon/Longford was 3.3 days.
Expenditure (€)	€62 million	
Ireland's Ancient East (2019) - International Visitor Performance		
International Visitor Measure	Numbers	Notes
IAE Overseas Visitor Numbers	954,000	All counties in IAE (14)
IAE Overseas Expenditure (€)	€348 million	Average €365/ per overseas IAE visitor
Monaghan (2019) - International Visitor Performance		
Monaghan Overseas Visitor Numbers	9,700	Fáilte Ireland calculate that Monaghan benefits from 1% of the overall visitor numbers and expenditure
Monaghan Overseas Expenditure (€)	€5.2 million	Average expenditure of overseas visitor = €536/ pp

It is worth noting that Fáilte Ireland estimate the following critical value added from tourism:

- For every €1 million in tourism expenditure = 27 tourism related jobs.
- Every 1000 overseas visitors = 20 jobs.
- For every €1 euro spent on tourism = €0.23c is generated in tax to the Irish exchequer.

There are no figures available to confirm the number of people employed in the Monaghan tourism economy. It would be advantageous to all parties for this to be addressed through a survey of tourism operators to support the establishment of a baseline evidence, upon which to build future targets.

¹As are counties Cavan / Leitrim and Roscommon / Longford.

3.4 Tourism Policy Context

A range of European, national, regional, and local policies will underpin the future strategic development of tourism for County Monaghan. Internationally and nationally, there is a major impetus to address the climate and biodiversity crises, as it is recognised that tourism is trailing other sectors in terms of the transition to sustainability.

The new Tourism Strategy for County Monaghan (2023-2028) is underpinned by this suite of policies that will support the development of vibrant and sustainable tourism assets across the county in the coming years. Full details of the policy research are presented in Appendix 1, while the following identifies the most salient policies that will influence tourism development in Monaghan in the coming decade.

3.4.1 International & National Policy Context

Key international and national policies and plans will strongly influence the future development and resourcing of tourism in Monaghan. These are particularly important in assessing the use of natural and cultural assets to sustain attractive tourism products, services and experiences (Table 6).

Table 6: Key International & National Policies that influence Tourism Development

POLICY PLANS & STRATEGIES THAT INFLUENCE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
International / European Policies Influencing Tourism	
<p>United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals</p>	<p>The SDGs were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity across the planet. Seventeen (17) <i>Sustainable Development Goals</i> provide an urgent call for action in a global partnership. Of these, the recognition and incorporation of Nos. 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 are critical for sustainable development of Tourism at national, regional, and local levels. Thus, balanced socio-economic development that is good for residents also supports balanced development of Tourism.</p>
<p>EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (2021)</p>	<p>Tourism is a cross-cutting economic activity with a broad impact on regional economic growth, employment, social development, and on the environment and climate. In 2019, the tourism industry directly and indirectly employed 27 million people, or 11.2% of total EU employment, and created 10.3% of EU GDP. However, tourism contributes to 8% of global CO2 emissions. Tourism has the potential to contribute to climate and economic security through modification and adaptation of the complex interlinkage of transport, accommodation, experience and intermediation. The success of the industry will lie in its ability to adapt, and in delivery of activities which generate jobs and prosperity in the regions, 33% of which are in rural areas.</p>

Table 6: Key International & National Policies that influence Tourism Development (Cont.)



POLICY PLANS & STRATEGIES THAT INFLUENCE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
Ireland – National Tourism & Planning Policies	
<p>‘People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025’ Dept. Transport, Tourism and Sport</p>	<p>The Government’s vision for tourism is that Ireland will have a vibrant and attractive tourism sector that will significantly contribute to employment and prosperity across the country. The objective of investing in and developing the tourism proposition will seek to maximise tourism’s potential to support regional economic and social development, while minimising its impacts.</p>
<p>Ireland’s Ancient East: Eastern Region Tourism Development Strategy 2022-2026 - Fáilte Ireland</p> 	<p><i>Ireland’s Ancient East</i> was launched in 2015 to unify the eastern region as an internationally marketable tourism proposition. By 2019, tourism in IAE was worth €1.7bn to the region’s economy, supporting c. 55,000 jobs. Fáilte Ireland’s goal is to make <i>Ireland’s Ancient East</i> the most personally engaging cultural destination in Europe by harnessing the authentic character of its living culture, landscapes, and hidden history to create unique visitor experiences and support vibrant communities. Monaghan is the most northerly of the IAE counties, with significant potential to create unique attractions and experiences for visitors to the border region.</p>
<p>Sustaining Tourism in Ireland: Understanding the Opportunity (2022) Fáilte Ireland</p> 	<p>This document aims to identify opportunities available to the Irish tourism industry based on internationally benchmarked research. It is an impressive ‘call to action’ to Irish Tourism to adopt the principles of sustainability at the heart of the offer, in each of the Accommodation, Restaurants/bars/ cafés; Activities; and Attractions sectors.</p> <p>Travellers are increasingly sustainability minded, and are demanding immersive experiences, with opportunities to connect with nature, local culture, authentic meetings with local people and communities, which should be accessible, with minimal impacts on the environment.</p> <p>Many of these opportunities are achievable in Monaghan, given the current baseline offering and new proposals emerging.</p>
<p>National Planning Framework Project 2040</p>	<p>Project 2040 sets out ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO), with supporting funds, to guide future development, centred on planning for sustainable growth, connectivity, enterprise, innovation and transition to low carbon, resilient communities within an inclusive society.</p> <p>Sustainable tourism development is central to delivery of a number of NSOs, including No. 3 ‘Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities’; No. 7 ‘Enhanced Heritage & Amenity’ and No. 9 ‘Sustainable Management of Environmental Resources’.</p>

Table 6: Key International & National Policies that influence Tourism Development (Cont.)


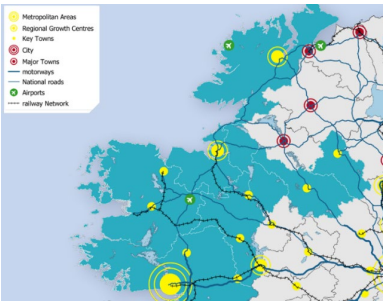

POLICY PLANS & STRATEGIES THAT INFLUENCE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
Ireland – National Tourism & Planning Policies	
<p>National Climate Action Plan 2021 Dept. Environment, Climate and Communications (Nov. 2021)</p> 	<p>The Climate Action Plan 2021 provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, as set out in the Climate Act 2021. This Plan will cascade downwards to all regional and county development plans. The Action Plan sets out 493 actions to be taken across all Government Departments and Agencies, in association with enterprise, agriculture, energy industries, as well as civil society.</p> <p>Ten actions are specifically focused on Sustainable Tourism, principally outdoor recreation, connectivity - greenways, blueways and peatways - and measurable targets to reduce the impacts of tourism on the environment.</p>
<p>Rural Development Programme (2023- 2027) EU LEADER</p>	<p>Since 1991, the LEADER RDP has provided rural communities with funding, supports and resources to actively engage in and direct the local development of their own area, through community-led local development. LEADER has supported projects and initiatives in enterprise, farm diversification, tourism, community facilities, social inclusion, and climate action. Within Economic (1) strand of this current LEADER Programme, Rural Tourism and Recreation are core elements and will offer significant supports to rural enterprises.</p>
Regional Planning & Development Policies	
<p>Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 – 2032 (RSES) Northern & Western Regional Assembly (RSES)</p> 	<p>The RSES sets out a 12-year policy for the Northern & Western Region through regeneration and growth of sustainable and transformative projects, meeting highest standards in innovation, design & place making. The RSES recognises that Cavan and Monaghan have a close relationshipand an easterly focus, where the key driver is the Dublin-Belfast cross border network. It recognises the strong rurality of the region, with areas of recreation and tourism based on assets of high environmental quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Towns are regionally strategic centres of scale that will act as regional drivers to accommodate a growth through appropriate investment in infrastructure, support services and placemaking. Monaghan has been designated as a Key Town in the RSES, including development of the Tourism offer. • The Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) as set out in the RSES are highly supportive of a holistic approach to development of tourism, outdoor recreation, and amenities, both for citizens and visitors to the region. These objectives recognise that access to outdoor recreation provides additional social, economic, and environmental benefits for all, particularly in cross-border collaborative opportunities of scale.

Table 6: Key International & National Policies that influence Tourism Development (Cont.)

POLICY PLANS & STRATEGIES THAT INFLUENCE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
Regional Planning & Development Policies	
<p>EU INTERREG VA Programme - Eastern Border Region /EU Programmes.</p>	<p>The Programme is designed to promote greater levels of cross-border co-operation across Europe. Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland share several common features with other border areas. Typically, developmental problems include different policy approaches, with distorted infrastructure and communication networks resulting in reduced economic development, all of which hinder joined-up service delivery. The INTERREG VA Programme is supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of €240m contribution and offers significant opportunities to Monaghan in its key border location.</p>
<p>ICBAN ‘Framework of Regional Priorities - Irish Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland, 2021–2027’</p>	<p>Monaghan County Council, Fermanagh & Omagh District Councils and Mid Ulster District Council, are members of the cross-border ICBAN partnership. The vision is to create natural infrastructure initiatives and zones, enhancing the sustainable tourism potential of the region, including development of a network of cross-border greenways and blueways; mountain biking, food and heritage trails; and, river catchment and water management projects’.</p>
<p>National Outdoor Recreation Strategy (NORS) (2023-2027) Department of Rural & Community Development/ Comhairle na Tuaithe</p>	<p>The NORS provides an overarching framework for the development of outdoor recreation in Ireland, creating a shared approach for the many strategies, programmes, agencies, and elements in Ireland’s outdoor recreation sector. It will seek to focus integrated delivery in a coherent fashion, with clearly articulated objectives, actions, and responsibility for delivery.</p>
<p>Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027</p>	<p>The NORS adopts six strategic objectives for the integrated development of Outdoor Recreation in Ireland, including Leadership; Environment; Awareness; Opportunities; Access and Expertise for delivery by key partners in recreational development countrywide, including DRCD, statutory agencies, local authorities with inputs from national organisations, recreational governing bodies, and communities for various actions.</p>
	<p>Application of best practice, common standards, sustained resourcing, and funding will aim to increase participation of citizens of all abilities in outdoor recreation for societal wellbeing over the next five years.</p>
	<p>This cohesive National Outdoor Recreation Strategy has the capacity to underpin recreational tourism and economic development in Monaghan.</p>

3.4.2 Tourism Development: Monaghan Policies & Strategies

A number of key strategies and initiatives underway in Monaghan will, when implemented, create a unique and vibrant tourism offer across the County in the coming decade. Given the renewed national focus on culture and creativity, immersive experiences and activity-based tourism, the emergent basket of activities and attractions on offer in Monaghan is well suited to current market trends (see Table 7).

Table 7: Key Monaghan Policies & Strategies for Tourism Development

MONAGHAN COUNTY POLICIES/ PLANS & STUDIES for TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
<p style="color: #003366; margin: 0;">Monaghan County Development Plan (2019-2025)</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 10px 0 10px 0;">MONAGHAN COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0 0 10px 0;">2019 - 2025</p>  <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 20px;">Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin March 2019</p> 	<p>The Monaghan CDP recognises that the County’s tourism sector has significant potential for future growth.</p> <p>Tourism is an important sector of activity as an economic driver, while improving the quality of life of residents. Monaghan’s relative proximity to the East Coast Corridor and Border offers significant opportunities to expand the tourism offer and brand.</p> <p>Monaghan has a wide range of historical, cultural and landscape interests that have the potential to raise the County’s profile as a significant tourist destination within <i>Ireland’s Ancient East</i>. Proposals to facilitate the development of attractions will respond to relevant markets and changing trends. Cross-border collaboration is hugely important for Monaghan, as is on-going cooperation and collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland.</p> <p>Monaghan CDP has defined nine key Tourism Policies to support the ongoing growth and development of the tourism sector, focused on towns & villages, landscape, recreational amenities, environment, heritage, as well as festivals, foods, and crafts, that will promote sustainable tourism development, while minimising impacts on the receiving environment.</p> <p>MCC is committed to enhancement of the ‘Borderlands’ concept particularly through development of low impact offers such as greenways, blueways and the Sliabh Beagh uplands.</p> <p>The current CDP will be reviewed and a new CDP 2025 – 2031, will be put in place during the lifetime of this tourism strategy.</p>

Table 7: Key Monaghan Policies & Strategies for Tourism Development (Cont.)



MONAGHAN COUNTY POLICIES/ PLANS & STUDIES for TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
<p style="color: #003366; margin: 0;">Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Heritage Office, Monaghan Co. Council</p> 	<p>This Biodiversity & Heritage Plan is a unique approach to addressing two key areas of responsibility for MCC in a unified fashion.</p> <p>MCC commits to ensuring that interactive ecoservices and amenity values of biodiversity and heritage are protected and sustainably utilised in heritage-led regeneration, sustainable tourism, habitat protection, carbon sequestration, and nature friendly agriculture as part of our landscape management. The strategy sets out the range of challenges and opportunities, as well as the range of adaptations, available to Monaghan and its citizens to protect these intrinsic assets.</p> <p>The strategy identifies thirteen (13) Heritage and Biodiversity Priority Strategy Themes and sets out a clear Action Plan to address each of these. These are linked to targets set in the National All Ireland Pollinator Plan (2021-2025).</p>
<p style="color: #003366; margin: 0;">Monaghan Reaching Out – A Framework for Diaspora Engagement</p> 	<p>Monaghan County Council has developed this ‘Reaching Out’ strategy to engage more proactively with Monaghan’s overseas diaspora.</p> <p>In this document, MCC commits to developing networks and connections, as well as provision of dedicated resources, to enhance Monaghan’s reach to people living overseas. The Council has committed to facilitating the ongoing building of relationships from local to county level by embracing both cultural and economic links with members of the Diaspora.</p> <p>The key strategy will be four-pronged: Identification > Communication > Engagement > Follow-Up</p> <p>A series of case studies and actions are proposed under each of the four ‘prongs’ to bring the strategy to fruition and to strengthen the diasporic network over the coming years. The Council will work with local historical societies, public participation network (PPN), sporting and cultural bodies, who have links with the wider Diaspora to build relationships and strengthen links into the future.</p>

Table 7: Key Monaghan Policies & Strategies for Tourism Development (Cont.)


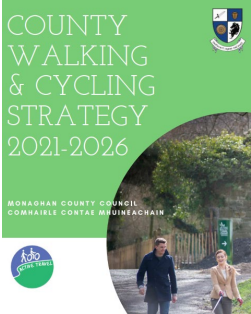
MONAGHAN COUNTY POLICIES/ PLANS & STUDIES for TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
<p style="color: #003366; margin: 0;">Monaghan Destination & Experience Development Plan (MCC with Fáilte Ireland IAE) 2023</p> <p style="color: #003366; margin: 0;"><i>(within Ireland's Ancient East)</i></p> 	<p>The Monaghan Destination & Experience Development Plan was launched in June 2022, as a five-year commercial destination and experience development plan (DEDP) to support development of unique and compelling experiences focused on several immediate and strategic destination opportunities within the county. Based on Fáilte Ireland's <i>destination maturity criteria</i>, Monaghan is classified as an 'Aspiring' destination, requiring an immediate focus on building effective local tourism networks, maximising the potential of the existing tourism product base and improving the visitor infrastructure. By addressing these requirements, an appropriate mix of interventions will be applied to build a distinctive Monaghan visitor destination.</p> <p>The immediate focus will be (i) the development of tourism clusters (ii) to create local conditions to increase reasons for visitors to consider Monaghan for a holiday and (iii) to increase their length of stay within the county.</p> <p>The DEDP will promote a collaborative approach where tourism industry partners will cross sell, adopt new approaches and develop motivational Monaghan visitor itineraries. It will sustainably maximise the potential of destination assets such as the Ulster Canal, Sliabh Beagh, the Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Rossmore Forest Park and Castle Leslie Estate, as year-round attractors, and a base from which to grow additional supporting experiences.</p> <p>The development of destination towns and local villages across Monaghan will seek to maximise the current investment in projects such as the Peace Campus, Rossmore Forest Park, and Lough Muckno. It will create additional focal points for the destination and fulfil a key role in signposting visitors into other parts of the county.</p>
<p style="color: #003366; margin: 0;">Monaghan Walking & Cycling Strategy 2021- 2026</p> <p style="color: #003366; margin: 0;">Monaghan County Council</p> 	<p>Monaghan has developed this strategy to encourage citizens to walk/cycle wherever possible. The strategy strongly recognises the role of walking and cycling in supporting tourism. This includes a commitment to build a 190km mid-Ulster network of linkages using the Ulster Canal Greenway and disused railways, to be phased in over 5-10 years, as a major tourism asset, with support on both sides of the Border. The Strategy recognises that walking and cycling are the two activities most pursued by visitors, and <i>“commits to development of walking – cycling infrastructure to support the overall development of the county's tourism product”</i>. The Strategy commits to development of Sliabh Beagh as an Outdoor Recreation Hub, with stronger active travel links to the uplands. Provision of infrastructure for camper vans is also included in this objective.</p> <p>MCC has set up a dedicated Active Travel Unit with four officers to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.</p>

Table 7: Key Monaghan Policies & Strategies for Tourism Development (Cont.)

MONAGHAN COUNTY POLICIES/ PLANS & STUDIES for TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	
<p>Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan Monaghan County Council, with Coillte under Memorandum of Agreement (2016)</p> 	<p>Rossmore Park is a 410-hectare forest park, located to the immediate south of Monaghan town. Passing through mature woodlands, alongside lakes and ruins, its network of paths offers a range of routes and general enjoyment of nature.</p> <p>The Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan is intended to guide all future management, infrastructure, and activities in the park. It sets out a series of objectives and key principles, followed by a total of 17 different projects designed to help the Council, Coillte and its partners look after the park, balance its interests and help realise its significant potential.</p> <p>Key to successful development will be maintaining a balance between uses across the Park, broadly allocated to four defined Zones (Busy, Historic, Active, Slow) to include a mix of activities: heritage, cultural, play, creativity, gardening and relaxation spaces.</p>
<p>Sliabh Beagh Masterplan (2019) Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council</p> 	<p>The Sliabh Beagh Masterplan was jointly commissioned by the cross-border local authorities to establish a strategic vision for the future of this upland area. Baseline consultations and research inform the objectives and defines a series of projects for the region.</p> <p>The Masterplan provides a road map for regeneration of the area to fulfil its potential as a visitor destination, while contributing continued environmental protection, cultural interpretation, and economic development. An action plan of 10 projects is proposed for delivery over the short, medium, and long term by a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>A total of 29 actions are proposed to address each of the 10 Themes (A-J) to develop a sustainable, community-based cross-border outdoor recreational destination that will stimulate tourism enterprise development, based on the principles of sustainable development and minimal impact on the environment.</p>

3.5 Conclusions

Based on this review, policy at every level is highly supportive of integrated development of a new sustainable form of tourism in Monaghan, offering immersive experiences of culture, heritage, community, outdoor recreation, and amenities, both for citizens and visitors to the region, delivering social, economic, and environmental benefits for all.

All the above must be delivered to the highest possible standards and practice of sustainable tourism, as proposed in Fáilte Ireland's recent document² that flags the considerable opportunities available where such a responsible ethos underpins tourism development.

A raft of recent investments in private facilities and the county's public realm will broaden the commercial scope of the county's opportunities to realise its objectives.

Linked to this will be the need to enable the ambitious, capable tourism entrepreneurs and communities, supported by strong policy and decision making at the Council.

The current baseline data indicates that, in 2023, Monaghan is primarily a domestic tourism offering. It attracts a tiny fraction (1%) of the total overseas visitors numbers to *Ireland's Ancient East* to the county. This suggests that there is significant room for improvement in the offer, branding and communications.

Monaghan has the potential to acquire a green, slow, eco-friendly, and recreation-friendly reputation, based on superb experiences and delivery, with plenty of opportunity to capitalise on the growing demand for getting 'away from it all', with a palette of cultural and outdoor activities. This must be cushioned within the policy context of sustainability and adopting low impact approaches to all developments.

There is a full recognition of the potential of the county to systematically grow its tourism economy. However, there is a wide variety of factors, given current economic and cultural shifts, including uncertainties related to post-pandemic and post-Brexit normalisation, that will shape the development of tourism in Monaghan in the decades ahead.



Fáilte Ireland's vision (2022) is to create sustainable, accessible, and immersive tourism experiences, delivered by a vibrant and strong tourism sector, that will have minimal impact on the environment and climate.

The commitment of Monaghan to *Ireland's Ancient East* as a core element of county brand will allow it to showcase its considerable cultural and natural heritage assets, within the IAE strategic branding and international promotion by Fáilte Ireland.

² <https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/sustainable-tourism-understanding-the-opportunity.pdf?ext=.pdf>

4 Stakeholder Engagement

A comprehensive programme of engagement was undertaken with tourism trade, SME, community, and decision/ policy makers to inform priorities and projects to be developed as part of the Tourism Strategy.

At the outset of the stakeholder engagement process, a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders was compiled. Every attempt was made to engage with a range of stakeholders, including community, accommodation, specialist visitor attractions, micro-small enterprises, recreational users, event organisers, promotional platforms, trails development, artisans, state agencies, local authority officers and elected members, for their inputs to the development of this Strategy. Over a four-month listening process, this engagement was largely structured as follows:

- Online survey with the wider Monaghan public.
- Online survey with elected member of Monaghan County Council.
- A series of five Focus Groups were convened with a range of stakeholders.
- In-depth interviews were held with key stakeholders, including officers and elected members of Monaghan County Council, officers of the Statutory Agencies, including members of Fáilte Ireland, Coillte, Waterways Ireland, Inland Fisheries, Eastern Border Region and An Taisce.




All interview and focal group data were compiled and aggregated for analysis by the project team. Key themes and ideas were identified and brought forward for consideration in the final strategy.

4.1 Online Surveys

As a critical part of the information gathering to develop the Monaghan Tourism Strategy, a representative section of the wider community and elected members of the Council were invited to participate in a bespoke online survey on the current tourism offer in Monaghan, the first such survey of its kind in the county. Local media helped to support and raise awareness of the survey (e.g. Northern Standard, April 2023).

These two online surveys were designed to capture diverse opinions from a wide range of Monaghan stakeholders, including tourism SMEs, communities, heritage, recreation, and arts interests, and a second was sent to elected members of the County Council. The surveys were circulated online through the offices of the Tourism Development Unit of MCC, and data compiled and analysed by the project team.

The wide community survey was divided into three simple sections:

-  Some information on the person responding³;
-  Perceptions of tourism in Monaghan today; and
-  Suggestions for future tourism requirements/ developments in Monaghan.

Thirteen interconnected questions, based on these three segments, were circulated through a digital link by MCC's Tourism Unit of and with very helpful support of the local newspaper, the Northern Standard, for six weeks between mid-March and end-April 2023.

³To retain the integrity of the survey, no names or contact details were sought or recorded.

There were 180 respondents to the public survey, a positive response for an online community survey. All data were aggregated for analysis and this valuable feedback has directly informed the findings and recommendations in developing the Strategy.

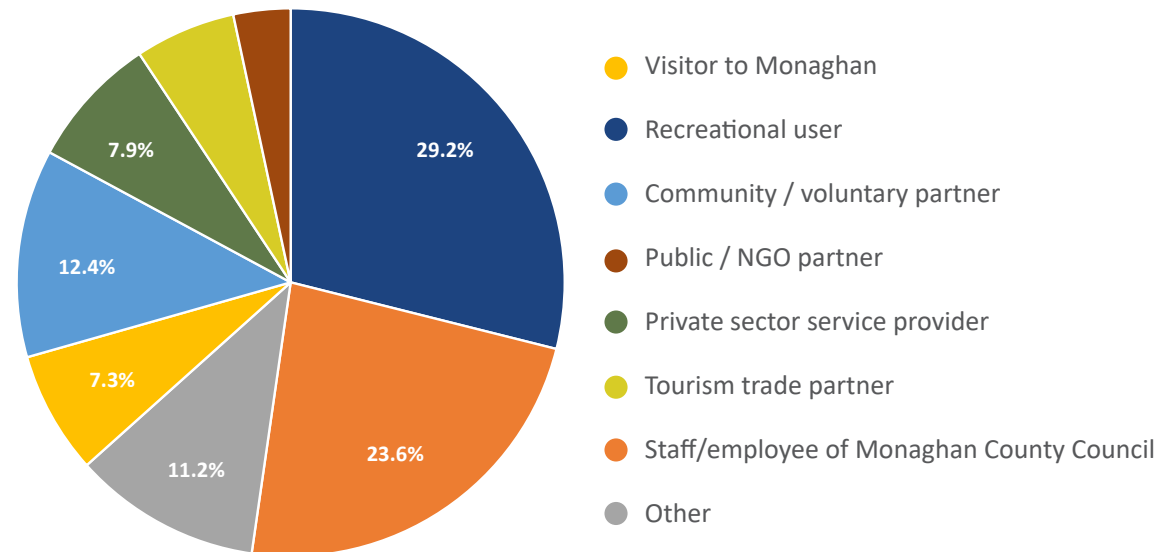
Summary reflections on aspects of the Community Survey include:

Section 1: Profile of Respondents

- ➔ **Q1.** 78% of respondents were aged 36-65, with approximately 10% under-35 and 10% over 65 years.
- ➔ **Q2.** 60% have lived all their lives in Monaghan with a further 16% living in the county for more than 15 years. Interestingly, about 13% of respondents do not live in Monaghan.
- ➔ **Q3.** 75% of respondents were employed with another 15% stating they were 'self-employed'. Just over 10% stated they were retired.
- ➔ **Q4.** 75% are not employed in the tourism or related sectors, while 15% stated they were employed in tourism or hospitality, and a further 10% stated someone in their household was employed in tourism.

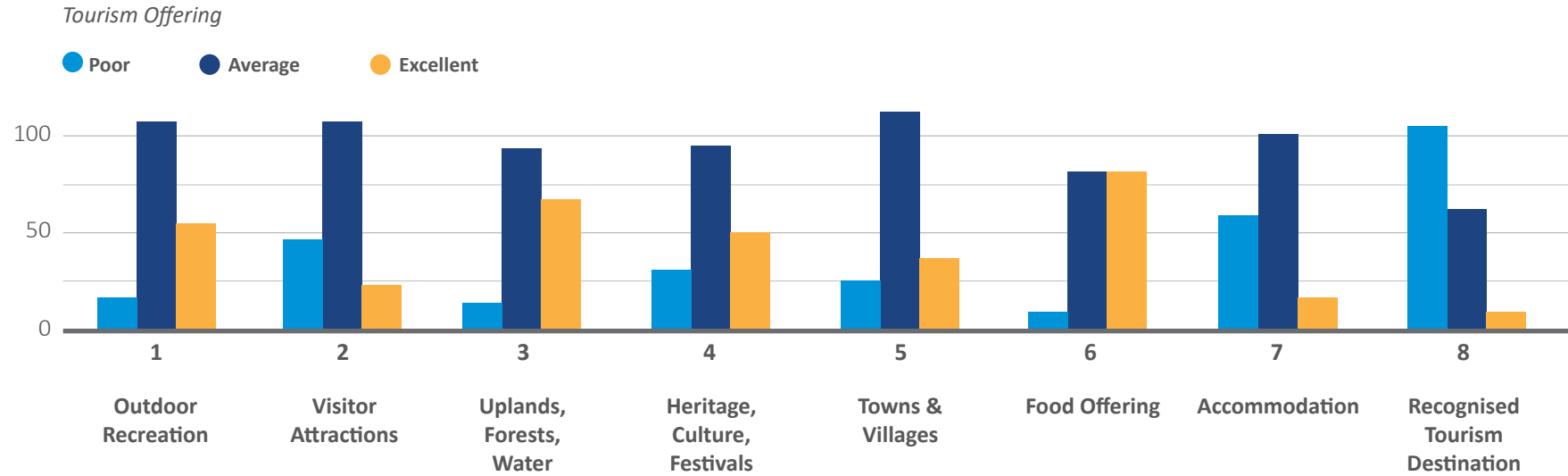
Section 2: Perceptions of Tourism Offer in Monaghan Today

➔ **Q5.** In terms of respondent's relationship to Tourism in Monaghan, the largest responses were from recreational users (29%) and employees of Monaghan County Council (23.6%). Visitors accounted for 7.3% of responses, 7.9% were private tourism providers, and c. 6% were tourism trade partners.





Q6. Respondents were asked to score the attractiveness of key elements of Monaghan’s tourism offer as a national visitor proposition. The results provided mixed perceptions, with Uplands, forest and water; and Food offering scoring the highest ‘excellent’. Accommodation supply and recognised Tourism destination scored the lowest.



Raglan Road Tea Room



Monaghan Town



Glaslough Alpacas

Section 3: Ideas for Tourism in Monaghan in the future



Q7. Respondents were asked to identify two ideas they would like to see happening in Monaghan. Responses varied, but in aggregation, centre around a few core ideas as follows:

Table 8: Community Survey – Ideas for Tourism Development

Theme	Suggestions
Recreational Amenities & Leisure Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved existing and develop new ‘walkways and trails’ • Better quality water events and information online. • Better protection and interpretation of our wilderness areas. • Bring the Ulster Canal from Clones to Monaghan. • Improve the horse trails across the county. • Examine obstacles to access e.g. Castleshane Waterfall. • Develop a cycle path between Monaghan and Emyvale. • Scope out, enhance and promote the best wild swimming in county.
Towns & Villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated enhancement of the county’s main towns and villages. • Develop new Visitor Plans for each town.
Sustainability and the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More awareness / services for e-Bike visitors. • Pollution is an obstacle that needs addressing,
Arts, Festivals & Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better use of our creative artists in tourism promotion and brand building. • Investment required for Urban mural programme in largest towns • County festivals programme with a few new large events. • Irish language promotion e.g. in Monaghan Town • Celebration of cultures of new communities in Monaghan
Accommodation & Foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve leisure facilities in the county’s larger hotels. • Better priced accommodation (not all 4 Star hotels) • More and enhanced food markets across the county.

Table 8: Community Survey – Ideas for Tourism Development (Cont.)

Theme	Suggestions
Transport access/ Packaging/ Make it Easy for Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More integration of public transport across the county (and intercounty especially from the airport). • Improved road signage ... signs need to be cleaned regularly, • Improved role for Local Link. • Develop an All Monaghan Trail for vehicular visitors ... maps, information, and discount vouchers. • Improve all aspects of packaging up Monaghan. • Free carparking in towns over bank holiday weekends.
Heritage Genealogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place our heritage and culture more at the heart of our tourism development ... what else realistically do we have? • Genealogy services provide important reason for visitors to come. • Enhanced contacts and links with our Diaspora
Training & Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A training programme rolled out across the county for retail staff making them aware of the tourism offerings and their opportunity to support tourism. • More walking and cycling guide training across the county and connect town and villages (including cross border).
Costs/ Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance issues are still holding back small tourism businesses
Marketing & Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Monaghan as more of a ‘part of Ulster’ for tourism purposes.



Q10. Respondents were asked to rate a series of statements, pertaining to importance for future development of Monaghan as an attractive visitor destination. The top 10 chosen statements (in no order of priority) were:

1. *We are not Killarney – make the most of what we have.*
2. *Respondents strongly endorsed heritage, culture, and food at the heart of Monaghan’s offer.*
3. *Managing visitors at environmentally sensitive sites is important.*
4. *Lough Muckno is perceived to be underdeveloped, with huge international potential*
5. *A small number felt that tourism is not key to Monaghan’s future*
6. *Infrastructure insufficient to cater for influx of tourists*
7. *Potential visitors do not know what is on offer in Monaghan*
8. *Digital communications should be at the heart of the new Strategy*
9. *Monaghan will underperform without adequate accommodation.*
10. *Tourism development is fragmented, without a clear vision or adequate resources.*



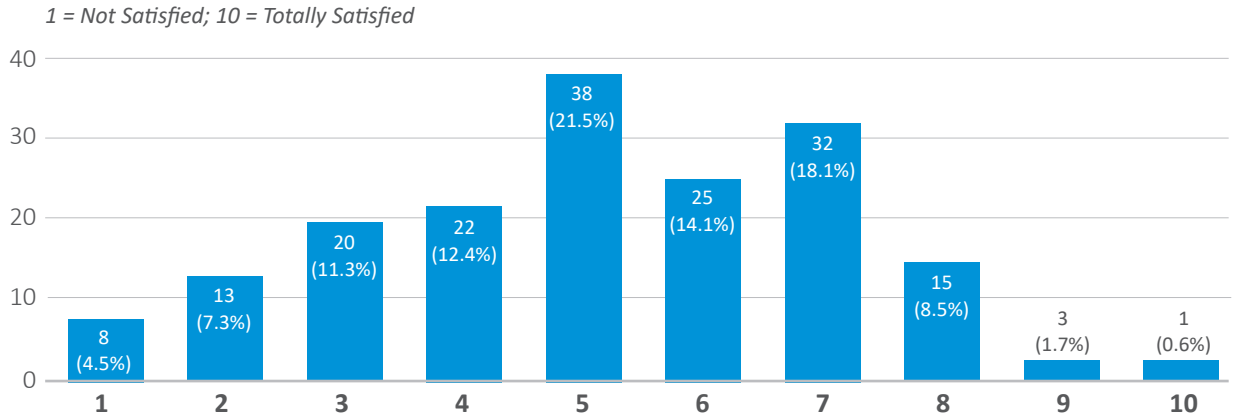
Q11. How satisfied are you with progress in achieving sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation development in the County?

Responses to this question provided a classic bell curve, with most falling in the mid-ranges of satisfaction levels.

The final series of questions asked respondents to comment on delivery of tourism. There was very strong endorsement for Monaghan County Council to take the lead on development and delivery of tourism in the county, while recognising the central role of the private sector and community enterprise in the ultimate delivery of services and experiences.

Sustainability is also at the heart of many respondents – with a certain degree of ambiguity about opening up Monaghan’s wild places to tourism and the potential impacts on the environment.

“As someone who is passionate about the outdoors and wilderness areas of Monaghan, I’m always asking myself the question - how can we develop tourism without destroying everything around us?”



St. Peter's Tin Church, Laragh

4.2 Focus Groups

A series of five Focus Groups were convened between May-June, 2023. These included:

- **Community and Voluntary** tourism interests;
- **Tourism Trade** including large, SME, micro;
- **Key Officers** of Monaghan County Council;
- **Elected Members** of Monaghan County Council; and;
- **Marketing & Communications** tourism group, respectively.

The sessions took place in Castleblayney, Carrickmacross and in Monaghan town. The format was relatively similar with an introduction and overview of the aims of the Strategy, followed by a set of leading questions. The sessions lasted on average for two hours, while the Marketing and Communications engagement was scheduled for three hours given its more detailed remit.

Each focus group had a slightly different thematic focus, but the challenges facing Monaghan in terms of becoming a tourism destination of choice are well recognised across all sectors. All sessions were private and confidential, but the following table aggregates the primary learnings and suggestions (*Table 9*).

Table 9: Thematic Learnings from Focus Groups

Category of Learning	Indicative Learnings / Feedback
Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the slow but steady progress of the tourism sector under the leadership of Monaghan County Council. • Lack of resources going into the sector is inhibiting growth. • Slow progress in development of main tourism assets ... the will is there but the outcomes are repeatedly delayed. • Few formal opportunities to engage regularly with tourism and recreational partners through networks. • Significant infrastructural, facilities, service, and capacity gaps must be addressed. • Insufficient brand awareness and messaging.
Secondary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical lack of accommodation supply, including hotel, guest house, Airbnb, AIREs, camping/glamping • Lack of built / indoor visitor attractions, esp. suited to families • Weak brand to date, not capturing the ‘Monaghan experience’ however, recognition that online marketing has improved. • Fragmentary offer of tourism activities and experiences ... few examples of effective packaging or bundling offerings. • Recruitment and retention of staff are considered critical handicaps in the current economy by the trade (exacerbated by affordable accommodation for staff) • ‘Purple economy’ (evening /night) is viewed as inadequately developed ... however, there was recognition that in a town like Castleblayney there are excellent assets to package for visitors. • Impressive examples to help inspire such as Castle Leslie Estate / Glaslough and the new Patrick Kavanagh Centre. • Commercialisation is weak overall. • Track record of operator networking is weak, albeit cluster approach is commencing in south Monaghan.

4.3 One-to-One: Key Stakeholders

The final element in the consultation process engaged directly with significant influencers in relation to the county’s tourism and recreational development. They range from the most recognised tourism operators, specialist NGOs, to the various statutory and development agencies supporting the sector. The private conversations provided valuable insights that have informed the subsequent recommendations.

Table 10 provides a distillation of these individual discussions and aggregates the three themes explored:

- Development; Management;
- Resourcing and Communications and;
- Partnerships.

A comprehensive consultation process was designed, undertaken and the feedback carefully examined to arrive at a set of findings that will influence the core recommendations in this strategy.

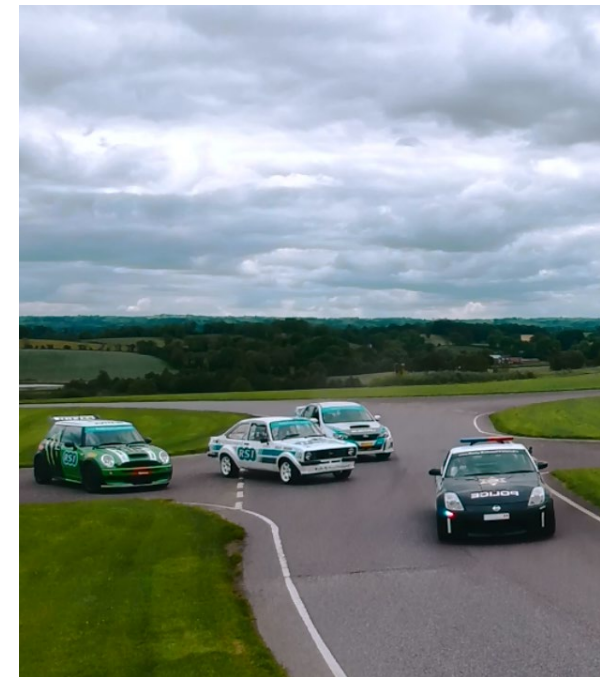
Finally, from regular engagement with the Tourism Unit and the development agencies in particular, the voices of both tourists and recreational visitors were clearly heard through access to their on-going research.

Table 10: Key Learnings: One-to-One Consultations

Category / Theme	Indicative Learnings / Feedback
Development	<p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness of all public partners in Monaghan’s tourism development to contribute to sustainable tourism products and to look at new ways of collaborative delivery. • Significant opportunities for further and deeper alignment of the Ireland’s Ancient East proposition and the growth of sustainable tourism in the county. • Monaghan’s positive location and ease of road access between Dublin and Belfast / East Coast was regularly highlighted. • Patrick Kavanagh was repeatedly referenced as an outstanding cultural icon to be carefully developed. • Lough Muckno was recognised as a signature asset in the region that needs sensitive, inclusive, and integrated development. • Cross-border collaboration on greenways / blueways – Waterways Ireland and the cross-border local authorities for Mid-Ulster and Eastern Border Area- Monaghan is viewed ‘... as a leader as opposed to being a follower’. • The quality, variety and spatial spread of the recreational offering was universally accepted. • There exists considerable agency goodwill about extending the Ulster Canal to Middletown into the medium term. <p>Negative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation deficit was referenced by virtually all consultees. • There remains a considerable lack of ‘joined-up thinking’. • The tourism economy is small, under resourced and without an obvious collective voice (outside of the Tourism Unit). • Post-Brexit, securing cross-border funding has become less of a priority as its perceived to be overly complicated with easier-to-access funding available from central Irish exchequer. • The lack of capacity, networking and supports for the tourism trade was acknowledged.

Table 10: Key Learnings: One-to-One Consultations (Cont.)

Category / Theme	Indicative Learnings / Feedback
Management / Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only recently that seeing suitable funding being invested in the county’s tourism and recreational sectors. • The Patrick Kavanagh Centre was uniformly acknowledged as being the visitor attraction benchmark for the county. • Opportunity for greater integration of tourism into the Monaghan Co. Council structures given the cross-cutting themes of tourism from climate, recreation, active travel, biodiversity and job creation. • Acknowledgement of positive role of 3x Municipal Districts in informing tourism policy and development in the county. • The Tourism Unit needs to be better resourced if the recommendations of this strategy are to materialise. • Considerable talk around sustainable tourism without a clear vision for how this could be delivered over the coming decade. • Acknowledgement of the improvement (and visibility) of the Monaghan food, craft and artisan offering- however this sector will need further supports. • Recognition that many of the county’s heritage and cultural assets lend themselves to the aims of the new PEACE Plus and Shared Island cross-border funding programmes.
Communications / Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultees unclear what ‘Monaghan’ as a destination stands for. • Recognition there is an absence of experiences to ‘sell’, without suitable messaging, consistently directed at target markets, to generate sales in a systematic way. • The rise in ‘staycationers’ post-Covid (single day / multi-day visits). <i>Most of the performance data to support this claim is largely anecdotal (i.e. hotels, retail and hospitality).</i> • Absence or lack of visibility of the mainstream business sector supporting the development of tourism and recreation. • Business tourism opportunities were referenced given the healthy state of many indigenous businesses that trade outside the county. • The Monaghan Diaspora are largely invisible within traditional tourism conversations; however they make up a healthy proportion of overseas visitors as VFRs (visiting friends and relatives) • An expansion of the scale, effectiveness and quality of joint and cross marketing was highlighted.



Rally School Ireland

4.4 Challenges & Influences for Tourism Development

Based on the extensive baseline research and engagement process in developing the Tourism Strategy, a range of economic and cultural factors, including uncertainties related to post-pandemic and post-Brexit normalisation, will influence the successful development of tourism in Monaghan.

4.4.1 Uncertainties for Tourism Development

There is a wide variety of factors that will shape the future development of tourism in Monaghan:

- Relative under-performance of Monaghan’s natural, cultural, recreational and built heritage assets;
- Changing motivation and behaviour of visitors in a highly competitive marketplace;
- Community interests, history, capacity, and priorities;
- Conservation of the environment and biodiversity at a time of global warming;
- Enhancing the capacity of the county’s current and future tourism enterprises to grow;
- Building and managing partnerships including securing public funding, and;
- Value adding and experience development of tourism and recreational assets;
- All leading to further job creation.

Finally, other factors will influence the implementation of the *Monaghan Tourism Strategy 2023-2028*:

- The delicate post-Covid-19 tourism and destination development landscape in Ireland/ Europe;
- Threats to global economic stability in 2023, including inflation and war in Ukraine;
- Opportunities that may flow for a rural tourism economy in northwest Europe like Monaghan (e.g. soft dollar, improved access, carbon footprint / flight shaming, enhanced central funding);
- Generational change in community tourism/ private sector provision of tourism experiences;
- Investments and initiatives already in-motion by strategic partners through Ireland’s Ancient East with thematic experience development plans, and funding streams like Town and Village Renewal / Rural Recreation Development Fund (*RRDF*; see *Table 13 for funding opportunities*);

- Continued policy alignment of Monaghan with Active Travel and Shared Island funding opportunities;
- Finally, recognition of the importance of a fresh, integrated, professionally managed brand, working across all traditional and digital platforms will be highly beneficial (*see Chapter 6 below*).

4.4.2 PESTEL Analysis

The purpose of this analysis was to examine six externalities that may impact on tourism development in County Monaghan over the next five years.

These include the classic PESTEL factors:

Political
Economic
Social
Technological
Environmental
Legal

The analysis is presented below in summary in Table 11 on the following page.

Table 11: PESTEL Analysis for Tourism Development in Monaghan

Aspect	Considerations	Risks / Rewards	Commentary / Observations
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filtration down from the National Planning Framework: Ireland 2040. Departmental / Agency / Local Authority relations. Elected Representatives engagement with and commitment to tourism development. Inter-county/regional / cross border relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New partnership possibilities opening up (hopefully some identified in this strategy); Driving growth away from Dublin into emerging <i>Ireland's Ancient East</i> destinations. Enhanced capacity / responsibilities for MCC e.g. Town and Village Renewal; Further efforts to create integrated brand/messaging. 'Shared Island' potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing support for tourism development within the county by the senior management + elected members of the Council will be critical to further growth. Need for deep awareness of EU of funding opportunities for all aspects of tourism development within the county. Any emerging post Brexit opportunities?
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued expansion of visitor numbers within and into Ireland (domestic/ international) post-covid Economic growth / cost of living / inflation Uncertainties (from Climate Change to Brexit) Progressive improvements in Monaghan's capital and current expenditure towards tourism (and related infrastructure) Next County Development Plan and its commitments to tourism and recreation Fáilte Ireland – <i>Ireland's Ancient East</i> branding & funding channels (and related branding) Does Monaghan possess a 'culture of innovation' in relation to tourism development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater demands/expectations from all tourist visitors (domestic and international) Increased <i>competition</i> from at home and abroad More domestic visitors but fall off from the traditional UK markets e.g. angling, visiting friends and relatives Increased funding sources from central government and agencies. Acute skill shortages particularly in servicing and chefs Growth in unregistered accommodation e.g. Airbnb with unregulated quality of offer Many of the larger tourism operators in Monaghan are saying 'staff retention' is their biggest challenge, with non-availability of quality affordable housing to help retain staff- recognised as a growing problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to enhance dwell time in county as a priority; thus, all building blocks of the tourism economy need to be working seamlessly together including services, accommodation, and night-time economy. Need for a closer alignment of the Monaghan 'green economy' with the tourism sector. Traction being generated in inter-regional and/or cross border projects of scale like Sliabh Beagh; Enhanced private sector investment in the county's tourism economy e.g. Castle Leslie; Enhancement of the role in tourism development by the Monaghan diaspora. Need to enhance visitor accommodation offer and long-term accommodation for workers to support the tourism sector in the county.

Table 11: PESTEL Analysis for Tourism Development in Monaghan (Cont.)

Aspect	Considerations	Risks / Rewards	Commentary / Observations
Social/ Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shifting tourism trends e.g. experience and leaning away from traditional overseas holidays towards ‘authentic and experience-rich’ new destinations like Monaghan; sustainable ‘off the beaten track’ tourism • Tourism is a service sector demanding higher skills in order to be able to demand premium prices e.g. languages and customer services; • Growing voice, skills, and capacity of the community sector as a valued partner in delivering the next generation of tourism in Monaghan. • Generational trends e.g. millennials and sustainability ethos + ‘flight shaming’. • Investment in interconnected ‘public transport’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ‘fashion’ for large built heritage attractions may be diminishing with traditional attractions being redrawn offering ‘total experiences’. • Towns and villages must be more awake to tourism potential and presentation. • Health and wellness agenda / outdoor recreation increasing in importance e.g. National Outdoor Recreation Strategy. • A new diverse / multi-cultural Monaghan- what role do they have to play in expanding the tourism economy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to refresh Monaghan’s Festivals and Events offering? • Role of traditional sports (i.e. GAA) in the future Monaghan tourism offering. • Role of education system to spread awareness of jobs and opportunities in tourism economy e.g. enhanced relationships with relevant third-level institutions via tourism/heritage-related courses. • More cross-sectoral collaboration within the Council is required. • Deliver more citizen engagement with the visitor through a few ‘pilot’ initiatives.
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All aspects of tourism from both supply & demand sides at the mercy of ICT (information and communications technology) and is set to grow. • Increased role of smartphones in aiding site planning, route setting, interpretation, self-guiding audio tours, and translation. • Growth of technology e.g. AR & VR storytelling. • Growth of QR codes / Apps in helping visitors. • Data capture, management, and analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Widely distributed value for money high speed broadband for operators and visitors alike. • Effectiveness of B2B enterprise networking (and tech support); • There will likely be a growing market demand for ‘off grid’ experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for county distribution of e-charging points for all devices e.g. smartphone/ e-cars/ bikes. • Greater linkage with academia. • Explore new creative <i>alliances</i> with FDI residents in Monaghan under the likes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)? • The marriage and integration of brand building with messaging through new media

Table 11: PESTEL Analysis for Tourism Development in Monaghan (Cont.)

Aspect	Considerations	Risks / Rewards	Commentary / Observations
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the importance of the natural, built, and cultural heritage of Monaghan and the need to conserve this for coming generations. • Climate: Water quality, flooding risks and severe weather incidents impact on tourism planning and percolate down to insurance premiums. • Move towards non-carbon future e.g. electric vehicles, public transport (incl investment in network of county wide charging points) • Food supply, cost, and promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost to businesses of adhering to mandated changes ahead and revenue generated to stay afloat. • How <i>substantial or fickle</i> will the ‘green euro’ turn out to be? • Nature of ongoing support offered to business / tourism trade from Fáilte Ireland • Enormous cost for society, the county and tourism of not embracing the need for urgent climate action. • Opportunities for traditional sectors (e.g. agriculture) to pivot under a just transition to embrace other opportunities (e.g. agri-tourism). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play a leading role for our size in the roll-out of imaginative and joined-up green initiatives in the tourism economy. • How best to reach and engage in an ongoing ‘conversation’ with future generations on the ‘green tourism agenda’ • Biodiversity threat and how best to overcome it e.g. highlighted in the County Biodiversity and Heritage Plan; • Examine local ‘green tax’ to cover impacts currently being researched across Europe. • Examine opportunities arising out of dramatically changing climate, with hotter, more oppressive summer conditions in traditional sun holiday destinations, leading to a change in holiday patterns.
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of litigious culture and large pay-outs impacting on insurance premiums (hopefully being addressed); • Perception the regulatory environment more demanding/time consuming. • Culture of ‘support’ for micro tourism/recreational business start-ups from LEO to Leader. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential of legislative impediments (e.g. health and safety + employment + energy + waste management) negatively impacting upon growth; • Continued access to the trails/ walkways/ blueways of Monaghan (and long-term development of same from the Ulster Canal to new greenway projects across the county). • Impediments obstructing the growth of the hospitality food sector. • Failing to comply with legislative requirements could have severe consequences for Monaghan’s reputation and ‘brand’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is future EU legislation going to cover and how can the county pre-plan/future proof for their impact from food labelling to water directives. • If long haul flying (US and non-EU markets) becomes expensive/unpopular that puts increasing focus on the yield from the domestic market, is Monaghan designing it new tourism propositions with this in mind?

SECTION C

The Future: A Tourism Strategy for County Monaghan (2023-2028)

5 Tourism Strategy for Monaghan (2023-2028)

A vision and roadmap are proposed, with inter-related actions across six core thematic areas for the integrated development of Tourism across County Monaghan over the coming years and beyond. These proposals are largely evidence based on research and consultations and reflect the aspirations of a significant number of stakeholders. By its nature, the sustainable development model proposed will require concerted and collaborative actions across the public, private and community sectors to deliver a vibrant tourism offering for visitors to the County, supported by strong branding, marketing and communications.

5.1 Vision for Tourism Development in County Monaghan

Baseline research, analysis of best practice in destination development and feedback from the stakeholder engagement process underpinned the development of a robust and ambitious vision statement for Monaghan tourism over the coming decades.



Bragan Penal Cross on Sliabh Beagh



Ballybay



Rossmore Forest Park

“The vision for Monaghan is to create a sustainable, engaging destination for all, which reflects the rich cultural heritage of this border county and its rolling landscapes of recreational opportunity, creativity, and surprising natural beauty. Monaghan will be a destination of choice for those who wish to ‘gentle their footprint’ in the unexplored, providing authentic, place-based visitor experiences which will enrich and inspire, while delivering economic benefits across the county.”

This vision has informed the development of the ‘roadmap’ and related actions presented below.

5.2 Objectives

Building on extensive research and the vision of the key stakeholders, six objectives were defined. These align fully with IAE Regional objectives and those defined in the Monaghan Destination and Experience Development Plan.

Figure 3: Strategic Objectives for Tourism Development



5.3 Tourism Strategy: A Roadmap (2023-2028)

Based on analysis of policy, consultations and research findings, a ‘Roadmap’ for delivery of the Monaghan Tourism Strategy has been designed to enable the realisation of the **Vision**.

All primary stakeholders (*see Chapter 4*) wish to see Monaghan significantly progress its tourism and recreational economy over the coming decade. The following recommended actions are designed to be interconnected and mutually supporting. The benefits to the county if successfully implemented and resourced will be transformative, based on the following cross-cutting issues and principles:

- **Sustainability** – there is a clear demand for Monaghan’s future tourism development to be sustainable, based on the county’s rich cultural and natural assets, with as little environmental impact as possible.
- **Evidence-Based** – the recommendations are derived from a combination of a county-wide tourism asset audit, extensive consultations with key stakeholders and partners, as well as national and international experience. Much of the information gathered takes an all-inclusive view of Monaghan’s tourism ‘ecosystem’ and the need to optimise returns from its tourism economy.

- **Positioning Monaghan** – the tourism marketplace at regional, national, and international levels has changed radically in the past five years. On both the supply and demand side, there have been tectonic shifts in policy direction, climate mitigation, use of technologies, impacts of the pandemic, as well as in delivery of tourism products and experiences. This Roadmap is designed to position Monaghan to both meet the challenges and realise the significant opportunities ahead.
- **Alignment of Recommendations** – the roadmap is aligned with other policies and plans, including, *inter alia*, Climate Action Plan 2021, Monaghan County Development Plan (2023), *Ireland’s Ancient East* Regional Tourism Strategy, Monaghan Destination Experience Development Plan, Walking & Cycling Strategy, and Biodiversity & Heritage Strategy, to ensure successful integration and implementation of developments underway at Lough Muckno, Sliabh Beagh, Rossmore Park, and the Ulster Canal Greenway/ Clones Marina, among others. This strategic roadmap recognises and supports the completion of these valuable projects.

- **Differentiation and Innovation** – One of the core challenges for Monaghan is to develop a point of differentiation in a crowded and competitive marketplace. An advanced, market sensitive, clearly messaged, and interconnected Monaghan tourism economy is required. Thus, a holistic review of marketing communications has been undertaken with tailored recommendations to support the ambitions of the county.
- **Tourism Infrastructure Deficit.** Recommendations aim to address the critical lack of core tourism infrastructure e.g. accommodation; hero attractions; and inter-linked recreational infrastructure, working in tandem and in support of the private sector.

Figure 4: An Interconnected Monaghan Tourism Economy



- Integrated Approach:** Sustainable tourism development requires an integrated and multi-sectoral approach. To this end, Monaghan County Council (MCC) must work effectively with multiple partners to realise a common vision, a sharing of resources and a cooperative delivery mechanism. Internally, within the council structure, there are significant opportunities for integrated planning and delivery; critically, MCC is already active in this sphere, with many aspects of council activity aligned, from planning of the public realm, heritage, culture, outdoor recreation, active travel and climate mitigation to community and economic development. Importantly, this approach aligns with the *IAE Regional Tourism Strategy* and the *Monaghan Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP)*, which aims to develop attractive towns and villages where visitors may enjoy positive experiences of the best that Monaghan has to offer.

Based on these principles, a series of integrated recommendations are presented under six thematic headings in the Roadmap, as follows (see also *Figure 5 and Table 12*):

- 1. Enabling and Resourcing of Tourism Development in County Monaghan**
- 2. Development of Destination Town (Monaghan) & Destination Hubs (towns & villages) across County Monaghan**
- 3. Enhanced Access & Links to the Great Outdoors of Monaghan**
- 4. Supporting Ongoing Tourism Product Development, Festival & Events**
- 5. Building Capacity, Networks & Partnership**
- 6. Marketing & Communications**

Each theme is aligned with the Regional IAE Tourism Objectives and with proposed actions under the Monaghan DEDP.

Under the six themes, each recommendation falls into one of four categories:

- Development / Enhancement;
- Marketing and Communications;
- Training and Capacity; and
- Management and Resources.

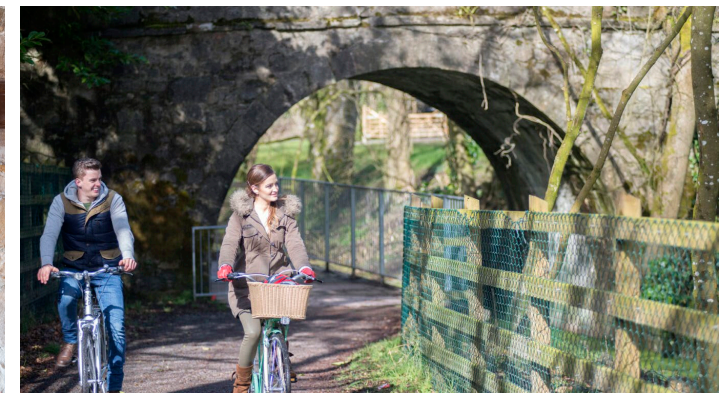
The recommendations included reflect the requisite actions, necessary integration and indicative resources required, as well as the responsibilities and delivery timelines for the five-year period (2023-2028) and beyond in the case of larger infrastructure projects.



Glaslough Village



Carrickmacross Workhouse



Ulster Canal Greenway - Cycling

Figure 5: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028)



Castleblayney



Collective@Market Square

Table 12: RoadMap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028)

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
1. Enabling & Resourcing of Tourism Development in County Monaghan					
<p>1.1 Resourcing the Tourism Function in Monaghan.</p> <p>To deliver the strategic ambitions & opportunities identified, additional human and financial resources are required.</p>	<p>Management & Resources</p> <p>Immediate and on-going review of resourcing in the MCC Tourism Unit</p>	<p>Significant – spread over 5 years</p>	<p>MCC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of resourcing within Tourism unit to identify necessary roles and funding options. Establish a procurement framework for providers of technical assistance to accelerate project delivery. Maximise knowledge of and access to all possible funding opportunities. 	<p>Increased resources within Tourism Unit aligned to the delivery of the Tourism Strategy</p>
<p>1.2. Creation of Monaghan Tourism & Recreation Forum.</p> <p>as formalised voluntary forum to engage key tourism and recreational stakeholders to support the MCC/Tourism Unit to deliver the objectives of the Strategy</p>	<p>Management & Resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rolling throughout the delivery of the strategy. To be externally reviewed after the 3rd year of operation. 	<p>Mid-Range</p>	<p>MCC (to establish), with DoS as link from Forum to Executive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of Reference developed for Monaghan Tourism & Recreation Forum based on Best Practice national model. Training / Induction for all. Establishment of Work Programme (<i>aligned fully with Tourism Strategy</i>). Commission Monaghan’s first County Recreation Strategy within first two years of operation supporting the work of RRO. 	<p>Tourism & Recreation Forum established and functioning</p>

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
1. Enabling & Resourcing of Tourism Development in County Monaghan (Cont.)					
1.3 Ensure cross-functional awareness, appreciation, collaboration & support in the delivery of the new Tourism Strategy	Management and Resources Ongoing throughout term of Strategy	Modest	MCC (internal, with top-down endorsement and full participation from the outset).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal adoption by MCC of Monaghan Tourism Strategy 2023-2028. Design and delivery of bespoke ‘tourism awareness and familiarisation’ programme for relevant staff within MCC. 	Strategy Adopted and bespoke training delivered
1.4 Mid-Term Review of Tourism Strategy to measure progress	Development/ Enhancement 2026	Modest	MCC Tourism Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC to conduct a Mid-Term Review to measure progress against the targets set in this Strategy 	Mid-Term Review completed
1.5 Conduct ‘Visitor Research Survey’ to measure impact from demand side.		Modest	MCC Tourism Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCC to conduct Visitor Research Survey in the year prior to commissioning of follow-on Tourism Strategy to measure the impact from demand side. 	Visitor Research Survey completed

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
2. Development of Destination Town (Monaghan Town) & Destination Hubs (towns & villages) across County Monaghan					
<p>2.1. Integrated Tourism, Recreation and Heritage Planning for Destination Town (Monaghan Town)</p> <p>Continuation of the multi-pronged planning and development approach to develop Monaghan as a Destination Town within <i>Ireland's Ancient East</i>.</p>	<p>Development</p> <p>Timing: Immediate and rolling out over the terms of the strategy</p>	<p>Each Project will require two distinct phases:</p> <p>a) planning and b) implementation.</p> <p>Significant</p>	<p>MCC Planning with Tourism/ Heritage/ Active Travel with multi-partner and MD support.</p> <p><i>Note: The development of a new Tourism and Recreation Forum (see below) may inform the delivery of these plans.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, commissioning, and delivery of all the elements of an integrated multi-sectoral masterplan for Monaghan Town , • MCC to ensure <i>optimum cooperation</i> for integrated development, conservation, commercial activation, outcomes, partnerships, alignment, and resourcing. • MCC to engage with communities and SMEs through participative planning to address issues of visitor management, attractions, parking, accommodation, activities, services. • Inclusion of Active Travel measures and safe sustainable transport linkages to/ from Monaghan Town to other town and village Destination Hubs across the county in recognition of the town's status and importance as the county's designated decarbonising zone. 	<p>Integrated Tourism, Recreation and Heritage Plan for Monaghan Town</p>
<p>2.2. Integrated Tourism, Recreation and Heritage Planning for Destination Hubs (towns and villages)</p> <p>Ongoing settlement planning to be delivered through multi-partnership and community inputs to commence with a pilot plan in Clones in 2024</p>	<p>Development</p> <p>Timing: Rolling out over the term of the strategy – 2 pilot Plans to be delivered by 2028.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, commissioning, and delivery of integrated multi-sectoral masterplans for key towns and villages as attractive destinations. • Glaslough and Castle Leslie – continue to support development including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Green Box' built attraction on the estate, - Reimagined <i>Walled Garden</i>. - Accommodation/ parking/ SME options in village, supported by MCC, LEO, Fáilte Ireland. 	<p>Integrated Tourism, Recreation and Heritage Plan for 2 pilot towns</p>

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
3. Enhanced Access & Links to the Great Outdoors of Monaghan - all align with National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2022-2027					
3.1 Expanded use of Monaghan’s Forest Estate for walking/ nature based activities and experiences	Development & Enhancement On-going throughout term of strategy	Signature	MCC under MoU with Coillte <i>Examine potential for private sector franchise</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossmore Park –further development based on Zonal Proposals for high octane, low octane, quiet zones. Explore options to generate revenue to support ongoing development and management e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Family friendly ZipLine amenity; o Development of a flagship Service Hub o Expansion of Big Sculpture Trail. • Promote access to forest trails at Dartrey Estate and Billy Fox Park forests as low-impact nature-based trails, that spreads tourism to lesser-known sites. • Explore potential for cross-border forest trails from Derrygorry Forest to Favour Royal Forest in Tyrone, as low-impact nature-based walks. 	Enhanced Trails and Activities developed in Coillte Forests
3.2 Monaghan Way Reimagined	Development On-going throughout the term of the strategy	Significant Work with LEADER/ RDP funding for SMEs	Rural Recreation Officer (RRO) supported by Active Travel Unit, Tourism Unit & new Monaghan Tourism and Recreation Forum	Re-energise Monaghan Way as premier driver of rural tourism / SME opportunities, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of upgraded Inniskeen to Castleblayney route with links to towns and villages • Extended 4-5 day walking experience with attractive offroad loops and services. • Consider expansion to the NI/ Mid-Ulster Greenway network. • Add value through extended offroad trail options and services e.g. luggage transfer, accommodation, food, evening events. • Employment of smartphone technology, with integrated signage, to enhance visitor experience. • Dedicated ‘trail development’ supports to emergent SMEs. 	Expanded Monaghan Way trail with increased route connectivity

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
3.3 Explore the potential of Sliabh Beagh for Outdoor Recreation whilst recognising the fragility of the ecosystems and protecting biodiversity	Development Ongoing on phased basis throughout term of Strategy	Signature	MCC with cross border partners and An Taisce Coillte FSNI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sliabh Beagh – develop as <i>exemplar outdoor destination</i>, with improved provision and quality of walking and cycling routes, birdwatching, eco-activities; with minimal environmental impact. • Explore <i>accommodation options</i>, bothies, hostels, Airbnb etc. • Develop cross-border linkages; activity trails to the <i>Ulster Canal</i> at Clones. 	Enhanced recreational access and environmental protection on Sliabh Beagh
3.4 Expansion of the Recreational Walk-Cycle Trail network across Monaghan	Development Within the strategy timeframe (and beyond)	Signature	MCC TII, with RRO & Active Travel Unit, with Planning, Environment, Tourism Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monaghan Greenway Network – rail-to-trail planning and development of Monaghan’s disused railways as Greenways to provide off road links from Castleblayney to Ballybay; Monaghan to Clones. • Continue work with NI partners to deliver the Mid-Ulster 190 km Greenway network, using Ulster Canal Greenway as ‘spine’ for linking trails. • Develop App for all walking-cycling trails across county (cf. Walk-Cycle Strategy 2021 review) to optimise services, signage, trail furniture, and route orientation for promotion as tourism assets. • Consider a cycling sportive route to link county’s major towns on 200km/ 3-4day cycle. 	Expanded and enhanced of walk-cycle trail network
3.5 Expanded options for Water-based Activities <i>Ulster Canal re-opening; Canoeing; Kayaking; Blueways, river trails</i>	Development Ongoing on phased basis throughout term of Strategy	Significant	MCC Waterways Ireland Canoe Ireland Canoe Clubs SME operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ulster Canal: completion from Lough Erne to Clones, integrated with Masterplan. • Creation of Clones Activity Hub, linking to Marina, GAA, Peace Links Campus, Canal Stores. • Phased opening of Ulster Canal through Monaghan Town. • Development of Dromore River Blueway including expansion to the Dromore Lakes – will require safe access/ egress points. • Consider options for Finn River kayak trails, linking to the Ulster Canal, and potential for Blackwater River trails. 	Expanded and enhanced of water-based activities

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
3.6 Develop the considerable Angling potential in the county to match the needs of today's marketplace	Development & Enhancement Ongoing throughout the term of the strategy	Mid-Range	IFI, working with MCC Angling clubs & service providers IFI / Angling Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand biosecurity facilities at Monaghan's angling lakes and rivers. Promotion of Angling internationally as part of Monaghan's core offer Engage with new communities to facilitate access, conservation and management of county's angling assets. 	Expanded and enhanced angling access, infrastructure and promotion
<p>4. Supporting Ongoing Tourism Product Development; Hero Projects; Flagship Festivals & Events</p> <p><i>Supporting roll out of large-scale tourism projects already underway across the county, while adopting the principles of sustainable tourism development. Specific actions are identified, noting that over the next decade, new 'Hero' opportunities may appear. Budgets will be addressed through feasibility studies / reports currently in motion.</i></p>					
4.1. Patrick Kavanagh Cultural Centre, Inniskeen	Development Ongoing through the term of the strategy.	Significant	MCC Tourism Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrick Kavanagh Cultural Centre – support efforts of PKC to further commercialise its operations through increased staffing and annual financial support. PKCC has considerable potential to grow & attract increased visitor numbers through expanded arts, music & cultural programming, as well as expansion of its off-site offerings. PKCC has the potential (copyright allowing) to be the voice / visual of a new '360-degree unified branding' of Monaghan i.e. Kavanagh as your 'Monaghan Guide'. 	Improved visitor offering and experience

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
4.2 Peace Campus/ Monaghan Museum	Development & Enhancement 2024	Modest	MCC and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace Campus: support the new Museum to tell the ‘Monaghan Story’ in innovative ways to encourage visitors to explore locations across the county. • Support the County Museum to optimise use of spaces for exhibitions, poetry readings, evening events. 	Value added to the core visitor experience at the Peace Campus
4.3 Lough Muckno: Explore possibilities for sustainable tourism options at Lough Muckno and Castleblayney in conjunction with local communities	Development & Enhancement Ongoing throughout the term of the strategy.	Signature	MCC, with Coillte In partnership with Community Concra Wood Golf & Country Club/ Trade / SMEs , IFI, Angling Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lough Muckno – complete studies to inform options & decision making. • Consider participative Masterplan for the whole Muckno site including Castleblayney. 	Studies completed and reviewed. Consultations undertaken to inform next stage
4.4 Carrickmacross Workhouse / Carrickmacross Lace Museum	Development Marketing & Promotion Ongoing throughout the term of the strategy.	Mid-Range	Specialist groups with MCC Tourism Unit and related partners, arts & crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support & promote unique story of Carrickmacross Workhouse • Enhance Carrickmacross Lace Museum and Market House offering through effective digital & sales strategies. • Add value to emerging South Monaghan Tourism Cluster 	Enhanced visitor experience development and marketing
4.5 Ulster Canal Stores Visitor Centre & Clones Lace Museum	Development Marketing & Promotion Ongoing throughout the term of the strategy.	Mid-Range	Specialist groups with MCC Tourism Unit with Waterways Ireland and community partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support & promote the industrial heritage of the Ulster Canal Stores, as well as a recreation hub for water-based activities. • Enhance the Clones Lace Museum offering through effective digital & sales strategies. • Add value to Clones as a Destination Hub. 	Enhanced visitor experience development and marketing

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
<p>4.6 Support the development of unique tourism infrastructure incl. Accommodation & range of Services</p>	<p>Development</p> <p>Ongoing on phased basis throughout term of Strategy</p>	<p>Significant</p>	<p>MCC (with partners including local communities).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a network of camping / glamping facilities across the county working with the trade and community enterprise. Support/incentivise private sector to address hotel/ guesthouse accommodation deficit. Develop a network of MCC-managed AIRES Motorhome stopovers with appropriate services in each MD area. 	<p>Increased accommodation provision</p>
<p>4.7 Niche Arts, Culture, Flagship Festivals & Events (to enhance the Evening Economy)</p> <p>Enhance the tourism impact through improved coordination within this offering, playing to Monaghan’s strengths, quirks, and unique character.</p>	<p>Development. Marketing & Communications</p> <p>2024-2026 Aim to have first annual ‘Small Festivals & Events’ programme completed for Q1/2024.</p>	<p>Mid-Range</p>	<p>MCC/Tourism Unit in partnership with community and private sector.</p> <p>Invite proactive/ entrepreneurial organisers to participate in the Monaghan Tourism capacity building initiative.</p> <p>With local intercultural NGOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated ‘Festivals and Events’ programme with priming supports (grants/ in-kind) & practical assistance; enhance the family offer and evening economy in particular. Should be geographically and thematically spread across county and aggressively supported through centralised promotions Programme a series of ‘Small Concerts & Film Screenings in the Outdoors’ throughout Summer months across County. Develop a series of ‘Vintage July Evenings’ throughout Monaghan; core events at PKCC, Inniskeen/ Billy Brennan’s Barn. Promotion of Monaghan’s Country Music, Dancing, Arts & Film Festivals to wider audiences. Develop Design, Arts, Crafts, and Food Trails linking visitor with micro producers to showcase distinct offers (e.g. CMX Market House, Lacemaking, Brehon Brewhouse) Embrace diversity of the New Irish population of Monaghan (25%, CSO 2022) through a series of Intercultural Feasts & Festivals to celebrate dates of meaning to new communities. Examine the feasibility regarding hosting of festivals/events using MCC land/facilities 	<p>Festivals/ Events support programme established</p>

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
<p>4.8 Visitor Information Points (VIPs) in Peace Campus, Libraries, Civic Offices, CMX Market House</p>	<p>Development Marketing & Comms</p> <p>Roll out through term of Strategy.</p>	<p>Modest</p>	<p>MCC with partner Fáilte Ireland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on Themes 3 & 4 above, develop Monaghan's Top 10 'Must See, Must Do' unique experiences. <i>Focus should be on promotion & communications (Theme 6)</i> Digital Screens at VIPs to provide visitors with up to minute information on accommodation, activities, events, festivals. Train staff in key aspects of tourism signposting and information giving. 	<p>Improved Visitor Information Experience</p>
<p>5. Building Capacity, Networks & Partnerships</p>					
<p>5.1 Enhanced Community and Local Partner Engagement.</p> <p>Gap identified in information exchange between community / trade sectors and planning / implementing bodies.</p> <p>Address through development of a bespoke 'communications plan' delivered through the new T&R Forum.</p>	<p>Marketing & Communications</p> <p>Ongoing throughout the term of the strategy.</p>	<p>Modest</p>	<p>Monaghan Tourism and Recreation Forum working with the Tourism Unit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build upon excellent work of Tourism Unit Devise a clear Communications Plan Issue 6-monthly 'Newsletter' as e-Zine Annual 'Monaghan Roadshow' to more 'remote' parts of the county profiling activity, opportunities for new start-ups and funds available- could be done in collaboration with FI, LEO, and Leader. Conduct ongoing research/ M&E through growing contact database. 	<p>Necessary research and communication planning conducted</p>

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
5.2 Monaghan Momentum Tourism Capacity Building Programme	Training & Capacity From 2024 and rolling onwards	Mid-Range	CMETB is subcontracted by MCC/ Tourism and Recreation Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit entrepreneurial participants for intensive Monaghan Momentum tourism capacity building programme, to include customer mapping, tourism experience development, marketing & comms, digital marketing, sales strategy, sustainability, financial planning, collaboration. A Commitment Charter between the participants and education body is recommended to ensure commitment. Examine if Programme could be professionally ‘accredited’ by ETB/ FETAC. Design and implementation to include mix of classroom, virtual and self-directed learning to accommodate participants. The networking potential of participants should be realised to propel growth throughout the county. 	Professional Development training programme delivered for trade
5.3 Progress tourism potential of enhanced linkages with overseas Monaghan Diaspora	Networking, Branding & Communications Ongoing throughout the term of the strategy.	Mid-range	MCC Tourism Unit, Community & Enterprise Section and local community networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide resources to progress the tourism potential of enhanced engagement with Monaghan’s diaspora. 	Sustained engagement with Monaghan’s Diaspora and related partner

Table 12: Roadmap for Monaghan Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) - Cont.

Name / Description	Category/ Timeline	Indicative Budget Modest (under €10K) Mid-range (€10K -€100K) Significant (€100K - €500K) Signature Project > €500K	Lead Responsibility	Recommended Actions	Indicative Outputs
6. Excellence in Marketing & Communications					
6.1 Support of Trade Partnership Initiatives	Marketing & Communications From 2024 and onwards	Modest	MCC Tourism Unit working in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and full range of trade partners and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of collaborative saleable experiences to create reasons to visit and to stay longer, aligned to the DEDP recommendations and to emerging experience themes. • Tourism trade to actively participate in marketing partnerships and with MCC • Development of a culture of collaboration amongst the trade and understanding of the power of driving collective Monaghan messages. 	Trade networks established and supported
6.3 Destination Monaghan Brand Development and alignment to Ireland's Ancient East Brand	Marketing & Communications From 2024 and onwards	Mid-range	MCC Tourism Unit working in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and full range of trade partners and communities..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, cohesive, and consistent core messaging in the market as to Monaghan's value proposition by MCC and trade (enabled through Trade toolbox) • Differentiation of Monaghan as a destination of choice through focusing on delivering slower and lighter footprint experiences, encouraging place-based travel, and allowing the destination to unfold to support more immersive travel experiences. • Create robust alignment to Ireland's Ancient East Brand, themes and offerings. 	Cohesive and managed county brand

5.4 Activating the Tourism Strategy Roadmap (2023-2028)

To activate early momentum behind the implementation of the Tourism Strategy, the following five initiatives may be commenced immediately as ‘early wins’ to deliver concrete results:

- 1. Establish the Monaghan Tourism and Recreation Forum** as a key enabler and support to MCC in leading on the development and implementation of the Tourism Strategy.
- 2. Continue to resource the Patrick Kavanagh Cultural Centre** appropriately to expand the tourism experience and offering both in the Centre and beyond.
- 3. Continue to enhance the Rossmore Forest Park** visitor experience in line with strategic recommendations, with appropriate expansion and commercialisation.
- 4. Continued development of Clones as a Tourism Hub** - capitalise upon the completion of the Ulster Canal, with linkages into the town, provision of local accommodation, amenities and onward recreational links to the surrounding environs and northwards to Sliabh Beagh.

- 5. Explore the potential of Sliabh Beagh** for outdoor recreation whilst recognising the fragility of the eco-systems and protecting biodiversity.

Adoption of the proposed Roadmap will transform the Monaghan Tourism brand, offering and marketability of a vibrant set of sustainable products, services and experiences over the term of the strategy and beyond.



Rossmore Forest Park



Sliabh Beagh



Patrick Kavanagh Centre

6 Marketing & Communications

The current tourism offering in Monaghan is somewhat fragmented and would benefit from a contemporary communications approach which is more cohesive, consistent and easy to understand. Monaghan currently has limited unique selling points, and many of the proposed signature projects in the Roadmap will have a +3-year delivery timeframe. This time lag creates an opportunity to *build brand position in the marketplace* and develop a *Monaghan brand that is synonymous with the destination experience* that the recommendations aim to create.

6.1 Introduction

Monaghan currently has limited unique selling points of scale, a challenge which can lead to generalised messaging and confusion amongst its target markets. Many of the larger proposed signature and enhancement projects will have an implementation timeline of 3+ years, as seen in the Roadmap (*Table 12*).

This developmental time lag creates an opportunity to begin to *build brand position in the marketplace* and develop a *Monaghan brand that is synonymous with the destination experience* that the recommendations in the Roadmap aim to create. In doing so, Destination Monaghan will develop a strong foundation upon which future complementary marketing strategies can be built.

To support the development of a more robust tourism offering in the short to medium term (until the realisation of some of the larger scale projects), Monaghan and the tourism trade will need to develop *strong complementary & collaborative marketing partnerships, networks, and saleable experiences*. These actions will be very much aligned to the *Monaghan Tourism Capacity Building recommendations (see Item 5.2 in Roadmap)*. Overall, this will support the destination in a practical yet strategic manner.

Action-oriented initiatives on this topic are outlined further in this section.



Clones - Round Tower

6.2 Current Demand Generation Strategy

Any tourism strategy needs to adequately address the supply (the assets/offering) and the demand side (the visitors and how to reach them). This section is focused on the demand side of the equation and seeks to:

- Review the current demand generation process and approach in Monaghan against best practice destination marketing.
- Overlay research, experience, and the valuable input of the county stakeholders to provide recommendations to grow visitors to Monaghan over the coming 5 years.
- Suggest the mechanisms required to both generate demand and measure and monitor success over the next five years.

So, given its importance, a successful Destination Marketing and Communications Strategy for a county like Monaghan must address a suite of core elements (*Figure 6*).

Figure 6: Elements of Successful Destination Marketing for Monaghan



Examining ‘Destination Monaghan’ performance through this lens makes it possible to identify areas of opportunity which the overall strategy and this specific section seeks to address.

This provides a solid foundation upon which to build an innovative and effective marketing and communications strategy.

The Tourism Unit (and its partners) currently deliver the following to support the sector:

Public Facing	Internal
Marketing research and analysis	Contact Database Management & Employment
Website	Asset Library (including image bank)
Social channels	Campaigns (solo or with partners such as IAE)
Content and messaging	KPI and Measurement
Brand development	
Annual Marketing Plan implementation	Annual Marketing Plan development
Media Management / PR/ Influencers	
Collaborative Marketing	Trade links and networking

6.3 Considerations for Strategic Vision for Monaghan

Monaghan’s strategic vision (*see Section 5.1 above*) is to create a sustainable and engaging destination which reflects the heritage of the borderlands, the rolling landscapes, rich creativity, recreational opportunity, and natural beauty while encouraging visitors to explore by ‘gentling their footprint’ and letting the destination reveal its many surprising facets at an unhurried pace.

This vision for the county presents a very tangible and directive lens through which all tourism development and marketing should be considered. It supports the concept of a slower, ‘place-based’ form of tourism that is more sustainable, requiring less resources and less travel, allowing the visitor to really immerse themselves in the rich countryside and to savour the experiences on offer.



Dartrey Forest



Monaghan Town

6.4 Overview of Current Marketing Activity

The following reviews the marketing related activity undertaken by the Tourism Unit and its partners in the recent past (during Covid, post-Covid times), as well as the outcomes (in no order of priority).

Marketing Resources

Marketing resources are currently limited with 2FTE persons working in the Tourism Unit. Of that resource, 80% of the time of one of the key individuals is spent on project management and tourism development. This amount of resourcing is insufficient to drive awareness and demand for the county, especially at this early stage of the destination lifecycle. The ratio between development and marketing activity is recommended to be, at minimum, 50:50. This plan highlights the need for additional resources and recommends a review of the existing provision. The skillset of the added resources needs to reflect the modern demands of a competitive marketplace and proven experience in the areas outlined in this plan is critical to realise the ambition of the county.

Audience Targeting and resonating Value Propositions

Like many destinations, Monaghan has previously cast its net wide to attract visitors. Through insights gleaned from the marketing stakeholder workshop and backed up by recent Fáilte Ireland research, a strategic audience targeting plan is recommended later in this section.

Long term strategic and short-term, tactical Marketing Communications Planning aligned to the Vision and Ambition

Given budget and human capital restraints, annual planning has mainly focussed on themed annual marketing campaigns. This new strategy will, guided by the vision, serve as a strategic roadmap for the marketing approach, under which tactical annual actions will fall, thus ensuring best return on investment and most nimble “in market” approach is undertaken. The recent appointment of additional resources in digital marketing will enable and escalate the development of this approach.

Distribution strategy that leverages the tourism assets and networks within the destination

Network development in Monaghan is in its early stages and the distribution strategy has been somewhat hampered by limited budgets and specialist experience. Through the implementation of the recommendations in this strategy as they relate to capacity building, network creation and the development of integrated niche events and festival planning, the trade networks can be leveraged to enhance the distribution strategy beyond the traditional paid and owned channels.

A strong Brand and consistent and creative Messaging, aligned to the Target Audience and their Motivations to Travel

Even within the constraints of the destination and budget, Monaghan has created an impressive bank of assets for use in promotion and marketing campaigns. Through the implementation of the marketing recommendations in this strategy, those assets can continue to be purposed in a more strategic and targeted manner – capturing the audience through personalised and nuanced messaging.

In time, the development of an appropriate tourism brand for Monaghan will also support the destination more fully. There is also opportunity to align more fully with the destination brand of *Ireland's Ancient East* to further establish the Monaghan tourism brand.

Robust support of collaborative trade partnerships and marketing initiatives

To date, the tourism Trade has not actively taken part in focussed or organised collaborative partnership marketing. This is an area of huge opportunity for Monaghan and through supporting the trade *strategically* in the development of collaborative trade initiatives and *facilitation* of partnerships and *financially* through sponsorship of marketing communications, Monaghan will amplify the voice of the destination and build market share. Initiatives in this area will rely heavily on the implementation of the strategic recommendations in the RoadMap around capacity building (*Table 12/ Section 5*), within the Tourism Unit and the development of the Tourism and Recreation Forum (*Table 12/ Section 1.2*), as well as niche events and festival programming (*Table 12/ Section 4.7*).

Ongoing Measurement and Monitoring

Monaghan has some focus on digital campaign performance with good insights into the capture of media coverage. In the future, a more holistic review of demand generation initiatives, including audience development and channel performance, together with development of meaningful KPIs is recommended. A review of post-initiative performance should follow (*See Chapter 7.5 below*). This will allow Monaghan to focus time and financial resources on the biggest opportunities, with greater confidence, which will deliver best results.



Carrickmacross - Lace Making

6.5 Developing a Sustainable Demand Generation Strategy

In relation to the above strategic plan, demand generation refers to the manner and means in which audience and visitor demand for Monaghan is generated. It encompasses strategic approaches to marketing and communications, in addition to identification of areas of opportunity to develop and support the increase of visitors to the destination.

To create recommendations for demand generation for Monaghan, the following actions were undertaken as part of the development of this 5yr strategy:

- Onsite review of a selection of tourism assets and experiences available in the county.
- Review of existing communications and marketing initiatives employed by the county.
- Review of past B2C and B2B marketing initiatives.
- Delivery of a strategic stakeholder workshop (Castleblayney, May 30, 2023) which helped to define audience acquisition strategy and value propositions.
- Extensive desk research and examination of transferable best practice.

6.5.1 Summary: Strengths & Challenges

On a macro level, the following strengths and challenges to Monaghan’s current demand generation initiatives were identified (Table 13).

Table 13: Strengths & Challenges for Demand Generation

Strengths in demand generation of destination Monaghan	Challenges in demand generation for destination Monaghan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong geographic location along the East Coast Corridor – including easy access to two international airports. • A destination that is unspoilt and “undiscovered” - Unique stories yet to be told. • Potential to attract specific customers based on travel motivations. • Recognition by MCC of tourism as a core economic contributor • Positive energy and willingness from the industry to drive tourism as a sustainable economic contributor (as born out in the surveys conducted as part of this plan). • Leveraging the outdoors and opportunities to be active in nature. • Significant potential for future development through capital projects. • Cultivated international linkages e.g. Prince Edward Island (Canada). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current lack of a hero tourism asset or product and short accommodation supply with limited reflected marketing • Limited experience development initiatives providing reasons to visit. • Unclear value proposition or unique driver to power messages focussed on specific audiences. • Limited collaboration and partnership marketing approach. • Institutional capacity constraints. • Ambiguities around borderland location and identity.



Horse riding in the Monaghan Countryside



Ulster Canal Stores

6.6 Marketing Findings & Recommendations

Based on the vision for Monaghan presented above and with a focus on building the marketing fundamentals to support the realisation of this vision, the following outlines the key areas to be addressed over the coming years. It includes recommendations based on the specific outputs from the marketing workshop undertaken with a representative group of Monaghan tourism businesses.

These findings and recommendations are presented so that Monaghan can build enhanced awareness and drive greater demand for the county through:

1. Creation of a motivations and geographic-based **audience development approach** aligned to the needs of today's visitor (with support of regular, insightful Fáilte Ireland research).
2. Building value for the visitor through creation of **value-led propositions** around people, place, nature, and the outdoors (recreation) and the positive border talk.
3. Focus on the **day trip** and **short break market** opportunities with a particular emphasis on **referral marketing** post-stay.

4. Focus on developing Monaghan as a **sustainable** and 'carbon-light' footprint tourism destination – helping visitors '**gentle their footprint**' while experiencing the undiscovered in Monaghan. This should potentially be an overarching marketing message and positioning statement for the destination.
5. Creation of an **events programme** which drives sustainable demand through the new MCC appointment of an Events Design and Development resource.
6. Extensive **capacity building** of the trade in event and experience development.
7. Leveraging **trade networks and partnerships** to ensure the development and promotion of saleable experiences linked to the key recommendations of the Monaghan DEDP.
8. Driving a multi-level **distribution strategy** across paid, owned, and shared and partnership channels.
9. Undertaking a **brand review and refresh** aligned to the value proposition that Monaghan offers.
10. Systematic **information gathering and regular review** to aid future decision making.

Monaghan is at a relatively early development stage in its tourism sector lifecycle. The county can capitalise on this previous lack of investment and cultural legacy as an opportunity in a changing global sector, where everything appears more instant and monetarised. Branding and digital messaging are important tools for the county to employ more aggressively from the outset.

The above Key Findings and Recommendations are expanded upon in greater details in *Appendix 2* at the end of this document.



Castle Leslie Estate

7 Implementation of the Tourism Strategy

Up to this point in the strategy, the future of tourism in Monaghan has been addressed through the lens of the ‘what’ and ‘why’. This section will address the ‘how’: the implementation process. It examines the targets, partners, capacity, and resourcing required to give this ambitious strategy the impetus it needs to succeed.

7.1 Addressing the Gaps

Based on the extensive policy review (*Section 3.4*), tourism plays a unique and fluid role in the development of a rural Irish county’s economy. Several cross-cutting deficits must be addressed in Monaghan to ensure that the strategic objectives will deliver the benefits of tourism for enterprise and communities across the county.

- **Sustainability**

This concept is at the heart of this strategy where climate action is the primary determinant and sustainability will underpin the delivery of all actions in the Monaghan Tourism Strategy for the next five years and beyond. The international **VICE** tourism development model, as embraced by Fáilte Ireland, should be adopted, where **V**isitors, the **I**ndustry that serves them, the **C**ommunity that hosts them, and minimisation of their impact on the **E**nvironment, all work in harmony to ensure the lowest possible impact of tourism developments.

- **Tourism Services**

The provision of accommodation, including hotel, guesthouse, self-catering, hostel, homestay, motor-homes (and/or new modes) will significantly accelerate tourism growth across the entire county. While there are excellent local food producers however, they are often difficult to access. The evening/night-time economy (the ‘purple economy’) and the cultural offering need to be expanded, packaged, co-ordinated and consistently promoted. (Reference recent emergence of Night-time Economy Task Force – <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d86df-night-time-economy-taskforce/> - as a potential tool for growth for this) Additionally, the whole realm of branding and communications will need to be refashioned in a strategic manner and aligned fully to this Strategy.

- **Tourism-Supporting Infrastructure**

There is considerable room for improving access into and throughout the county and a need to develop and enhance sustainable transport solutions such as LocalLink, services connecting with rail services in Dundalk, scheduled services by public and private bus operators etc. Monaghan is one of only a handful of counties in Ireland that are not serviced by the national rail network. However, its geographical location on the East Coast Corridor, with access to two international airports in Dublin and Belfast, while straddling the Borderlands, requires improved operator/destination signposting off the M1/ N2, routes which carry millions of vehicular journeys per month. Services such as e-bikes and e-cars charging points, motor-homes docking stations, as well as active travel modes require expansion.

- **Capacity / Training**

A small number of empowered and capable tourism operators working progressively together will largely determine the success of this strategy. These may be accommodation providers, artisan / craft producers, community enterprise or public sector drivers of recreational delivery. A bespoke training and capacity building programme is required to support a **network** of these individuals, to accelerate Monaghan's tourism performance. A medium-term knowledge support programme built around these key people will represent a commitment to ensure delivery of the strategic objectives. Moreover, such a programme is likely to attract new partners that may not have previously engaged in tourism development e.g. Monaghan's Local Enterprise Office (LEO) and Education & Training Board (ETB).

Given its **existing and planned mix of tourism products and services** that align well with current trends⁴ and motivations⁵, Monaghan can effectively improve its tourism performance over the coming decade.

However, this will only be realised through strategic investments (evidence-based on good practice models), including:

- Empowering the Tourism Unit of MCC.
- Systematically building the capacity of the tourism trade / drivers.
- Creating a formal 'network' of tourism and recreation-related stakeholders to help deliver key actions proposed in this Strategy, through a Tourism & Recreation Forum.
- Build and manage new dynamic partnerships within tourism.
- Secure more (and consistent) funding of the county's tourism economy.
- Addressing the infrastructural deficits across the county, while noting the considerable advances in this domain e.g. greenways, walking trails, cross-border Ulster Canal.

7.2 Empowering the MCC Tourism Unit

The Monaghan Tourism Unit is currently operating with a full-time staff of three (Tourism Officer + Administrator + Manager, Patrick Kavanagh Centre). They are a fully integrated unit within the Monaghan County Council structure, with offices adjacent to the MCC Planning Department in central Monaghan Town.

The Unit's annual budget allocation (c. €0.35 million per annum) from the Council covers salaries, operations, promotions and the operation of the Patrick Kavanagh Centre. However, the Unit also accesses a considerable amount of external funding concerned with tourism and recreational delivery in the county, including Fáilte Ireland Tourism Promotion Support/ FI Destination Town funding; LEADER/ RDP; ORIS funding and Shared Island supports.

On an annual basis these combined figures historically amount to a modest €0.35- €1.5 million per annum.

⁴<https://www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/sustainable-tourism-understanding-the-opportunity.pdf?ext=.pdf>

⁵https://issuu.com/discoverireland/docs/segmentation_study_pdfs_fm_100622_v3_lowres?fr=sYzVknzU'NDU'NTc

“The feedback from the tourism trade and community enterprise sectors is generally favourable towards the MCC Tourism Unit, acknowledging its considerable work-load, outputs, value for money, and its inclusive means of delivery. There is, however, a recognition that the TU is under-resourced and overstretched. Given the ambition of this new Strategy, the Tourism Unit needs to be fully resourced to deliver the objectives.”

It is clear from the review and trade engagement, that the Tourism Unit will require significant additional resourcing (human and financial) to deliver the objectives the Tourism Strategy 2023-2028.

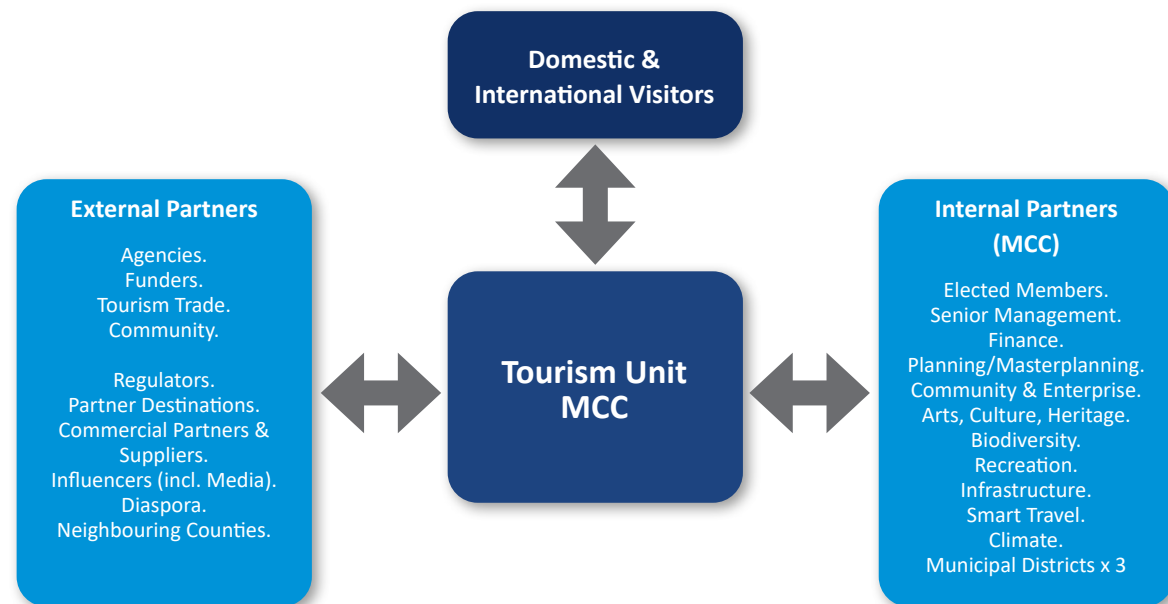
Additionally, enhanced inter-departmental collaboration within MCC will be beneficial in delivery of the cross-cutting aspects of the recommendations. There are multiple functions within the Council that inform and support the delivery of sustainable tourism from arts, heritage, active travel, climate adaptation, community, and enterprise development, to planning, roads and related infrastructure.

A regular (e.g. 6-monthly), facilitated meeting (ideally by CEO) to review progress and secure requisite collaborative resources would support the TU in delivery of the objectives.

Figure 7 illustrates the internal and external relationship the Tourism Unit will require with key partners.

Externally, it is encouraging to see the practical programming and collaboration among key agency partners such as Fáilte Ireland / Ireland’s Ancient East, Waterways Ireland, and Coillte with the Tourism Unit. Likewise, there is practical cooperation at an inter-county and cross-border level in development of recreational greenways and blueways, creating important relationships that need to be expanded over the coming years.

Figure 7: Tourism Unit MCC – Internal & External Relationships



7.3 Monaghan Tourism & Recreation Forum

A key proposal in this strategy is the creation of a supported, multi-stakeholder **Tourism & Recreation Forum** for integrated tourism and outdoor recreation development on a partnership basis. This new entity will work hand-in-glove with the Tourism Unit following the learnings from several dynamic models around the county.

Initially the following issues must be addressed:

- Definition of appropriate Terms of Reference for an inclusive and efficient Forum.
- Administration / resourcing and funding.
- Leadership (Chair) of the new entity.
- Participating partners and at what level / experience.
- Working structure that will best facilitate the Forum to meet its targets.
- Detailed ‘work programme’ (aligned with key actions defined in the Monaghan Tourism Strategy, 2023-2028), ensuring complementarity of tourism and recreation.
- Enabling of a good working relationship among all key Tourism partners.



Ballybay - Walking



Brehon Brewhouse - Inniskeen

7.4 Building Capacity: Monaghan Momentum

Tourism is a highly competitive and rapidly evolving sector of the Irish and global economy. The following trends will likely continue into the near future:

- Globally, Q1/2023 saw visitors still at only 80% (UNWTO) of their pre-Covid numbers;
- Ireland’s tourism, including Monaghan, is still rebuilding after the ‘shock’ of the pandemic;
- The climate and environmental imperatives will drive sustainable tourism;
- Technological evolution (communications, operational and analytical);
- Marketplace awareness of visitor motivational trends.

The professional, business, and commercial capacity of the Monaghan tourism trade will require to respond to these global and national trends to remain in the market.

The ambition of the local trade will largely determine the elevation of the Monaghan brand nationally and the creation of new jobs in the local economy and will require an innovative and integrated response.

Monaghan Momentum is the term given in the Tourism Strategy (see Roadmap, Table 12, 5.1) to a proposed training and capacity building process of scale, to enable the most ambitious tourism operators in the county to build a definitive offer, over an initial two-year period of delivery. The outcomes will be both direct and indirect, from accelerated investment in tourism products and services, systematic growth in visitor numbers and related expenditures, spread across the county. The objective is to enable collaborative development and marketing among a small network of Monaghan’s ‘tourism influencers’ of tomorrow.

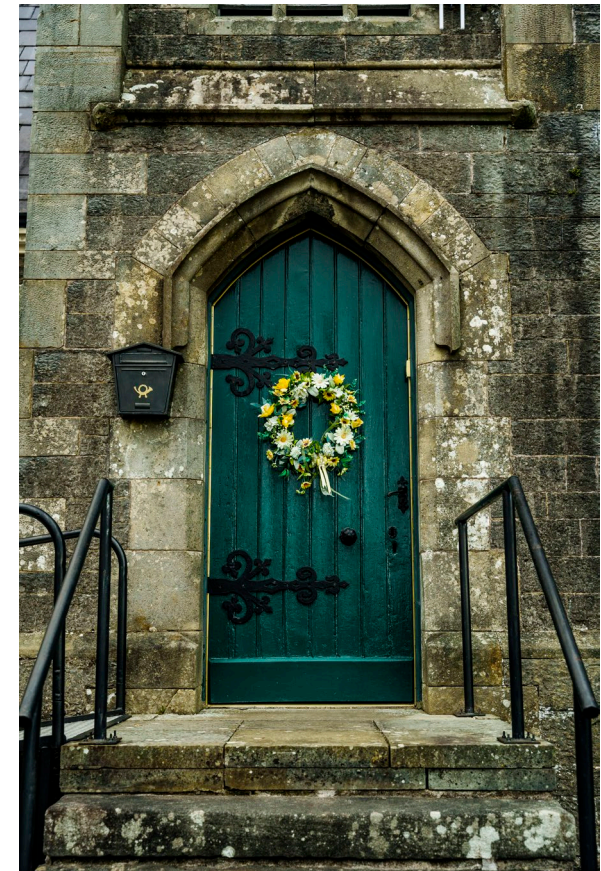
Monaghan Momentum will be a trade-focused programme, tailored for Monaghan’s needs. It will provide expert tuition and mentoring through bespoke courses, from strategic planning, operational efficiency, and marketing innovation to staff recruitment / retention. Study visits should be included to examine best-in-class destination, with transferable learnings to Monaghan. Courses will be designed to best suit the availability and learning desires of participants, and ideally the full programme will be accredited.

Participation would require a 20-day commitment spread over 24 months, open to dynamic operators in the county’s tourism economy, including MSMEs and start-ups. Participants will be required to apply online, ensuring a genuine commitment to the whole programme, with a modest ‘fee’ charged for participation, depending on the ultimate model of delivery. The courses would aim to include a mix of up to 12 enterprises representing the full tourism economy, with good geographical spread from across the county. A combination of private, community and public enterprises would provide the complementarity required across the full range of tourism products and services.

The operational delivery for **Monaghan Momentum** could fall to a body such as CMETB (Cavan Monaghan Educational Training Board) who have the experience and resources to design a tailored programme of this scale and complexity. Fáilte Ireland could provide additional professional advice and oversight. If the first pilot programme were evaluated as a success, then another wave of participants should be considered.

Participants should be viewed as Monaghan’s tourism leaders of tomorrow, encouraging them to share experience and learnings, while getting to know each other’s operations. The end result will be a positive outcome for the future tourism economy of the county.

Other training-related initiatives will be undertaken in Monaghan over the duration of this strategy. Interventions such as the mentoring support offered through the LEO, and the themed *Ireland’s Ancient East* capacity building by Fáilte Ireland will continue apace.



Cassandra Hand Folk & Famine Centre - Clones

7.5 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

There follows a set of ambitious yet achievable key performance targets (KPIs) that will enable MCC and its partners to evaluate the implementation of the tourism strategy up to 2028.

It is envisaged that the **Tourism Unit** (working with the proposed **Tourism and Recreation Forum**) will employ these as macro-indicators of satisfactory delivery. It is envisaged that upon inception the Forum will agree on performance targets and work with the Tourism Unit to monitor and evaluate them. Over time, the agreed targets may be modified to better reflect performance and likely changes in the tourism economy.

These eight clear targets are derived from complementary data pertaining to the IAE tourism sector, including the Monaghan Destination Experience Development Plan, key findings from extensive consultations and current motivational trends in tourism nationally. The targets below are broadly aligned to best practice targets set for comparable counties in rural Ireland (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Key Performance Indicators, Monaghan Tourism Strategy

- 1 150 – NEW JOBS**
New people employed (FT/PT) in the Monaghan tourism and hospitality economy.
Benchmark: Supported enterprises performance monitoring.
- 2 GROW BY 20% - DOMESTIC VISITORS**
Domestic all-island visitors to Monaghan, including day visits and overnight stays, equating to 4% per annum
Benchmark - Fáilte Ireland / IAE data.
- 3 GROW BY 15% - INTERNATIONAL VISITORS**
International visitors to Monaghan including day visits and overnight stays equals 3% growth per annum
Benchmark: Fáilte Ireland / IAE annual data.
- 4 GROW BY 40% - ENTERPRISES EMBRACING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE**
Number of enterprises who have adopted sustainable products, services, and practices across the county (food, travel, waste, water). Also, those who participate in specialist training initiatives.
Benchmark: Tourism Unit monitoring
- 5 GROW BY 50% - TRADE ENGAGEMENT IN TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
Participation in Fáilte Ireland's tourism support programmes in addition to those supplied by the likes of LEO and LEADER **from 24 (2023) to 36 enterprises by 2028**, those who participate in specialist training initiatives. Benchmark: Tourism Unit monitoring.
- 6 €25 MILLION - TOTAL INVESTMENT in SECTOR**
Investment in tourism and recreational offerings within the county by the end of the decade. This investment will likely come from the public, private and community enterprise sectors.
Measurement / Benchmark: Tourism Unit working with essential partners.
- 7 GROW BY 30% - ACCOMMODATION BASE**
Registered Fáilte Ireland accommodation (2022) = 1246 beds (Hotel, Guesthouse, BandB, Self-Catering, Irish Welcome Standard). Target up to **350 new beds** in Monaghan by 2028.
Benchmark - Fáilte Ireland / IAE data.

7.6 Resourcing the Tourism Strategy

The following assumptions underpin the seven indicators:

- That the elected members of Monaghan County Council will adopt this strategy;
- That demand-related constraints such as unexpected shocks to the national / international economy such as pandemic or severe recession, will not occur;
- That supply-related constraints such as availability of qualified / experienced staff will be resolved; and
- That additional research will be conducted to monitor performance e.g. the number of new jobs being created in the counties tourism economy.

The Roadmap for the Tourism Strategy proposes six integrated thematic pillars, with a number of linked actions to be undertaken within each pillar.

The signature and enhancement projects proposed include ‘order of magnitude’ costings, as an indication of the likely financial resources to deliver the Tourism Strategy (2023-2028). These costings, allowing for inflation and VAT, will require detailed costing and quantity analysis as each project is commissioned.

A number of sources of externally derived supporting funds are available, which are outlined in Table 14.

Table 14: Potential Funding & Resources to Support Implementation

Target of Funding	Potential Source of External Funding & Resources
Tourism Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fáilte Ireland Tourism Promotion support • Fáilte Ireland Destination Town (IAE) supports • Fáilte Ireland – capital grants • Fáilte Ireland – Platforms for Growth • Capacity building & networking for SMEs
Recreational Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) – • Rural Recreation Development Fund (RRDF) • Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)- Greenway funding • LEADER/ Rural Development Programme 2023-2027 • The Walks Scheme (currently being expanded) • Cross border/ Shared Island funding
Rural Regeneration/ Town & Village Enhancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Regeneration Funds • Town & Village Renewal Scheme • Municipal grants
Active Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Roads Authority (NRA)
Cross Border Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Island Initiative • EU PEACE PLUS • International Fund for Ireland (IFI)



Carrickmacross Workhouse



Busy Bee Ceramics

Table 14: Potential Funding & Resources to Support Implementation (Cont.)

Target of Funding	Potential Source of External Funding & Resources
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage Council grants Dept Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht Built Heritage Investment Scheme Historic Structures Fund
Co-Funding Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coillte Inland Fisheries Ireland PEACE PLUS funding Dept. Transport, Tourism & Sports
Skills, Capacity Building & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEADER/ Rural Development Programme 2023-2027 Cavan-Monaghan Education & Training Board (ETB) Local Enterprise Office (LEO)
Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEADER/ Rural Development Programme 2023-2027
Marketing & Related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fáilte Ireland – <i>Ireland's Ancient East</i> LEADER/ Rural Development Programme 2023-2027 Local Enterprise Office (LEO)



7.7 Conclusions

The Tourism Strategy (2023-2028) for County Monaghan aims to provide a confident, evidence-based and forward-looking roadmap to guide future tourism development across the county. Its development has taken cognisance of past learnings, current trends and best practice in tourism development, while addressing the needs of key stakeholders across the county.

The new Tourism Strategy has identified six development pillars within a defined Roadmap, each with a foundation and champions upon which to build. They include:

- Enabling & Resourcing of Tourism Development in County Monaghan.
- Development of Destination Towns & Villages in County Monaghan.
- Enhanced Access & Links to the Great Outdoors of Monaghan.
- Supporting Ongoing Tourism Product Development / Hero Projects.
- Building Capacity, Networks & Partnership.
- Excellence in Marketing & Communications .



Monaghan Town



Emy Lough



Patrick Kavanagh Mural



Sliabh Beagh



Carrickmacross Lace Gallery



Clones Lace



Fishing in Clones

It is acknowledged that the implementing environment will be challenging, given the three seismic shocks of the post-Covid political and economic upheaval; the war in Ukraine (including inflation and interest rate rises); and the growing imperatives of climate change and adaptation, respectively.

The **Roadmap** provides a smart action plan that reflects the risks inherent in this changing market-place- which, if implemented, will ensure that Monaghan is in a position to provide authentic experiences to meet demand. As well as tourism infrastructural proposals, clear proposals are made for networking, collaboration, professionalisation and suitable resourcing of the plan.

The Strategy will require **sustained resourcing and consistent supports** from Monaghan County Council over its five-year term (2023-2028); increased **collaboration, networking and capacity-building** of the tourism trade (private and community enterprise) and harnessing of the positive impacts of some inspirational projects, under the assured guidance of Fáilte Ireland. Considerable government and cross-border funding opportunities are available to support the implementation of the Strategy over the short to medium term.

The creation of a new **Monaghan Tourism and Recreation Forum** could be transformational for integrated tourism development in the county. Under astute leadership, this will become the fulcrum for coordinated delivery of tourism products, services and experiences, under the guidance of the MCC Tourism Unit, to realise the ambition of the 5-year strategy.

The ultimate goal for delivering the actions under each of the six development pillars will be to alter the trajectory of the county's tourism economy for the coming generation. The aim is to ensure the county becomes a high-performing tourism destination by 2030. The direct (jobs, investment, regeneration) and indirect (quality of life, reputation, infrastructure) benefits will be considerable.

This Tourism Strategy's roadmap is only the start of a significant journey for the people of Monaghan.



Louise Loughman - Artist



Castleblayney



SECTION D

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Detailed Policy Review

Appendix 1: Introduction

It is envisaged that the new Tourism Strategy for County Monaghan 2023-2028 will be aligned with relevant policies that influence various aspects of the socio-economic development of County Monaghan. This summary provides a high-level overview of a range of influences on the future development of tourism in County Monaghan at international/ European, national, regional and local levels. In recognition of the inter-related climate and biodiversity crises, the critical contribution of the National Climate Action Plan 2021 in future-proofing the sustainable development of Monaghan’s tourism assets is acknowledged. These combined policies and strategies will assist in setting the future strategic development of tourism for the County.

It is clear that European, national regional and county planning and development policies are designed to cascade and complement each other to ensure that policy will drive sustainable development in consideration of the full range of economic, social and environmental elements and influences. These are critical to ensure that tourism development in Monaghan is based on sound principles of sustainability, particularly in the use of natural and cultural assets to develop tourism products and services.

Table A1 presents the list of policies and plans reviewed, while **Table A2** provides a summary of the key elements and initiatives to support the development of a vibrant tourism offer across County Monaghan in the coming decade. Given the renewed focus on activity-based tourism in Ireland, the review includes an overview of recreational and biodiversity policies also.

Table A1 List of Policies, Strategies & Plans Reviewed, Co. Monaghan

POLICY PLANS & STRATEGIES THAT INFLUENCE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN COUNTY MONAGHAN
INTERNATIONAL / EUROPEAN POLICIES INFLUENCING TOURISM
United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals
UN World Tourism Organisation - Strategy
Paris Climate Agreement (2016)
EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (2021)
EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030
European Green Infrastructure Strategy
EU EuroParc network – promoting sustainable development of parks’ network and responsible tourism
IRELAND – NATIONAL TOURISM & PLANNING POLICIES
Tourism Strategy – Ireland Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
‘People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025’ - Dept. Transport, Tourism and Sport
Regional Tourism Strategies: Fáilte Ireland – for 4 brand regions - IAE, IHH, Dublin, WAW
Ireland’s Ancient East: Eastern Region Tourism Development Strategy 2022-2026 -Fáilte Ireland
Travel Motivations Framework (Feb 2023) Fáilte Ireland
Sustaining Tourism in Ireland: Understanding the Opportunity (2022) - Fáilte Ireland
‘Realising our Potential’ National Action Plan for Rural Development - Dept. Rural & Community Dev, 2017
National Planning Framework Project 2040 Dept. Housing, Planning & Local Government
National Climate Action Plan 2021 Dept. Environment, Climate and Communications
EU LEADER Rural Development Programme (2023- 2027)

Table A1 List of Policies, Strategies & Plans Reviewed, Co. Monaghan (Cont.)

IRELAND – NATIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION / LANDSCAPE & BIODIVERSITY POLICIES
Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors - National Outdoor Recreation Strategy (2023-2027) Comhairle na Tuaithe and Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD)
Outdoor Recreation Plan for Public Lands (2017-2021) Coillte, NPWS, WI, Bord na Móna, IFI
Outdoor Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) Dept. Rural & Community Development, May 2020
Guide to Planning & Developing of Small Vessel Water Trails in Ireland (2013) Waterways Ireland
Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future - New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020 Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2009
Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2018
The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020 (Department of Transport)
National Strategy for Angling Development 2015-2020 - Inland Fisheries Ireland (Dept. Agr, Fisheries & Marine)
New Strategic Vision for Forestry in Ireland - Coillte, April 2022
National Landscape Strategy for Ireland (2015-2025) Dept. Arts, Heritage & The Gaeltacht
National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021
The All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 – 2025 (5-year Road Map)
NATIONAL WATERWAYS & HERITAGE POLICIES
Waterways Ireland - Corporate Plan 2020-2022
Culture 2025 - Éire Ildánach 2025 Dept. Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs
REGIONAL PLANING & DEVELOPMENT POLICIES
Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020 – 2032 (RSES) for Northern & Western Regional Assembly (RSES)
EU INTERREG VA Programme - Eastern Border Region /EU Programmes including e.g. Ulster Canal regeneration.
ICBAN ‘Framework of Regional Priorities - Irish Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland, 2021–2027’

Table A1 List of Policies, Strategies & Plans Reviewed, Co. Monaghan (Cont.)


MONAGHAN COUNTY - POLICIES/ PLANS & STUDIES
Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025
Monaghan Socio-Economic Statement, March 2023
Monaghan Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021
Monaghan Walking & Cycling Strategy 2021- 2026
Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017 -2022 -
Monaghan Destination & Experience Development Plan (MDEDP) 2023
Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan - Monaghan County Council, 2016
The Great Drumlin of Adventure : Vision for Lough Muckno, Castleblayney - 2021
Black Island Trails Concept, Muckno Park - 2022
Slieve Beagh Masterplan (2019) - Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Sliabh Beagh Eco-Tourism Destination Concept Appraisal –Work Packages 1-3
Sliabh Beagh: Audit & Hero Attractor
Sliabh Beagh – Feasibility Strategy - Initial Options (Gateway & Signage) 2023
Monaghan County Council - Destination Towns Programme
Monaghan County Council - Dartrey Forest – Analysis & Opportunities 2021
Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage-Strategic-Plan-2020-2025
Monaghan Reaching Out – A Framework for Diaspora Engagement

Table A2: Summary of Policies, Strategies & Plans Reviewed for Tourism Development in Co. Monaghan


Policy / Strategy	Key Elements
INTERNATIONAL / EUROPEAN POLICIES INFLUENCING TOURISM	
<p>United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals</p> <p>https://sdgs.un.org/goals</p>	<p>The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, is a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for the planet. At its heart are seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with an urgent call for action by all countries in a global partnership. The SDGs recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. The SDGs address issues of <u>water</u>, <u>energy</u>, <u>climate</u>, <u>oceans</u>, <u>urbanization</u>, <u>transport</u>, <u>science and technology</u>. In order to make the 2030 Agenda a reality, broad ownership of the SDGs must translate into a strong commitment to implement the global goals at national, regional and local level.</p> <p>Of the 17 SGG's, the recognition and incorporation of Nos. 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 are critical for sustainable development of Tourism at national, regional and local levels. Thus, balanced socio-economic development, that is good for citizens also supported the balanced development of Tourism.</p> <div data-bbox="869 635 1912 1145" style="text-align: center;"> </div>

<p>UN World Tourism Organisation - Strategy www.unwto.org</p>	<p>UNWTO is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. UNWTO strives to promote tourism development that supports conservation of biodiversity and social & economic security of the host countries and communities.</p> <p>Its work is based around five distinct pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. making tourism smarter through celebrating innovation and leading the digital transformation of the sector; 2. making tourism more competitive through promoting investment and promoting entrepreneurship; 3. creating more and better jobs and providing relevant training; 4. building resilience and promoting safe and seamless travel; and 5. harnessing tourism’s unique potential to protect cultural and natural heritage and to support communities both economically and socially. <p>UNWTO promotes tourism as a driver of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability and offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.</p> <p>UNWTO encourages the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, to maximize tourism’s socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts, and is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide. It recognises that tourism is both highly vulnerable to climate change while at the same time contributing to it. Threats for the sector are diverse, including direct and indirect impacts such as more extreme weather events, increasing insurance costs and safety concerns, water shortages, biodiversity loss and damage to assets and attractions at destinations, among others.</p>
<p>Paris Climate Agreement (2016)</p>	<p>Climate change is a global emergency that requires coordinated solutions at all levels and international cooperation to help countries move toward a low-carbon economy. To tackle climate change and its negative impacts, 197 countries adopted the Paris Agreement at the COP21 in Paris on 12 December 2015. This informs all subsequent policy making in participating countries and is updated regularly at international COP meetings.</p>
<p>EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (2021) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0109_EN.pdf</p>	<p>EU Strategy for Sustainable Tourism recognises that tourism is a cross-cutting economic activity with a wide-ranging impact on the EU’s economy as a whole, in particular on the regions’ economic growth, employment and social and sustainable development, but also on the environment and climate. The tourism industry directly and indirectly employs 27 million people, which accounts for 11.2 % of total EU employment, and 10.3 % of EU GDP in 2019. Tourism helps to promote a balanced regional structure, has a positive impact on regional development, and should contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, social welfare, and the economic security of local communities.</p> <p>The tourism value chain is one of Europe’s main industrial ecosystems, made up of a complex of closely linked, key vectors of transport, accommodation, experience and intermediation. The success of the industry lies in the balance among these four vectors; although tourism has an impact on climate change by contributing to 8 % of global CO2 emissions. The sector encompasses a great diversity of services and professions; but is dominated by SME enterprises, whose activities generate employment and wealth in regions that depend on it e.g. in 2018, 51.7 % of EU tourist accommodation was in coastal and maritime areas, which are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change, while 32.9 % of them were in rural areas. These outermost regions are characterised by their remoteness, insularity and strong economic and social dependence on the tourism and transport sectors.</p>
<p>EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030</p>	<p>The European Commission adopted the new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and an associated Action Plan (annex) - a comprehensive, ambitious, long-term plan for protecting nature and reversing the degradation of ecosystems. It aims to put Europe’s biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 with benefits for people, the climate and the planet, underpinning EU’s contribution to international negotiations on the global post-2020 biodiversity framework. The Biodiversity Strategy aims to build resilience to future climate change impacts, forest fires, food insecurity or disease outbreaks, including by protecting wildlife, with specific commitments by 2030:</p>

<p>European Green Infrastructure Strategy</p>	<p>The EC adopted an EU-wide strategy to promote green infrastructure, to restore the health of ecosystems and ensure that natural areas remain connected together, and allow species to move across their entire natural habitat, so that nature keeps on delivering its many benefits to us. The strategy promotes the deployment of green infrastructure across Europe as well as the development of a Trans-European Network for Green Infrastructure in Europe, a TEN-G network.</p> <p>Green infrastructure will support the development of sustainable tourism experiences and services.</p>
<p>EU EuroParc Federation</p>	<p>Established as an EU funded LIFE programme in 1995 to examine sustainable tourism in protected areas, EuroParc published a charter in 2000 that commits signatories to implement a local strategy for sustainable tourism defined as: ‘Any form of development, management, or tourist activity which ensures the long-term protection and preservation of natural, cultural, and social resources and contributes in a positive and equitable manner to the economic development and well-being of individuals living, working or staying in protected areas’.</p>
<p>IRELAND – NATIONAL TOURISM & PLANNING POLICIES</p>	
<p>Tourism Strategy – Ireland https://www.gov.ie/en/policy/3fcc3a-tourism/#introduction Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media</p>	<p>The Irish government seeks to have a vibrant and competitive tourism sector that contributes positively in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner, promoting a positive image of Ireland overseas, and enabling local communities to prosper.</p> <p>Government policy framework and objectives for the tourism sector have the following priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Growing and sustaining tourism employment. ✓ Increasing the economic contribution of tourism across local communities. ✓ Ensuring that contribution of tourism to economic growth and regional development is fully recognised. <p>Tourism is recognised as one of Ireland’s most important economic sectors, particularly in rural areas. In 2018, out of state tourists generated €5.6 billion for the Irish economy, rising to €7.3 billion when fare receipts to Irish carriers are included. Domestic tourism was worth €2 billion, thus as a whole, tourism was worth €9.4 billion to the economy.</p> <p>Domestic tourism is the bedrock of the Irish tourism industry. It sustains a level of investment in tourism product that is of considerable benefit to Ireland’s attractiveness as a destination and provides an opportunity to both extend the season and deliver additional business that is more regionally dispersed. The tourism sector is an essential component of Ireland’s employment base. It supports around 325,000 jobs on the island of Ireland.</p> <p>The interaction between overseas visitors and those employed in our tourism sector is highly important. It creates a positive link between the qualities of Ireland as a place and the qualities of the Irish people. It is essential that the level of service provided to visitors is of the highest possible standard. The government aims to strengthen the capacity of people working in the tourism sector, so the highest quality experience can be delivered to visitors. This also lets Ireland compete effectively for business in the international tourism marketplace.</p>
<p>‘People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025’ Dept. Transport, Tourism and Sport</p>	<p>The Government’s vision for tourism is that Ireland will have a vibrant and attractive tourism sector that makes a significant contribution to employment across the country, as set out in People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025. The objective of investing in and developing the tourism proposition will seek to maximise tourism’s potential to support regional economic and social development.</p> <p>Key elements of the policy that are relevant to Monaghan’s tourism development are:</p> <p>4.1.1 Local Authorities will be encouraged to support communities in tourism development, and will co-operate with neighbouring authorities as appropriate to maximise tourism opportunities for their region as a whole.</p> <p>4.1.2 The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and Fáilte Ireland will encourage the sharing of expertise between communities that have been successful in building the tourism capacity of their localities, and those that are at an earlier stage of development.</p> <p>4.1.4 The identification of tourism as a priority in the Local Economic and Community Plans, and the provision of support to start-up and developing tourism enterprises will be aligned with the Local Authorities tourism objectives and plans for their areas.</p>

<p>Fáilte Ireland Regional Tourism Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild Atlantic Way • Ireland’s Ancient East • Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands and • Dublin 	<p>Fáilte Ireland is highly focused on supporting the sustainable development of Irish tourism, particularly in the wake of the covid pandemic 2020-2021. It will focus on financial and practical supports for tourism enterprises, driving domestic and international demand in a globally competitive market, developing destination experiences across the country and addressing the staff and skills shortage in the industry. Key priorities to support the tourism industry include refocus on the four regional brands through tailored strategies and support mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and implementation of four Regional Tourism Strategies and 27 localised Destination Development Plans which will be critical to driving the long-term development of tourism across Ireland. • Driving demand through a €10million investment in domestic marketing including sponsorship of the RTÉ weather, to encourage people to take additional short breaks in Ireland. • Enhancing the digital capabilities of over 400 tourism businesses through Fáilte Ireland’s Digital that Delivers programme. • Digital audit of over 800 hotels to be conducted and a suite of digital supports to ensure businesses are visible, searchable, and most importantly, bookable. • Driving a more sustainable tourism sector by developing a carbon reporting framework to benchmark the performance of Irish tourism businesses and carbon calculators and supports to help businesses reduce their carbon footprint. • Administering €50million through further phases of the Tourism Business Continuity Programme of funding which will help sustain strategic tourism businesses and drive the sustainable recovery of the sector in the coming decade.
<p>Ireland’s Ancient East – Eastern Region Tourism Development Strategy 2022 – 2026 - Fáilte Ireland</p>  <p>https://www.Failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebSiteStructure/Documents/Irelands%20Ancient%20East/irelands-ancient-east-project-updated.pdf</p>	<p>Ireland’s Ancient East was launched in 2015 as a mechanism to unify the eastern region (outside of Dublin) as an internationally marketable tourism proposition. By 2019, tourism in IAE was worth €1.7bn to the regional economy, supporting approximately 55,000 jobs. Fáilte Ireland’s goal is to make Ireland’s Ancient East the most personally engaging cultural destination in Europe by harnessing the authentic character of its living culture, lush landscapes and hidden history to create unique visitor experiences, unite stakeholders and support vibrant communities. IAE will support sustained economic growth and community wellbeing while valuing our heritage, history and environment.</p> <p>The IAE Regional Tourism Strategy 2022 - 2026 identifies five strategic objectives to develop the tourism economy in the region. The objectives are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability so that it can thrive over the period of this strategy and create sustainable jobs in the local community. 2. Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development across the region. 3. Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Ireland’s Ancient East. 4. Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism. 5. Ensure the region is easy to access, navigate and consume. <p>The projects outlined in the Monaghan DEDP align to these overall regional objectives.</p> <p>The IAE East Regional Tourism Strategy (2022-2026) will ensure the appropriate interventions and supports are put in place to address the differences that exist in destination maturity levels across the region. Based on the regional assessment of tourism ‘maturity’ Monaghan is seen to be</p> <p>IAE Strategy will be delivered through a suite of Destination and Experience Development plans to drive growth of the visitor economy and to create sustainable jobs and strengthen local communities, while protecting our natural environment. The strategy sets out a number of objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Motivating the domestic and international consumer to visit Ireland’s Ancient East ■ Providing the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism ■ Ensuring the region is easy to access, navigate and consume for the visitor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enabling and assisting the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure it can thrive in the period of the strategy and create sustainable jobs in local communities ■ Building committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development across the region. <p>Despite trading challenges post-covid, demand for holidays in Ireland is high. Fáilte Ireland will continue to work closely with tourism businesses to build their capability and capitalise on this demand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of greenways <p>Driving Climate Action as a strategic priority and is committed to helping businesses in Ireland’s Ancient East become more sustainable.</p>
<p>Fáilte Ireland – Motivations Framework Feb 2023.</p> <p>https://issuu.com/discoverireland/docs/segmentation_study_pdfs_fm_100622_v3_lowres?fr=sYzVKNzU1NDU4NTc</p>	<p>Fáilte Ireland published the results of extensive behavioural research in early 2023, to inform the positioning of Irish tourism at the heart of sustainable best practice. The Motivations Framework has been developed from rigorous research and insights, analysing over 5,000 travel occasions. None of the motivations are mutually exclusive, but the primary motivation will always be the most important for a particular trip. The percentages in the Motivations Framework wheel reflect the total size of each motivation in domestic travel.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Energy. This motivation is driven by a desire to have fun, to be in a high energy atmosphere with like-minded individuals and to immerse oneself in all that a travel occasion has to offer. While night life is the most important, ease of access, local food and drink, and availability of things to do are also an important characteristic for this motivation. Typically, city breaks, festivals and sports events would sit in this motivation and it is skewed towards younger unconstrained adults. However, at the same time, unconstrained adults 45+ also index in this space. 2. Adventure, at 16% of all travel motivations, is led by the desire to test one’s own personal limits or to go outside of one’s own personal comfort zone. At the same time, it is not about extreme sports and instead about doing something physical over and above normal activities. The motivation is typified by outdoor activities and a consumer will usually only engage in one of these activities while on a trip. The occasion will be focused and intense. It is all about the depth of an experience, rather than the breadth of multiple experiences. Solo travel over indexes in this motivation, although couples are the primary demographic profile. 3. Exploration, at 17%, is heartland territory for tourism and is about discovering and exploring new and unfamiliar places. It is also the motivation where landscape, history, culture and place all come together. They are not seen in isolation from one another and therefore interconnected experiences are important. Both attractions and activities play a strong role in this motivation. Tourists are looking for multiple attractions and activities with which to engage and enrich their trip. This motivation is skewed towards 45+ unconstrained adults. 4. Time Out is what it says – time to turn off the phones and step away from day-to-day life. It is time to spend with one’s significant other, time that is cherished and which is low key in activities. It also a time for treating oneself. The location must be easy to get to, and is often one couples have wanted to spend time in. 5. Reconnection, at 11% is that time spent with friends where the focus is on relaxation, reconnecting and enjoying treasured moments. It is all about ease and convenience and not having to worry about anything when it comes to a trip. While there is little engagement in activities and attractions, friends in this motivation are likely to go to gigs or festivals while together. 6. Bonding is a strongly emotive segment and is all about creating lasting family moments and memories. It’s about focusing on those relationships which are most important to us and feeding the sense of nostalgia. Trip length tends to be longer in bonding than it is in the other motivations. It is also where we see the most habitual behaviour when it comes to destination choice and is dominated by families as the demographic profile. As a result, children’s needs and requirements drive all behaviour and choices, with safety and security being paramount. A family trip brings different days and different motivations, thus, this motivation feeds into Social Energy, Adventure and Exploration particularly. 7. Celebration, which is focused on celebrating and rejoicing in special milestones and achievements such as birthdays, weddings, graduations etc. It is characterised by short stays that are in convenient locations.

<p>Sustaining Tourism in Ireland: Understanding the Opportunity (2022) Fáilte Ireland</p>  <p>https://www.Failteireland.ie/Failteireland/media/WebSiteStructure/Documents/Publications/sustainable-tourism-understanding-the-opportunity.pdf?ext=.pdf</p>	<p>This document aims to identify the opportunities available to the Irish tourism industry based on critical international benchmarked research undertaken 2022. This is an impressive ‘call to action’ to adopt principles of sustainability at the heart of the Irish tourism Accommodation, Restaurants/bars/ cafés; Activities; and Attractions sectors. Travellers are increasingly sustainability minded, and are demanding immersive experiences, with opportunities to connect with local culture; have authentic meetings with local people and communities; with options for mental relaxation – all of which should be easy to access, with minimal impacts on the environment.</p> <p>It is critical to bridge the ‘Say-Do’ gap and actually implement practical sustainability solutions for environmental, social and economic dividends across the visitor offer. The three drivers of such experiential demand are (i) Immersion in nature; (ii) Culture & Connection; and (iii) Mental Wellbeing – which must have positive impact, with proof points to call out to visitors.</p> <p>Most of all, such experiences must be enjoyable and immersive, preferably in nature, but with sustainability built into the core of the tourism product: e.g. no single use plastics; renewable energy use, local foods with zero waste; pollinator gardens; e-biking and active travel; access to public transport; ecological and educational guides tours/ walks; accessible to all ages and capacities; partnerships with local producers; etc.</p> <p>Thus a wonderful opportunity exists for the Irish tourism trade and communities to embrace sustainability at the core of their products and services, and build on the considerable progress made over the past decade.</p>
<p>‘Realising our Potential’ National Action Plan for Rural Development Dept. Rural & Community Development, 2017</p>	<p>The National Action Plan for Rural Development commits to delivering funding for recreational infrastructure, training and jobs creation, using our natural assets. It identified a number of pillars to promote rural development.</p> <p>Key future policy for outdoor recreation and management</p> <p>Based on 5 Pillars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pillar 1: Supporting Sustainable Communities • Pillar 2: Supporting Enterprise and Employment • Pillar 3: Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreation Potential • Pillar 4: Fostering Culture and Creativity in Rural Communities • Pillar 5: Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity <p>Pillar 3 commits to delivering funding for recreational infrastructure, training and jobs creation, using natural assets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pillar 3 ‘Maximising our Rural Tourism and Recreational Potential’, focuses on the development of greenways and blueways, and other recreational opportunities, and to support sustainable rural jobs through targeted tourism initiatives. • Pillar 5 Improving Rural Infrastructure and Connectivity includes improvement of connectivity of rural areas through broadband connection and improved transport links.

National Climate Action Plan 2021
 Dept. Environment, Climate and Communications
 (Nov. 2021)



<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6223e-climate-action-plan-2021/>

The Climate Action Plan 2021 provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and setting us on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government and set out in the Climate Act 2021.

It will put Ireland on a more sustainable path; cut emissions; create a cleaner, greener economy and society; and protect us from the devastating consequences of climate change. It is a huge opportunity to create new jobs and grow businesses in areas like offshore wind; cutting-edge agriculture; and retrofitting, making our homes warmer and safer. The Plan lists the actions needed to deliver on our climate targets and sets indicative ranges of emissions reductions for each sector of the economy. It will be updated annually to ensure alignment with our legally binding economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral ceilings. This Plan aims to make Ireland one of the most ambitious countries in the world in addressing climate change and will cascade downwards to all regional and county development plans.

The Action Plan sets out 493 actions to be taken across all Government Departments and Agencies, in association with enterprise, agriculture, energy industries, as well as civil society, ten(10) of which are specifically focused on expanding our sustainable tourism offer, principally outdoor recreation, connectivity along greenways, blueways and peatways, as well as setting measurable targets to reduce the impacts of tourism on the environment.

National Planning Framework
 Project 2040



<https://npf.ie/project-ireland-2040-national-planning-framework/>

The NPF (Project 2040) sets out ten National Strategic Outcomes (NSO) or priorities to guide future development: Compact Growth; - Enhanced Regional Accessibility; - Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities; - High Quality International Connectivity; - Sustainable Mobility; - A Strong Economy supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills; - Enhanced Amenities and Heritage; - Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society; - Sustainable Management of Water and other Environmental Resources; - Access to Quality Childcare, Education and Health.

Community and Recreation are key issues in providing facilities and amenities that support Community, Economy and Environment.

As a key enabler to support the objectives of the NPF, the Government approved four funds, with a total allocation of €4bn over the 10-year period of the NDP. All four are competitive bid-based funds, to support innovative, collaborative projects in relation to Urban Regeneration and Development (€2bn), Rural Regeneration and Development (€1bn), Climate Action (€500m) and Disruptive Technologies (€500m), each to be overseen by the relevant Government Department.

A key focus for all four funds will be on collaboration between organisations and sectors, and on projects that will deliver impactful and transformational change.

Sustainable tourism development is central to the delivery of a number of the ten NSOs, including in particular No. 3 'Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities'; No. 7 'Enhanced Heritage & Amenity' and No. 9 'Sustainable Management of Environmental Resources'.

EU LEADER Rural Development Programme 2023- 2027



Economic	Social	Environmental
The Green Economy	Local Services	Water Resources
Farm Diversification	Community Facilities	Biodiversity Protection
Rural Tourism and Recreation	Digital Literacy	Renewable Energy
Enterprise Development	Youth Participation and Leadership	Climate Change Awareness
Artisan Food & Beverage		Climate Change Mitigation
Social Enterprise		

Since 1991, the EU LEADER RDP has provided rural communities across the EU with resources to enable local partners to actively engage and direct the local development of their own area, through community-led local development. The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) is responsible for the implementation of the LEADER Rural Development programme (RDP) in Ireland. Pobal supports DRCD in the administration of a number of elements of LEADER Programme. LEADER supports the local development of Ireland’s rural areas (excepting our five main urban City areas). The LEADER Programme works with communities and individuals through funding, supports and resources to assist in the development of stronger, resilient and prosperous communities. LEADER has supported projects and initiatives in the areas of enterprise, farm diversification, tourism, community facilities, greater social inclusion, or climate action.

The current LEADER Programme will run from mid-2023 – 2027. The broad areas in which support can be offered are:

1. Economic Development and Job Creation, including farm diversification ideas and tourism projects.
2. Rural Infrastructure and Social inclusion, including improving services and ideas for young people.
3. Sustainable development of rural environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation

Within the Economic strand, Rural Tourism and Recreation are a core element of the programme and will offer significant supports to enterprises in Monaghan. Monaghan Integrated Development CLG is based in Castleblayney.

NATIONAL OUTDOOR RECREATION, LANDSCAPE & BIODIVERSITY POLICIES

National Outdoor Recreation Strategy (NORS) (2023-2027)

Embracing Ireland’s Outdoors
National Outdoor Recreation Strategy
2023-2027



Department of Rural & Community Development (DRCD) and Comhairle na Tuaithe

The NORS adopts six strategic themes for the integrated development of Outdoor Recreation in Ireland:

1. Leadership: to create a more coordinated approach at national and county level to make best use of resources
2. Environment: to protect and enhance the environment through better planning and development of outdoor recreation in keeping with best practice in management of landscape and habitats
3. Awareness: to create awareness of outdoor recreation opportunities and how to enjoy the outdoors responsibly
4. Opportunities : to increase and support the numbers of people active in the outdoors
5. Access: to protect and improve access to the outdoors for the benefit of all.
6. Expertise: to improve awareness, knowledge, skills and expertise of stakeholders and partners.



Under each Strategic Objective, a number of key actions were identified within specific timeframes (1-5+ years), for delivery by key partners in recreational development countrywide, including DRCD, statutory agencies, local authorities with inputs from national organisations, recreational governing bodies and communities for various actions. The NORS provides an overarching framework for the development of outdoor recreation in Ireland, creating a shared approach for the many strategies, programmes, agencies and elements in Ireland’s outdoor recreation sector. In particular, it will seek to focus integrated delivery in a coherent fashion, with clearly articulated objectives, actions and responsibility for delivery. Application of best practice, common standards, sustained resourcing and funding will aim to increase participation of citizens of all abilities in outdoor recreation for societal wellbeing over the next five years.

The contribution which outdoor recreation makes to our physical and mental wellbeing has been recognised in the public response during the global pandemic of 2020-2021. This cohesive National Outdoor Recreation Strategy has the capacity to underpin recreational tourism and economic development in Monaghan.

Outdoor Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

ORIS contributes to the strategic objective of strengthened rural economies and communities as set out in the Project Ireland 2040 strategy. The objective is to provide funding for new outdoor recreational infrastructure and for necessary repair, enhancement or promotion of

<p>Dept. Rural & Community Development, May 2020</p>	<p>existing outdoor recreational infrastructure in countryside areas. The scheme invests in physical infrastructure that underpins sporting and recreational activities based on the use of the resources of the countryside; contribute to active lifestyles while building on the economic and tourism potential, and so are to the benefit of both local communities and tourist visitors alike. The scheme may also provide some limited funding for the marketing and promotion of such infrastructure, typically as part of a wider project involving capital supports.</p>
<p>Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways</p> <p>Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2018</p>	<p>Aims to assist in strategic development of nationally and regionally significant Greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard to deliver a quality experience for all users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of Greenways of scale and quality around the country over the next 10 years resulting in a significant increase in the number of people using Greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.</p> <p>The Strategy recognises the benefits that can arise from the further development of Greenways (mainly as ‘rail to trails’) as a tourism product with significant potential to attract overseas visitors, for local communities in terms of economic benefits, and for all users as an amenity for physical activity and a contributor to health and wellbeing.</p> <p>This poses significant opportunity for Monaghan to redevelop some of the disused railways as greenways, linking e.g. Monaghan town to Glaslough and thence to the Ulster Canal.</p>
<p>Outdoor Recreation Plan for Public Lands (2017-2021) Coillte, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Bord na Móna, Inland Fisheries Ireland</p>	<p>The national for public lands and waters was developed by five public landowning organisations (Coillte, NPWS, Waterways Ireland, Bord na Móna and Inland Fisheries Ireland), as a strategic development plan for recreation on public lands and waters, comprising 15% of Ireland’s land surface. The plan focused on seven strategic themes including: managing & maintenance of recreational infrastructure; improving recreational facilities; developing consistent standards; promotion of outdoor recreation; and maximising the benefits to communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessed that investment in outdoor recreation would reduce obesity, increase well-being and generate potential savings of €132 million per annum in health budget savings. Potential for job creation in rural areas is significant – Fáilte Ireland estimates that €1 million of tourism expenditure generates 29 jobs in tourism. <p>It is highly significant that the relevant public bodies are promoting the value of recreational investment and that sustained investment by Government would create multiple benefits in rural enterprise, tourism and health gains, as well as being a significant jobs and revenue generator.</p>
<p>Guide to Planning & Developing of Small Vessel Water Trails in Ireland (2013)</p> <p>Waterways Ireland, with ISC, NTO, Canoe Ireland</p>	<p>This practical guide sets out the general considerations for planning and development of a small vessel water trails for kayaking and canoeing, including snorkelling, exemplified by case studies. The guide proposes practical considerations of requisite trail attributes, safety, strategic planning & partnership, development costs, as well as responsibilities for longer term management & maintenance. Key considerations are issues of ownership rights in relation to the navigation, as well as fishing rights and the need for landowner consultation and agreement to gain permissive access.</p>
<p>Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future - A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009-2020</p> <p>Department of Transport, 2009</p>	<p>This strategy sets out a vision for how Ireland’s sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. The policy recognises the vital importance of continued investment in transport, including cycleways and walkways, to ensure an efficient economy and continued social development. The Government reaffirms its vision for sustainability in transport and sets out five key goals: i. to reduce overall travel demand ii. to maximize the efficiency of the transport network iii. to reduce reliance on fossil fuels iv. to reduce transport emissions v. to improve accessibility to transport</p>
<p>The National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020</p> <p>Department of Transport</p>	<p>The NCPF is derived from Smarter Travel policy document sets out a national policy for cycling, to create a stronger cycling culture, a safer environment for cycling and improved quality of life.</p>

<p>National Strategy for Angling Development 2015-2020 Inland Fisheries Ireland (Dept. Agriculture, Fisheries & Marine)</p> 	<p>The National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD) is the first comprehensive national framework for the development of Ireland's angling resources. Within an overarching conservation ethos and focus, the Strategy sets out three strategic objectives for angling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To make angling accessible and attractive through information, infrastructure and support. - To develop tourism through the promotion of our angling resource. - To recognise angling as a key leisure and recreation pursuit. <p>DAFM provided €2 million directly for capital projects and a further €537,000 under the Action Plan for Rural Development (to 2020). Total funding available to Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) to date is €3.437 million across all aspects of fisheries development, which are to be delivered under the umbrella of NSAD. Drawdown of funds is subject to all governance, environmental and other project requirements, such that delivery could take up a three year period reflecting the complex nature of fisheries projects. IFI officers promote capacity building and collaboration with voluntary organisations in delivering projects and to progress projects through governance and into delivery phase.:</p> <p>Angling has been allocated to 174 fisheries development and management projects nationwide; 75% of the projects have been completed to date; Angling access has been upgraded in 78 locations with a further 22 due for completion in 2019; Over 20 Information and Education initiatives supported, introducing approximately 1000 people to angling and informing visiting anglers; Including equipment to value of €60,000 for angling events, signage, marketing. Riparian enhancement, conservation and regeneration work completed on river channels; Anti-poaching equipment purchased and installed; Organised angling events funded to encourage positive social inclusion in communities; Over 5,000 hours of engagement from IFI local staff to provide support, information, assistance and advice.</p>
<p>New Strategic Vision for Forestry in Ireland climate action, biodiversity and recreation Coillte, April 2022</p>  <p>https://www.coillte.ie/coillte-launches-new-forestry-strategic-vision-to-optimize-its-contribution-to-irelands-climate-targets/</p>	<p>Coillte aims to deliver multiple benefits from its forests and to focus to climate action, biodiversity and recreation, as well as developing the forest and wood products industry. Coillte aims to grow 100,000 ha of new forests by 2050, supporting the delivery of >30% of Ireland's afforestation target. The company aims to create a carbon sink of 18 million tonnes (Mt) of CO₂ in new forests and to manage its existing forest estate to capture an additional 10 Mt of CO₂ by 2050.</p> <p>Coillte intends to increase the area of its forest estate managed primarily for nature from 20% to 50% in the long term, by enhancing and restoring biodiversity and planting new forests, half of which will be native woodlands. In terms of recreation, Coillte will enable investment of €100 million to create world class visitor destinations by 2030, aiming to double the number of recreation areas nationally to 500, to support local communities and the Irish tourism sector. The new strategic vision will be underpinned by Coillte's commercially successful business, aiming to enable creation of 1,200 direct and indirect jobs in rural communities to support the just transition to a low carbon economy in Ireland.</p> <p>Coillte reported in 2016 that it provides over 2,000km of waymarked trails, 180 recreation sites and 12 forest parks in the estate attracting 18 million visits annually.</p> <p>These forests provide open access recreational opportunities for visitors to the region, as recognised in Monaghan in a number of strategic sites, including Rossmore Forest Park; Lough Muckno (Black Island); and Dartrey Forest.</p>

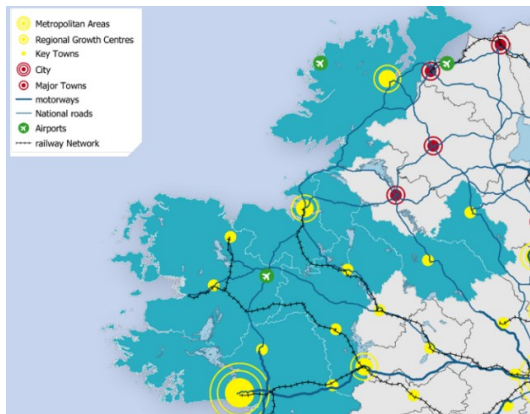
<p>National Landscape Strategy for Ireland (2015-2025) Dept. Arts, Heritage & The Gaeltacht</p>	<p>The National Landscape Strategy (NLS) obliges Ireland to implement policy changes and objectives concerning the management, protection and planning of the landscape. The NLS is used to ensure compliance with the European Landscape Strategy and to establish principles for protecting and enhancing our landscapes while positively managing its change. This is relevant for the future management of Slieve Beagh upland landscapes in the Monaghan borderlands.</p>
<p>National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 – 2021</p>	<p>Objective 1 – Mainstream biodiversity into decision-making across all sectors; 1.1.3. All Public Authorities and private sector bodies move towards no net loss of biodiversity through strategies, planning, mitigation measures, appropriate offsetting and/or investment in Blue-Green infrastructure; 1.1.6. Local Authorities will review and update their Development Plans and policies to include policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity; 1.1.7. Develop a Green Infrastructure at local, regional and national levels and promote the use of nature based solutions for the delivery of a coherent and integrated network; Objective 6 – Expand and improve management of protected areas and species; 6.2.1. Increase connectivity of the protected areas network using appropriate buffer zones, corridors, stepping stones and/or flyways.</p>
<p>The All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021 – 2025 (5-year Road Map)</p>	<p>The 2015-2020 Pollinator Plan made it clear that 33% of Ireland’s bee species are threatened with extinction due to reduced amounts of food and safe nesting sites in our landscapes. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan for 2021-2025 is a new five-year road map that aims to help bees, other pollinating insects and our wider biodiversity – as part of better management of our whole landscape to permanently support our struggling biodiversity. It is more ambitious with multiple partners coming together to deliver coordinated actions and encourages farmers, local authorities, schools, gardeners and businesses to create habitats where pollinators can survive and thrive.</p> <p>The AIPP 2021-2025 has 186 actions spread across six objectives. It has a 16-person steering group who provide oversight, with implementation coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Responsibility for delivering the actions is shared out among the main partner organisations, who have committed to taking action and funding them. There are 6 core objectives.</p>
<p>NATIONAL WATERWAYS & HERITAGE POLICIES</p>	
<p>Waterways Ireland Corporate Plan 2020-2022</p>	<p>Waterway Ireland’s (WI) is in the process of developing a longer term plan to 2030. In the meantime, its 2020-2022 Corporate Plan aims is to increase the use of the North-South inland waterways to provide high quality recreational amenities, well used by all the people who live near them, whilst also attracting increasing numbers of visitors, bringing jobs, creating new and sustaining existing businesses, and delivering prosperity. At the core of the Corporate Plan is delivery of maintenance and active management of the waterways.</p> <p>Many of the navigation features are now over 200 years old and are in need of significant investment. WI will continue to focus on ensuring public safety, water control, and investment in critical infrastructure in areas of greatest use. Funding grants for current and capital expenditure are allocated from the Irish Government, while 15% current expenditure is matched funding and capital allocation from the NI Executive.</p> <p>Five strategic themes (Management & Maintenance; Environment and Heritage; Affinity and Participation; Development and Income; and Organisation and People) form WI’s broad strategic goals.</p>
<p>Culture 2025 Éire Ildánach 2025 Dept. Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs</p>	<p>Culture 2025 sets out an overarching vision and framework for the future and outlines the priorities for action over the coming years. Through this policy framework, the Government seeks to nurture creativity, boost citizen participation, help more people to follow a sustainable career in the cultural sector, promote Ireland’s cultural wealth and ensure a cultural contribution to wider social and economic goals.</p>

REGIONAL POLICIES (Northern & Western Region)

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern & Western Regional Assembly

RSES Northern & Western Region 2020-2032 adopted in January 2020

<https://www.nwra.ie/pdfs/NWRA-RSES-2020-2032.pdf>



The RSES sets out regional policy for the growth of the Northern & Western Region for the next 12 years. It seeks to support the regeneration and growth of high quality mixed-use sustainable and transformative projects, meeting national and international standards in innovation, quality design, based on exemplary place making. Furthermore, the RSES seeks to revitalise the region’s towns, villages and rural areas.

“The landscape of the Northern and Western Region is internationally renowned for its Mountain Ranges, dramatic coastline, beaches and inland waterway networks, including the Shannon and Corrib. The region is home to half of the State’s National Parks, with many other outstanding assets, including 34 Blue Flag Beaches, Forest Parks, Trails and a growing number of established Greenways and Blueways.” RSES p. 191

The RSES recognises: an economic corridor extends from Dublin to Belfast and the counties of Cavan and Monaghan have a close relationshipand an easterly focus and the NPF recognises that they comprise part of a North Eastern functional area with Louth, where the key driver is the Dublin-Belfast cross border network, that influences both these counties. The Cavan/Monaghan sub-region also provides an important connection between the remainder of the Northern and Western region and the Greater Dublin Area. It recognises the strong rurality to the region, with areas of recreation and tourism based on assets of high environmental quality.

Key Towns are those regionally strategic employment centres of significant scale that can act as regional drivers that complement and support the higher-order urban areas within the settlement hierarchy (e.g. Galway, Sligo). They also have the potential to accommodate a significant level of growth in population and employment through appropriate investment in infrastructure, support services and placemaking initiatives.



Future priorities have been identified for Monaghan as a Key Town in the RSES:

- Industry, Enterprise and Employment lands in northeast could be connected to the national road network and their development should be integrated with the population growth; Enterprise and employment lands to the west of the town have similar characteristics and their development should be similarly phased;
- Development of the Ulster Canal Greenway, to provide a direct sustainable transport mode of regional benefit to healthy living and economic benefit through the development of the tourism offer.
- Regeneration and renewal of four specific target areas in the town centre, & smaller town centre sites that could also potentially become available for redevelopment.

In recognition of the region’s assets, the Assembly supports, through Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs):

- RPO 5.6 Establish a network of Historic Towns and Villages across the region through a Regional Fora of stakeholders that shall be co-ordinated by the NWRA in collaboration with Local Authorities, the Heritage Council, Fáilte Ireland, the DCHG and relevant stakeholders. The purpose shall be to promote awareness and investment in a regional network of Historic Towns and Villages, maintaining heritage integrity and quality of historic towns and villages.
- RPO 5.22 To protect and conserve our designated peatlands and bogs for reasons of biodiversity, ecosystem services, carbon sinks, areas of habitat importance, amenity and landscape value.
- RPO 5.23 To establish Regional Fora that shall prepare an audit of worked out bogs and peatlands within our region and to identify strategic sites and propositions of regional value, including but not limited to areas such as renewable energy, tourism, biodiversity, climate mitigation, education, recreation and amenity.

	<p>Facilitating a modal shift to more sustainable transport options, including walking and cycling is a key element in promoting healthier lifestyles, better traffic management and assisting in mitigating climate change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPO 6.26 The walking and cycling offer within the region shall be improved to encourage more people to walk and cycle, through: (a) Preparation and implementation of Local Transport Plans for Metropolitan Area, Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns, which shall encourage a travel mode shift from private vehicular use towards sustainable travel modes of walking, cycling and use of public transport. (b) Safe walking and cycle infrastructure shall be provided in urban and rural areas, (c) Development of a network of Greenways. • RPO 6.29 The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life. • RPO 6.32 Invest in transport networks and services in the region that are socially inclusive and provide a quality of service, connectivity and facilities to meet all societal needs, disabilities (including mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments) and meet the needs and opportunities of an ageing population. • RPO 6.51 Promote values and policies that make it easy to commute between home, work and school across the region in a way that contributes to a healthy, attractive and climate-friendly region. <p>The RSES notes (p. 255) that “Communities that are designed in a way that support physical activity, such as generously sized footpaths, safe cycle lanes, safe attractive stairways and accessible recreation areas, all encourage people to make healthy choices and live healthier lives. Countries with extensive cycle infrastructure report higher levels of cycling and lower rates of obesity.”.....” Recreation and amenity facilities contribute to the quality of life of the communities they serve. The provision of facilities that cater to the demands of an increasing population and which are accessible to all sectors and age groups is a key component in the creation of successful sustainable communities”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPO 7.9 Promote the provision of high-quality, accessible and suitably proportioned areas of public open spaces and promote linkage with social, cultural and heritage sites and buildings. In this process prioritise access for walking and cycling. <p>Chap. 9 All Island Cohesion: The Irish East Central Border Area Network provides a platform for collaboration between local authorities north and south, including Monaghan. Tourism is a key area of opportunity for the cross-border area and extensive networks exist on an all-island basis that needs to be nurtured and grown to meet its potential.</p> <p>Tourism is a key area of opportunity for the cross-border area and extensive networks exist that need to be nurtured and grown to meet its potential. There are many established Cross Border flagships such as the Cavan Burren Geopark /Marble Arch Caves. Furthermore, there are amenity projects being progressed, including ... the Ulster Canal Project from Cavan, via Monaghan to Counties Tyrone and Armagh. These projects ...are notable for the involvement of Cross Border bodies such as Waterways Ireland. There is undoubtedly an opportunity to upscale existing tourism ventures across the region and to develop further attractions of national and international scale.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPO 9.1 Various... d) Valuing Cultural Heritage by creating appealing places through attractive and imaginative building design, street layout, civic space and public realm design; Developing new offerings in support of existing ventures in the tourism sector, such as greenways, walking trails and other inter-urban connections, based on the wealth of natural and cultural heritage assets • RPO 9.6 To establish a Cross-Jurisdictional Working Group which collaborates on projects such as Blueways, Greenways, Walking/Hiking Trails/Peatways to foster improved local and regional links. • RPO 9.7 The Assembly will work with Local Authorities and other stakeholders in both jurisdictions to identify further potential projects which could benefit cross border communities and in doing so create an inventory of priority projects to be advanced to feasibility studies, and beyond. <p>The policy objectives as set out in the RSES are highly supportive of a holistic approach to development of tourism, outdoor recreation and amenities, both for citizens and visitors to the region. These objectives recognise that access to outdoor recreation provides additional social, economic and environmental benefits for all.</p>
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<p>EU INTERREG VA Programme</p> <p>Eastern Border Region /EU Programmes including e.g. Ulster Canal regeneration.</p>  <p>https://www.eastborderregion.com/eu-projects/</p>	<p>The INTERREG VA Programme is designed to promote greater levels of cross-border co-operation across Europe. Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland share a number of common features with other border areas across Europe. Typically, developmental problems include different policy approaches, with distorted infrastructure and communication networks resulting in reduced economic development, all of which hinder joined-up service delivery. The INTERREG VA Programme was designed to address many of these issues to promote greater economic, social and territorial cohesion across the region, supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of €240m contribution.</p> <p>The East Border Region in Ireland has formed strategic Partnerships with a range of key stakeholders across the eligible area and have been involved in the implementation of nine INTERREG VA Projects to the value of €104.37million, including the restoration of the Ulster Canal to provide much needed regeneration along the Border. The programme presents significant opportunities to deliver tourism and outdoor recreation projects in Monaghan.</p>
<p>ICBAN ‘FRAMEWORK OF REGIONAL PRIORITIES for the Irish Central Border Region of Ireland / Northern Ireland, 2021–2027’</p>	<p>Monaghan County Council, Fermanagh & Omagh District Councils and Mid Ulster District Council, are members of the cross-border ICBAN local authority partnership. The ICBAN ‘FRAMEWORK 2021–2027’ includes a vision for natural infrastructure initiatives and zones, enhancing the sustainable tourism and wellbeing potential of the region, including development of a network of cross-border greenways and blueways; mountain biking, food and heritage trails; and, river catchment and water management projects’.</p> <p>ICBAN proposes to realise the Vision under the five thematic pillars of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic development; • Infrastructure and connectivity; • Human Capital – Education, Training and Skills; • Liveable communities; • and Natural Capital – Greening the Region. <p>The pillars are referenced against international principles of sustainable development through the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to promote regional development without undermining or eroding the natural and built assets to the detriment of future generations.</p>
<p>THE SHARED ISLAND INITIATIVE</p> 	<p>The Shared Island Initiative involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with the Northern Ireland Executive and the British Government to address strategic challenges faced on the island of Ireland • further developing the all-island economy, deepening North/South cooperation, and investing in the North West and border regions • fostering constructive and inclusive dialogue and a comprehensive programme of research to support the building of consensus around a shared future on the island of Ireland. <p>A Shared Island unit in the Department of the Taoiseach acts as a driver and coordinator of this whole of government initiative. The Shared Island Fund was announced in Budget 2021, with €500m in capital funding available between 2021-25, ring-fenced for investment in collaborative North/South projects.</p> <p>The Shared Island Civic Society Fund promotes practical North South cooperation and engagement across a range of sectors and themes, consistent with the objectives and commitments of the Good Friday Agreement. Some civic society organisations have formed strong cross-border partnerships, or have members in both jurisdictions. However, in many areas, cross-border civic society interaction is limited or non-existent, notwithstanding common circumstances, concerns, and interests.</p>

**Monaghan Socio-Economic Statement,
March 2023**
**The Monaghan Local Economic and
Community Plan process - to develop the next
Local Economic & Community Plan)**

GOAL 4:

Champion and enhance the
County's arts, culture and sports

GOAL 5:

Grow and diversify the economy
and create high value
sustainable employment.

GOAL 6:

Unlock the County's tourism
potential to support economic
growth and sustainable
development

The Monaghan Local Economic and Community Plan (2015-2021) was developed to support the economic and community development of the county to support the quality of life, with vibrant communities and enterprises across the county. The LECP had 6 high-level goals including Brand and Image promotion; Skills and Training; Economic Growth; Health & Wellbeing; the Environment; and Civic and Voluntary Participation.

This is currently being reviewed and updated through the Socio-Economic Statement (SES) 2023. The SES for Monaghan is aligned with key policies of the Monaghan County Development Plan (2019-2025) Monaghan Climate Change Adaption Strategy, and Monaghan's Digital Strategy as well as the N&WRESE 2020-2032, the National Planning Framework (Project 2040) and the National Climate Action Plan 2023. Comprehensive and inclusive public consultation will be key to ensuring the success of the new Local and Economic Community Planning (LECP) process. Following analysis of feedback received during the consultation process, high-level goals will be revised and findings used to develop the objectives, actions and outcomes for the final LECP.

The preliminary 2022 Census results show that Monaghan's population increased to 64,832 in 2022, a 5.6% population growth since 2016. Assuming the average annual population growth between 2002 and 2022, County Monaghan is projected to have a population of 76,698 inhabitants by year 2050. Interestingly, the town with the highest population growth was Clones, growing by 22.8%.

Three of the six goals presented in the current Socio-Economic Statement (2023) will directly support the development of a vibrant tourism sector. Goals 4 and 5 will support the development of:


Goal 6: "unlock the County's tourism potential aims to support economic growth & sustainable development".

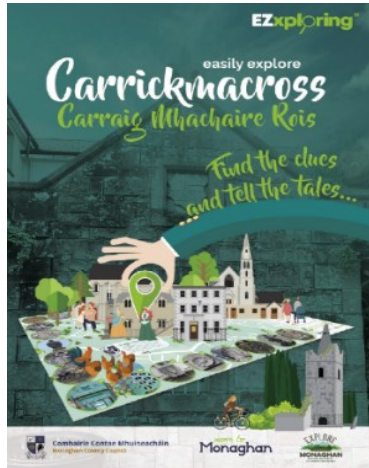
The public was asked to consider:

Supporting sustainable tourism initiatives to ensure optimal use of existing natural resources while effectively balancing the environmental impact of tourist activity.

- ✓ •Enhancing coordination and cooperation between those operating in the tourism sector to ensure a joint-up approach in relation to the development and promotion of Monaghan as a tourism destination.
- ✓ •Further developing and linking key attractions and ensuring the County benefits from the interest in sustainable and active tourism products(e.g. greenways and cycling).
- ✓ •Workingtoobtainpublicaccesstoattractionsthatmaybeonprivateland.
- ✓ •Pursuing enhanced marketing and promotion of Monaghan's tourism offering including in relation to the Ireland's Ancient East destination brand.
- ✓ •Explore opportunities for enhanced synergies to combine aspects of Monaghan's natural environment, heritage, culture and history.
- ✓ •Developingamoretargetedapproachtoattractvisitorsfromadiverserangeofcountriesandbackgrounds.
- ✓ •Collaborating with relevant stakeholders to enhance capacity, capability & skills within the tourism sector

The SES public consultation period closed in April 2023 and MCC is now working to develop the draft LECP based on feedback received from key stakeholders and the public.

<p>Monaghan Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021 MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL (see above also)</p>	<p>Monaghan LECP supports tourism and enterprise development thematically as follows, with particular reference to:</p> <p>Theme 1: Economic/Enterprise Development and Job Creation Sub-theme: Rural Tourism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for development and marketing of tourism accommodation 2. Encourage development and marketing of rural tourism leisure amenities, adventure tourism product and visitor attractions 3. Develop and support County tourism network 4. Support for utilisation of old buildings for the provision of tourism activities <p>Sub-theme: Enterprise Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support new start-up and expansion of Small to Medium Enterprises 2. Promote and assist the development of social enterprises 3. Support the development of the artisan foods, handcrafts and farm diversification <p>Sub-theme: Rural Towns</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot a Heritage Towns Initiative in two of the five towns in Co Monaghan 2. Support development of new guesthouses /B&B's /selfcatering / hostels in rural towns 3. Support the development of the arts/community infrastructure in towns <p>Theme 3: Rural Environment Sub-theme: Protection of Biodiversity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for programmes and training which raise awareness and public interest in maintaining and protecting biodiversity. 2. Support for the practical implementation of biodiversity projects within rural areas.
<p>Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme 2017 -2022 Monaghan County Council</p> 	<p>The Tourism Statement of Strategy commits to sustainable development and promotion of Monaghan’s significant assets, linked to the regional action plan for jobs and the LECP Tourism objectives.</p> <p>In the Tourism Work Programme 2017-2022 – eight (8) key actions were identified, centred on core activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Product Development ✓ Experience Development ✓ Festivals & Events ✓ Marketing & Promotion ✓ Regional Collaboration & Bespoke Initiatives <p>These Tourism Development Initiatives were progressed by MCC from 2017- 2022, with the support of the national Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), RDP/ LEADER, Shared Island and MCC funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rossmore Cycle Trail: The cycle trail was designed following consultation with key stakeholders such as Coillte, Emyvale Cycling Club and Cycle Ireland. The project was completed and officially launched in April 2022. • Monaghan Way Upgrade – Inniskeen to Castleblayney: upgrade project contracted to survey the route and to provide specifications for upgrade works. The anticipated completion date for the project is 2023. • Dartrey Forest Enhancements: Landscape architects were appointed to work up detailed designs to enhance the natural assets of Dartrey Forest, with a view to maximising its recreational value, due for completion in 2023. • LEADER Heritage Cluster Project: Signage - design team was appointed to design and install signage and interpretation panels at Rossmore Forest Park, completed in September 2022. • Conservation Management Plans - multi-disciplinary design team, including archaeologists, was appointed to draw up Conservation Management Plans for Rossmore Forest Park and the Black Pig’s Dyke at Scotshouse. The projects identified will be progressed as funding becomes available.

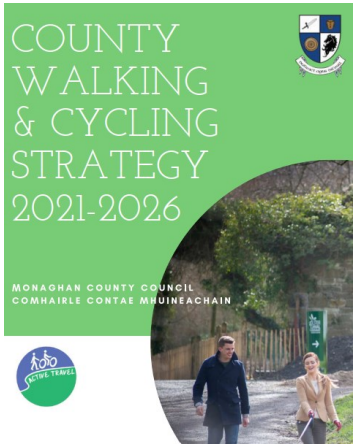


- The Destination Towns-Fáilte Ireland scheme will see the enhancement of Monaghan Town as a visitor destination through delivery of a multi-use events space in Church Square, scheduled for completion in 2023.
- Sliabh Beagh Partnership Committee: a cross-border initiative with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Mid Ulster District Council, with representation from elected members, community groups and the business community in each council area for a major tourism feasibility study for the joint catchment area.
- Dromore River Blueway: plans to develop a Blueway along the Dromore river system from Ballybay to Lisnalong. Canoeing Ireland was appointed in September 2022 to carry out a technical water survey which is a key project development requirement.
- Lough Muckno Vision Report: Following development of a Visioning Report for Lough Muckno Estate, Castleblayney and the surrounding area, a feasibility study of the concept proposals was progressed in 2022 and will determine next steps in the feasibility study process.
- Summer of Food Series: Monaghan's food businesses and producers participated in a promotional campaign highlighting several of the county's leading food businesses and foodie experiences, with a particular emphasis on what's new, innovative and unique about each. The Summer of Food series was launched in June 2022.
- EZxploring Trail Maps for County Monaghan: Monaghan Tourism worked in conjunction with EZxploring and the Municipal Districts to create a suite of new town trail activity maps for the county, specifically targeted at families and children. Trail maps are for download from <https://monaghtourism.com/brochures/>
- Tourism Promotion: A range of multi-media promotional activities and events were undertaken using digital platforms and active content to promote Monaghan as a superb place to visit.
- Opening of the Patrick Kavanagh Centre, Iniskeen – was a major step in the development of a literary centre as a gem at the heart of Monaghan's tourism offer. It aims to attract 10,000 visitors by 2026


<https://www.Fáilteireland.ie/Utility/News-Library/patrick-kavanagh-centre-opens-in-monaghan.aspx>

The Tourism Priorities for County Monaghan Tourism Unit in 2023 are:

- Complete delivery of public realm tourism enhancements to Monaghan Town
- Progress Project Development of Dromore River Blueway
- Develop New Strategy Document for Tourism 2023 - 2028
- Continue to seek funding for tourism development projects
- Deliver Sliabh Beagh Shared Island Feasibility Study project
- Progress delivery of Dartrey Forest recreational enhancements
- Operate seasonal tourist office in Monaghan
- Deliver promotional campaigns and on-going PR activity for the county
- Facilitate networking and organise tourism trade engagement initiatives
- Continue to grow the visitor numbers and widen the visitor base at the Kavanagh Centre, and develop an enhanced events programme and retail opportunity at the Centre.

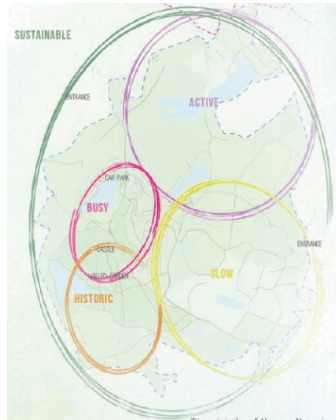
<p>Monaghan Local Economic & Community Plan 2015-2021</p> <p>Monaghan County Council</p>	<p>Monaghan LECP supports tourism and enterprise development thematically as follows, with particular reference to:</p> <p>Theme 1: Economic/Enterprise Development and Job Creation Sub-theme: Rural Tourism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for development and marketing of tourism accommodation 2. Encourage development and marketing of rural tourism leisure amenities, adventure tourism product and visitor attractions 3. Develop and support County tourism network 4. Support for utilisation of old buildings for the provision of tourism activities <p>Sub-theme: Enterprise Development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support new start-up and expansion of Small to Medium Enterprises 2. Promote and assist the development of social enterprises 3. Support the development of the artisan foods, handcrafts and farm diversification <p>Sub-theme: Rural Towns</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot a Heritage Towns Initiative in two of the five towns in Co Monaghan 2. Support development of new guesthouses /B&B's /selfcatering / hostels in rural towns 3. Support the development of the arts/community infrastructure in towns <p>Theme 3: Rural Environment Sub-theme: Protection of Biodiversity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for programmes and training which raise awareness and public interest in maintaining and protecting biodiversity. 2. Support for the practical implementation of biodiversity projects within rural areas.
<p>Monaghan Walking & Cycling Strategy 2021-2026</p> 	<p>Most journeys undertaken in Ireland are under 2km. In recognition of climate imperatives, Monaghan has responded to by developing an Active Travel strategy, based on its Settlement Strategy and DMURS, to encourage citizens to walk/cycle wherever possible for school, work or leisure. It is noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Travel by walk/cycle contributes to regeneration of towns and villages by making them more attractive places to live. • MCC has a key role in provision of walking/cycling infrastructure such as footpaths, trails and open spaces for leisure, as well as greenways. • MCC has set up a dedicated Active Travel Unit with four officers to oversee the implementation of the Strategy. <p>The strategy strongly recognises the role of walking and cycling in supporting tourism. This includes a commitment to build a 190km mid-Ulster network of linkages using the Ulster Canal Greenway and disused railways. Planning and environmental approvals and consents are required. SEA and other surveys are underway for the Middletown, Co. Armagh to Smithstown, Co. Monaghan element, as well as the Smithstown to Clones element, to be phased over 5-10 years. Planning was granted for the Monaghan Town to Armagh border in July 2021.</p> <p>The Clones -Lough Erne section of the Ulster Canal is a key element in the regeneration of the canal as a major waterway through mid-Ulster and has the potential to be a major tourism asset. It features in the Northern Ireland Greenways Strategic Plan 2016, thus has support on both sides of the Border.</p> <p>The Strategy recognises that walking and cycling are the two activities most pursued by tourists (international and domestic) based on Fáilte Ireland metrics and “commits to development of walking – cycling infrastructure to support the overall development of the county’s tourism product”.</p>

	<p>A number of Greenway scoping exercise are underway, using the extensive defunct 19th C. railway infrastructure as linear walk-cycle routes that can be used for community, leisure and tourism. A number of these routes are to be prioritised for development in line with regional and national priorities. In particular:</p> <p>Objective 1: Action 4.4 – 4.10 support the development of walking & cycling infrastructure and festivals that will support tourism development across the county.</p> <p>Objective 3: Action 5.7 -5.8 commit to collaborative cross border working to deliver the Greenways/ Ulster Canal and to work with MCC Tourism Unit and Fáilte Ireland to promote the walking/cycling product.</p> <p>Finally, the Strategy commits in full to the development of Slieve Beagh as an Outdoor Recreation Hub at Knockatallon, with stronger active travel links from Monaghan and Clones to the uplands. Provision of infrastructure for camper vans is also included in this objective.</p>
<p>Monaghan Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025 Heritage Office, Monaghan County Council</p> 	<p>This Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Plan is a unique approach to addressing two key areas of responsibility for MCC in a unified fashion. Monaghan CC commits to ensuring that the interactive ecoservices and amenity values of biodiversity and heritage need to be protected and sustainably utilised in heritage led regeneration, sustainable tourism, habitat protection, carbon sequestration, nature friendly agriculture as part of our landscape. The strategy sets out the range of challenges and opportunities, as well as the range of adaptations, available to Monaghan and its citizens to protect these intrinsic assets.</p> <p>The strategy identifies thirteen (13) Heritage and Biodiversity Priority Strategy Themes and sets out a clear Action Plan to address each of these through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerated efforts to improve awareness and halt biodiversity loss; demonstrating good custodianship of MCC-owned heritage including maintaining appropriate use, re-use and repair; and effective management of biodiversity. • Incentivise private involvement in initiatives that have positive outcomes for biodiversity and heritage. • Use existing legislation to support positive outcomes for biodiversity and heritage. • Participate in Biodiversity Week, Heritage Week and World Wetland Day. • Invite citizens to take part in inventories, surveys and protection, with the guidance of experts • Be mindful of needs for young people and design particular events and training for them. • Support multi-stakeholder partnerships for heritage promotion and conservation. • Search for supplementary funding. • Make heritage more accessible through digital and other means where appropriate
	<p>In response to the successful <i>'The Gathering 2013'</i> and <i>'Ireland 2016'</i>, and more recently the 'Creative Ireland' initiative which places culture and creativity at the core of tourism activity, Monaghan County Council has developed this 'Reaching Out' strategy to engage more proactively with Monaghan's overseas diaspora.</p> <p>In this document, MCC commits to developing networks and connections, as well as provision of dedicated resources, to enhancing Monaghan's reach to people living overseas to celebrate their connections with the county as well as their achievements in their adopted homes.</p> <p>The Council has embraced the use of the 'Local Diaspora Toolkit' and 'Global Diaspora Strategies Toolkit', to facilitate the ongoing building of links and relationships from local to county level. The Council will embrace both cultural and economic links with members of the Diaspora.</p> <p>The key strategy will be four-pronged: Identification > Communication > Engagement > Follow-Up</p> <p>A series of actions are proposed under each of the four 'prongs' to bring the strategy to fruition and to strengthen the diasporic network over the coming years.</p>

<p>Monaghan Reaching Out – A Framework for Diaspora Engagement</p>	<p>The Council is committed to working with local community groups, local historical societies, the public participation network (PPN), sporting and cultural bodies such as the County Library, Museum, GAA and Comhaltas Ceoilteoirí Éireann and others, who have links with the wider Diaspora to identify those who may wish to engage and to build stronger links.</p> <p>Case studies are cited to provide examples of how this will work in practice, with recommendations for action.</p>
<p>Monaghan Destination & Experience Development Plan (MDEDP) 2023 (within Ireland’s Ancient East)</p> 	<p>A crucial output from the collaboration of the Tourism Unit with Fáilte Ireland was the production of the Destination & Experience Development Plan launched in June 2022. The MDEDP is a five-year commercial destination and experience development plan to support the development of unique and compelling destination experiences focused on a number of immediate and strategic destination opportunities within the county. The full plan can be viewed at www.monaghan.ie/tourism/monaghan-destination-experience-development-plan</p> <p>Based on Fáilte Ireland’s destination maturity criteria, Monaghan is classified as an ‘Aspiring’ destination, requiring an immediate focus on establishing and building effective local tourism networks, maximising the potential of the existing tourism product base and improving the visitor infrastructure. By addressing these requirements, an appropriate mix of interventions will be applied to build a distinctive Monaghan visitor destination. The immediate focus will be</p> <p>(i) the development of tourism clusters (ii) to create the local conditions to increase the reasons for visitors to consider Monaghan for a holiday and (iii) to increase their length of stay within the county. It will promote a collaborative approach where tourism industry partners will cross sell, adopt new approaches to packaging and develop motivational Monaghan visitor itineraries.</p> <p>This approach will be supported through an experience development focus maximising existing cultural, heritage and outdoor assets to build a year-round tourism proposition for visitors to consider. It will sustainably maximise the potential of destination assets such as Castle Leslie, the Ulster Canal, Slieve Beagh, the Patrick Kavanagh Centre and Rossmore Forest Park as year-round attractors and a base from which to grow additional supporting experiences. Projects will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on estate heritage villages such as Glaslough • Ongoing development of the multi-functional outdoor Recreation Park at Lough Muckno in Castleblayney • Development of Monaghan as a ‘Destination Town’ <p>Developing destinations requires a multi-faceted approach that impacts on the quality of the visitor experience. This requires a focus beyond simply visitor attractions, activities and accommodation to also include the quality of visitor facilities, local services and the presentation of local communities to ensure every aspect of the destination experience meets visitor expectations. The development of destination towns and local villages across Monaghan and future public realm investment will explore opportunities to maximise the current investment in projects such as the Peace Campus, Monaghan Museum and Lough Muckno. It will create additional focal points for the destination and fulfil a key role in signposting visitors into other parts of the county.</p> <p>MONAGHAN DEDP OBJECTIVES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a series of tourism industry clusters and visitor hubs that will link visitor experiences and communities across the county and deliver an enhanced range of reasons to motivate visitors to explore the wider Monaghan destination. 2. Develop four to five key tourism projects in County Monaghan that contribute to its growth into a year round visitor destination. 3. Maximise and build on the potential of existing heritage assets. 4. Capitalise on the wide range of opportunities Castle Leslie Estate offers. 5. Generate increased economic returns from tourism by increasing the value generated by visitors to Monaghan. 6. Elevate the position of Monaghan as a tourism destination through new levels of collaboration. 7. Maximise the potential provided through the new investment in the Peace Campus /County Museum and Monaghan Destination Town. 8. Convey the rich 10,000 year history of the area to the modern day Monaghan story. 9. Examine a differentiated approach to sustainability through ReWilding to leverage the natural and built heritage assets 10. Explore the opportunity to develop a visitor attraction of scale within the county.

Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan

Monaghan County Council, 2016



The Rossmore Masterplan was commissioned in late 2016 by Monaghan County Council in partnership with Coillte, reflecting a memorandum of agreement reached between both organisations.




Rossmore Park is a 410 hectare forest park, located to the immediate south of Monaghan town. Passing through mature woodlands, alongside lakes and ruins, its network of paths offers a range of routes for walkers and runners, and general enjoyment of nature. The Masterplan sets in place a vision for the future of the Park as a place of nature, of history, of forestry and of enjoyment for residents and visitors to the area.


It was researched and compiled through a collaborative process with elected members, interest groups and the people of Monaghan. The Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan is intended to be used to guide all future management, infrastructure and activities in the park. It sets out a series of objectives and key principles, followed by a total of 17 different projects designed to help the Council, Coillte and its partners look after the park, balance its interests and help realise its significant potential.


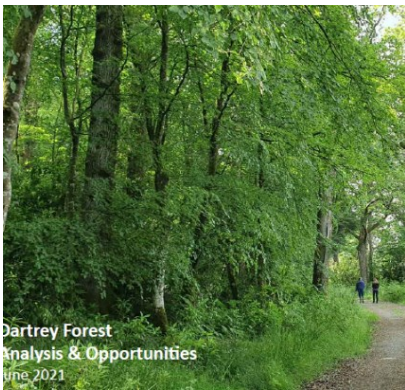
Two important concepts underpin the Rossmore Forest Park Masterplan, namely 'Balanced' and 'Activation'. Key to successfully integrating these will be maintaining a balance between uses across the Park, broadly allocated to defined Zones to include a mix of activities, heritage, cultural, play, creativity, gardening and relaxation spaces:

- the central car park is the 'Busy' area, primed to sustain the highest footfall and levels of vehicular movement.
- The vicinity of the castle ruins is the most 'historic' area of the park and should prioritise the conservation and sharing of the park's heritage.
- The northern section, including the Twin Lakes, will provide for more 'Active' uses in the park, and is best suited for activities such as running and cycling.
- Finally, the remainder of the Forest Park should be preserved for 'Slow' activities to ensure plentiful opportunities for quiet contemplation and relaxation.

Rossmore Forest Park will be a flagship of sustainability through uses of renewable energies and technologies throughout. It will provide a core element of Monaghan Town's tourism offering as the site is developed over the coming decade.

<p>Black Island Trails Concept, Muckno Park</p> 	<p>Further concept development was undertaken for trail development around Black Island within Lough Muckno Park, with improved trail hierarchy targeting specific groups; enhanced signage; boardwalking across flood-prone zones and opportunities for outdoor classrooms and creative spaces. The low impact proposals using natural materials would complement the existing ambiance and environment of Black Island.</p>
<p>Slieve Beagh Masterplan (2019) Monaghan County Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council</p> 	<p>The Slieve Beagh Masterplan was jointly commissioned to establish a strategic vision for the future of this upland area. The plan was researched working in close consultation with local residents, community organisations and elected members of both Councils. This report summarises the findings of the research process and sets out aims, objectives and a series of projects for the future of the region. It seeks to set in place a road map for regeneration, helping the area to fulfil its potential as a visitor destination, while contributing to its needs for continued environmental protection, cultural interpretation and economic development. The Masterplan presents an action plan of 10 proposed projects for delivery over the short, medium and long term by a range of stakeholders.</p> <p>The vision for the area: “Slieve Beagh is a unique cross border region of Ireland whose high quality natural environment provides a haven for wildlife and an opportunity to connect with and explore the natural world. Its natural assets are cherished and protected by the local communities, who work together, supported by Local Authorities, to develop improved access to the region’s many natural and cultural delights. The Slieve Beagh visitor experience is community based, sensitively managed and focused on promoting the exploration of the wonderful natural and cultural landscape of this unspoilt uplands area.”</p> <p>A total of 29 actions are proposed to address each of the 10 Themes (A-J) to develop a sustainable, community-based cross-border outdoor recreational destination that will stimulate tourism enterprise development. However, as recognised in the Monaghan Walking & Cycling Strategy 2021-26, this is an ecologically sensitive zone, subject to an EU LIFE programme, that will require careful management of any tourism proposals to ensure its long term sustainability.</p> <div data-bbox="745 927 1312 1331" data-label="Image">  </div> <div data-bbox="1330 927 1552 1315" data-label="Text"> <p>Slieve Beagh, which has its own Masterplan to direct development, is a very special place. Its blanket bog serves as a carbon sink; it is one of only a few water sources left in Ireland which are still rated as high quality, and it is home to a clutch of protected species, including the curlew, the hen harrier and the marsh fritillary butterfly. It is a precious habitat, and is part of an INTERREG-funded cross border conservation project to restore the peatlands. There are a number of routes in place across the mountain, and further careful development for eco-tourism is planned.</p> </div> <p style="text-align: right;">from Walking Cycling Strategy 2021-26</p>

<p>Sliabh Beagh Eco-Tourism Destination Concept Appraisal –Work Packages 1-3 (Outdoor Recreation NI, 2023)</p>	<p>In 2023, a proposal was prepared in 2023 to develop the Sliabh Beagh Eco-Tourism Destination Concept Appraisal. It reviews 24 potential trails for potential trail development including both new build trail and trail upgrade.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriately waymarked and interpreted with signage branded with agreed branding. •The following items will be addressed after the initial options appraisal – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of primary and secondary trail heads • Additional facilities such as additional/ enhanced car parking, toilet facilities etc • Trail network and connectivity maps • Additional feasibility/ engineering studies (beyond the scope of the current study) are required for some potential trails/ associated infrastructure e.g. Lumfords Glen, Favour Royal Blackwater Bridge, Favour Royal Burkes Waterfall viewpoint, enhanced or additional car parking, toilet facilities.
<p>Sliabh Beagh: Audit & Hero Attractor (CHL 2023, for Monaghan Co Council)</p>  <p>Example Outer Gateway Sign with 2019 Colour Logo</p>	<p>A review was undertaken to assess potential for a hero attractor at Slieve Beagh. It provides an overview of Market Scale and estimates the market as comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small catchment population of approx. 178,000; Wider catchment still fairly small: approx. 328,000 • Tourism markets are larger: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fermanagh & Omagh - 428,000; Mid Ulster - 147,000; Monaghan - 134,000 • Other niche markets would include schools/educational, biodiversity and special interest groups. <p>There are no major tourism attractions in the immediate area that would attract visitors and the main urban centres (Omagh, Dungannon, Enniskillen, Monaghan) have plenty of other options for outdoor recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The top attractions across the three areas are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dungannon Park 404,000 (MU); Castle Archdale Country Park 319,000 (FO); Ballyronan Marina 263,000 (MU) and Lough Fea 202,000 (MU) • Cuilcagh Boardwalk (FO) has been an unexpected success with almost 100,000 visits and now needs management and an alternative but similar experience elsewhere to take the pressure off • Todd’s Leap activity centre in Ballygawley gets about 75,000 visitors • Most visited attraction in Monaghan is the County Museum with c. 20,000 visitors <p>There is a limited accommodation base in the immediate area, with the exception of the Sliabh Beagh Hotel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approx. 720 hotel beds across 7 key bases: Monaghan town, Glaslough, Ballygawley, Clogher, Fivemiletown, Clones and Knockatallon. Greatest concentration in Monaghan (470). • More generally there are 7,500 registered beds (excl. Airbnb) across the three local authority areas. • Pre-covid, occupancy levels were low across the area. <p>Based on the challenges and opportunities, the study present a series of high level concepts to develop Slieve Beagh sustainably, focused on nature and outdoors. It recommends that a multi-criteria analysis be undertaken of these c. 10 concepts, using pre-agreed criteria and weightings to select a Concept to take to the next stage of refinement.</p>
<p>Sliabh Beagh – Feasibility Strategy Initial Options (Gateway & Signage) (Paul Hogarth/ Bright / Muir 2023)</p>	<p>The 2019 Masterplan’s priority is to improve accessibility of the Sliabh Beagh Area for visitors. This current study examines the options for Gateway signage at the entrances to the Slieve Beagh region with appropriate graphics and artworks. The idea is to facilitate the journey of visitors into Slieve Beagh and orient them while journeying through the district. All of this will underpin integrated tourism development based on the Masterplan 2019.</p>

<p>Monaghan County Council Destination Towns Programme</p> 	<p>Monaghan Public Performance Space, Church Square - Design Development (HJL 2022) This concept study by Henry J Lyons presents design ideas to transform Church Square outside Monaghan Courthouse into a civic performance space in the heart of Monaghan Town.</p> <p>It examines the site options; presents design sketches for various settings, events and audiences to develop the overarching suite of concepts. The design development is then presented with sketches and examples of best practice internationally based on optimal use of space and ease of mobility for users. Additionally, examples of aesthetically pleasing street and performance furniture is presented for consideration by Monaghan County Council.</p>
<p>Monaghan County Council (2021) Dartrey Forest – Analysis & Opportunities</p>  <p>Dartrey Forest Analysis & Opportunities June 2021</p>	<p>This study (Hogarth 2021) reviews the potential for recreational development of the Coillte-owned Dartrey Forest near Rockcorry on the border of Monaghan and Cavan. The forest was originally part of a demesne but has subsequently had commercial forestry as well as some of the original forest remaining.</p> <p>The study reviews the various habitats, vegetation types (flora, conifer, broadleaf trees) and settings (forest, lacustrine, etc) and proposes a series of looped walks ranging from 2.1km (Fairfield) through to 7.2km (Temple Loop).</p> <p>It critically analyses the entrances to the park, parking amenities, signage and makes proposals for initial interventions, enhancements and waymarking, centred on defined key Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Enhanced arrival & amenity, additional parking, ✓ development of Walking Route from Rockcorry, Trailhead map) ✓ Plantings such as Oaks & Horse Chestnut trees; ✓ Boardwalk / Paths weaving through the forest at ‘watery’ sections, ✓ Tree Viewing Platform, ✓ Waterside Views & Woodland Picnic Areas, Woodland Glade and ✓ the opening up of some of the lakeside vistas.

Appendix 2 - Marketing & Communications Planning

A2.1 Introduction

As seen in **Chapter 6 Marketing and Communications** above, it is important that Monaghan continues to build incrementally, in a strategic and innovative manner, the county's tourism economy over the coming decade. The plan below elaborates a smart pathway to see the related marketing and communications actions and priorities realised.

A2.2 Audience Development Strategy for County Monaghan

Audience strategy development is the creation of a strategic approach to focus on, attract and increase specific types of visitors to the county, encouraging them to stay longer, spend more time and money, return regularly, and become advocates for the county and its offering.

Visitors to Monaghan can be segmented in many ways, by geographic source, by age, social demographics, values, lifestyle and more importantly by needs and motivations.

The suggested audience development strategy aims to capture the best prospect visitors for the short to medium term – for the case of Monaghan it is based on a dual lens of motivations and geography.

Audience Development Strategy - The Motivations

This plan fortuitously coincided with the release of recent Fáilte Ireland research into the domestic holidaymaker motivations⁷. The research undertaken sought to understand the motivations for travel for the domestic market, and in surveying over 3000 people it created meaningful insights into audience travel motivations which can now be leveraged by Monaghan going forward.

These motivations formed the cornerstone of the Marketing Strategy workshop undertaken with key members of the tourism trade in Castleblaney in May 2023.

By defining the motivations of the audiences currently coming to Monaghan and by identifying the motivations of target audiences, the approach to demand generation can, and should be, tailored to meet these needs.

Fáilte Ireland Domestic Travel Motivations



⁷https://issuu.com/discoverireland/docs/segmentation_study_pdfs_fm_100622_v3_lowres?fr=sYzVknZU1NDU4NTc

To develop an audience strategy, it is first essential to understand who the visitor to Monaghan currently is and align these visitors to the different motivations. In understanding this, it is then possible to identify the opportunity audiences, or the visitors that are missing. Once this is complete, Monaghan will have a strong vision of the types of activities the existing and target audiences would be motivated by and the types of messages that will resonate and encourage their visit.

Developed as part of the stakeholder workshop against the backdrop of a detailed review of the domestic motivations framework, the following core audience motivations have been identified as priority for Monaghan: these are- Social Energy, Celebration, Bonding and Reconnection.

Social Energy: This motivation is centred around being immersed in the vibrancy and atmosphere of a location and is focussed on being around people. An example of capturing this audience would be through the development of small events and festivals that draw people to the destination. This audience is very aligned to a number of strategic recommendations in the wider strategy including development of a niche festivals and events strategy and the further development of Monaghan as a host location for angling events and competitions of scale.

Monaghan Audience Motivations

Social Energy	Celebration	Bonding	Reconnection
Couples and small friends groups travelling for an event	Couples and friends / family groups travelling for special occasions	Families, including multi-generational and extended family groups holidaying in the region.	Small groups of friends, spending time together in a relaxed and unhurried environment

Celebration: Identified strongly through the workshop, this motivation represents audiences (friends and family groups) who are celebrating or commemorating special occasions or milestones, like birthdays, anniversaries, or other important life events. Especially relevant to Monaghan is the fact that the destination choice often relies on being convenient and easy to get to- allowing for leverage of the location from key city hubs like Belfast and Dublin. Monaghan has already enjoyed success with Clan gatherings and related which are linked to both the celebration, the social energy and the bonding motivations.

Bonding: Focussed on nurturing and strengthening relationships, this motivation encompasses families of all ages but especially those with younger children. Memory making is important and simple activities and special moments done well can succeed in exceeding expectations. Businesses working together to develop family focussed experiences can be very effective way to capture this market or adding simple family focussed activities can deliver high levels of visitor. This last segment is undervalued and underserved in Monaghan currently.

Reconnection: Focussed on quality time and time well spent with friends in a relaxed and unhurried manner, sometimes this motivation will be connected to a public event, recreation-together, or performance used as a catalyst to come together with friends. Often the destination is based around locations where the friends or family are based. This again ties in strongly with the strategic recommendation to build a programme of events, outdoors options, and niche festivals to attract this audience.

Audience Development Strategy – The Geography

To complement the audience motivations, the geographic audience strategy focuses on **where** the visitor is coming from. In terms of a geographic approach to attracting visitors, it is widely recognised that the domestic market presents the strongest potential for Monaghan in the short to medium term – driving regional and seasonal spread- the number of trips taken in 2022 surpasses 2019 figures and represented a 14%⁷ increase thus presenting a robust and sustainable primary focus market for Monaghan.

It has been identified by the stakeholders that Monaghan’s unique location on the border and within easy reach of densely populated hubs of Dublin and Belfast, offers all the benefits of the traditionally more rugged or unspoilt destinations like Donegal, without the investment of significant travel time required to reach it. Linked to the very real trend to ensure that audiences “spend their time well” this is a factor to be leveraged.

Based on this, there are three strands to the proposed geographic strategy- a local strategy, a neighbouring county strategy and a further-afield visitor strategy. As outlined below, the predominant focus is to:

... keep locals local, to bring those from neighbouring counties into Monaghan and to attract visitors from further afield to try Monaghan.

To serve Monaghan best the domestic market has been further divided by geographic location into the following areas:

- Hyper-Local: visitors living in Monaghan spending time and discretionary spend in Monaghan.
- Local: visitors from within a 60-minute drive time of Monaghan travelling for day trips or overnight visits
- National: Visitors from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (the Island of Ireland) mainly travelling for overnight visits.
- Some limited international visitors– this is often identified as a diaspora audience primarily driven by visiting friends and relatives.

**Caveat: in general, the national market is deemed to be the Republic of Ireland, however, given the geographic location of the county on the border between north and south, for the purpose of this plan, we refer to national market as encompassing the visitors on the island of Ireland.*

Geographic Audience Strategy

Hyper- Local

Keep our locals in Monaghan for day trips and overnights

Local: Neighbours

Bring visitors from our neighbouring counties to Monaghan for day trips and overnights

National: Visitors

Entice visitors from further afield to try Monaghan for short breaks. Welcome back those Visiting F&R

⁷Fáilte Ireland winter consumer update May 2023

Reason to Visit – Types of Visits

Within the domestic market, there are different types of visits, be they day trips, short breaks, or extended holidays. In terms of Monaghan, it is recommended that a focus be put on the day trip market and short break market in the short to medium term.

The Daytrip Market

This market is appropriate for attracting the hyper-local visitor and the local visitor from a geographic perspective.

There is a strong domestic daytrip market in Ireland, especially post-Covid and with a emphasis on reducing out travel footprint. These trends present good potential for Monaghan, particularly as many of the natural and outdoor amenities are free to enjoy and this helps to represent good value for money as an overall experience especially for families. The day trip market represents a lucrative source of visitor revenue and is driven by four different types of day trips- general leisure day trips, visiting friends and relatives, attending a public event, or attending a private event*. Exploration, Adventure and Bonding have been identified as key motivations for day trips in 2022 and these motivations can and should be leveraged in experiences on offer and in marketing communications.

Leveraging the day trip market:

- 62% travel more than an hour to the day trip destination so geo-targeting of digital offers with this statistic in mind is important.
- Top of mind is a key driver in day trip marketing- so ensuring that the messaging is timely and includes compelling reasons to visit and provides information on plenty of things to do that fit the motivation is key.
- Encouraging trade to build depth of experiences in a given locale is important to demonstrating that there is “plenty to do” in the destination,
- Understanding and leveraging the short lead in nature of the day trip market is essential to ensure that the digital strategy is aligned.

The Domestic Short Break Market

The geographic focus for this market is local and national visitors, including Northern Ireland.

In 2023, overseas travel has gathered momentum following the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic and many domestic visitors are currently travelling abroad for key holidays. However, the short break market does remain robust and as outlined earlier in this section, has shown growth on 2019 figures. Value for money remains a key concern along with the fact that Monaghan is challenged by a lack of range and volume in accommodation providers which is exasperated by rising costs for accommodation providers, reduced available staffing and a related supply issue. This perfect storm means that the accommodation providers in the county need to work harder to capture the valuable customer who will stay longer and provide positive sentiment and recommendations following their stay.

**Fáilte Ireland Domestic Tracker*

The domestic holiday market is not only driven by accommodation providers but is very much driven by the types of experiences any destination offers, thus Monaghan will need to work collaboratively across accommodation and activity providers and visitor attractions to deliver experiences that inspire the short break market. Focussing on the audience motivations will be key to driving demand and delivering experiences which meet and exceed these expectations will be critical to success.

To deliver growth in the domestic short break market, it is recommended that the destination comes together to create and promote individual itineraries based on audience motivations, and to actively demonstrate cross sell and upsell within destination pockets – with businesses actively engaged in demonstrating knowledge of things to do and places to go. As outlined in the strategic recommendations, this work can be supported by the creation of a new Tourism and Recreation Forum. Also, an enhanced coordination approach to event planning will pay handsome dividends (see below). The development of personalised itineraries based on audience motivations could also be created in conjunction with appropriate micro influencers to support Monaghan’s tone of voice and amplify the messages to matching target audiences.

Events as a Demand Driver

Events have long been recognised as a driver of demand in destinations and a crucial activity for many tourism destinations⁹ Events help to broaden the target audience, support the development of new products, improve the destination’s performance, raise their visibility, and reduce seasonality¹⁰.

The development and implementation of a strategic events programme which complements the natural assets of the destination, attracts these target audiences, and delivers commercial growth for local businesses is a core element of any successful destination, especially those without the added benefit of established built heritage or other large scale tourism assets. Recent winter statistics, suggest that in 2023, 21% of those taking winter city breaks are driven by attending a public event¹¹.

The events industry in 2020 was reported to generate more than €3.5bn¹² towards the Irish economy, events of all sizes and nature are proven to support employment and help to build destination brands so this is an appropriate focus for a destination like Monaghan. Events also have been proven to extend the length of stay in destinations with an average of four nights per trip for those attending public event¹³.

In terms of development of events programming, it is interesting to see below that in the winter months of 2022/2023 that social energy as a motivator was a driver of trip decisions. Social energy is often linked to events taking place, as is the motivation of reconnection. This continues to confirm the concept of event programming as a driver of off-peak demand and as a catalyst for the creation of competitive advantage.

The development of **evening economy events** is also of paramount relevance to encouraging economic gain for Monaghan. Developing reasons to encourage visitors to stay overnight or for multiple nights, to avail of interesting things to do and see in the late afternoon and evening is an effective differentiator, especially in a time where in many destinations, options are limited to simple dining choices.

⁹Getz 2008

¹⁰Baum and Hagen 1999; Connell, Page, and Meyer 2015; Getz and Nilsson 2004; Getz and Page 2016.

¹¹Fáilte Ireland Winter2022-2023 consumer-update.

¹²Event Industry Association of Ireland Oireachtas submission

¹³Fáilte Ireland Domestic travel behaviour consumer update.

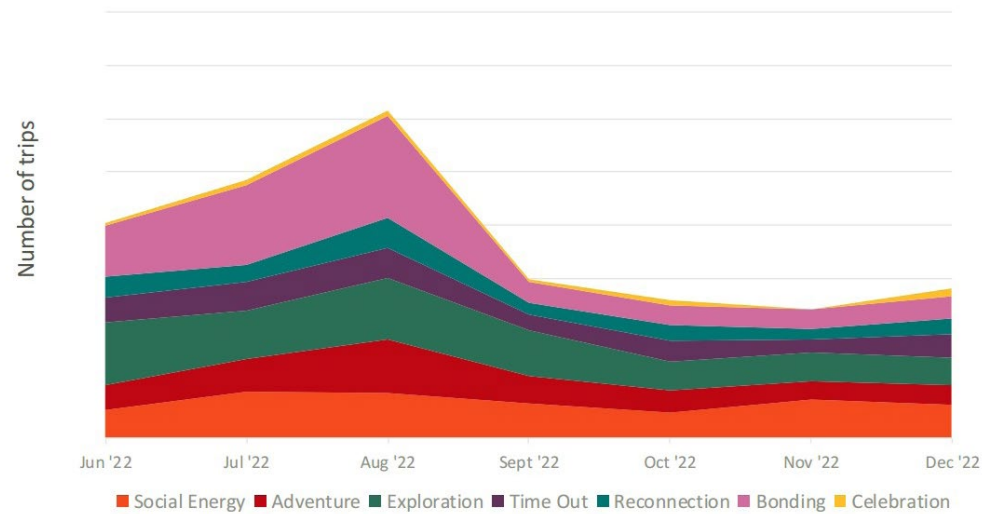
Motivation for Driving Domestic Breaks by Season

It is one of the key recommendations of this plan for Monaghan to build a programme of **niche festivals and special events**, an approach that has proven successful for neighbouring county Armagh and other destinations across the country like Kilkenny.

It is recommended in this strategy that a new resource within the Tourism Unit will take responsibility for events – they will deliver an innovative programme focussed on the target audiences and aligned to the value proposition of the county. Ensuring that the events programme is appropriately tied to these critical success factors will support sustainable strategic programming for Monaghan.

In addition to developing a programme of countywide Council supported events (with partners), it will be important to drive and support the development of small-scale public events that individual tourism businesses create. To support the development of a successful reputation for event delivery in Monaghan, it is recommended that consideration be given to creating a separate **county events strategy** together with an event sustainability commitment charter for local businesses.

Distribution of motivations by month of trips



Source: Fáilte Ireland, Domestic Tracker
Base: All those taking a general leisure

Provision of ongoing training to the trade / community sectors is essential. In terms of destinations working collaboratively together to build interesting events, Kilkenny demonstrates this well on their events calendar. This approach could be used as inspiration for similar in Monaghan.

Marketing of events will also need to be undertaken and supported by the county tourism function, through the development of specific event pages / accounts across appropriate channels. It is recommended to build an online events calendar into the website of the destination which would provide a day-by-day listing of things to do and see in the destination. In summary as part of the responsibility in Events Planning, one of the primary roles will be to build and communicate more events to create a vibrant destination offering.

B2B (Business to Business) Audience Development Strategy

B2B Audiences refer to group or individual travellers who are travelling through the advice and guidance of a third party- be that a travel agent, an OTA, an event or conference planner, DMC, Group tour operator etc. In addition, to the leisure visitor it also includes the business tourism visitor- which incorporates the corporate meeting, incentive, and event market This is an important source of growth in potential visitor for Monaghan for future years as there is already in existence several operators who use Monaghan as a stop off point in itineraries for those travelling North South or vice versa.

Also, it's important to reference there is an already establish (and highly successful) indigenous business community that regularly facility often high spending corporate visitors to the county. These visitors seldom appear on the mainstream visitor radar. How can these all-year-round visitors be better supported in practical ways?

Often this type of business is driven by individual members of the trade and leveraged through sales interactions which are scheduled directly or through Fáilte Ireland or other agencies. This plan does not directly seek to address a B2B approach, however the facilitation of network development will naturally support this as businesses collaborate and bring new experiences to market which can then be introduced to the B2B market.

The provision of an appropriate accommodation offering is an important factor in targeting group travellers be they corporate or leisure and the development of a strategic approach to accommodation development will also aid in the growth of this sector. The recommendation to develop a tourism and recreation forum as outlined earlier in this plan will strengthen B2B opportunities greatly. With the additional development of an interesting events programme, many B2B audiences can be also attracted, be they special interest groups, corporate or tour groups.

A2.3 Creating and communicating Monaghan's Value

Development of a clear value proposition aligned to target audiences is a cornerstone of successful marketing. One of the aims of the stakeholder workshop in Castleblaney was to uncover the elements of value that Monaghan offered and align these to different audience motivations. A value proposition is a short statement that communicates why visitors should choose Monaghan over another destination. A resonating value proposition is one that showcases a unique point of differentiation which matters to that customer. It is important to nuance the value proposition appropriately to the different target audiences to gain best cut through and results of marketing efforts.

The marketing workshop uncovered four key elements of value that supported Monaghan's tourism offering, which were: **People, Place, Immersion in Nature & Activity, and Border Walks.**

The following section outlines suggested draft value propositions based on these key elements. Each value proposition should then be nuanced to the key audience motivation as is appropriate.

Value Proposition: People – exploring the value of the unique stories and people of Monaghan, their friendliness and interest in people and the in-the-moment interactions which make lasting memories and bring visitors back, time and again.

MONAGHAN'S UNIQUE VALUE

- The People- Monaghan is a place where everyone really does talk to everyone. It is the connections with the locals at every turn which help to define Monaghan's unique value. In Monaghan, it's the spontaneous and in-the-moment interactions which make lasting memories. Monaghan locals are full of character and personality, you can be sure your experience will be unscripted and off-the-cuff.

Value Proposition: Place – exploring the value of undiscovered Monaghan- a place to reconnect and unwind close to city hubs.

MONAGHAN'S UNIQUE VALUE

- Place- off the beaten track a wholly unexpected county of fresh air, beautiful landscapes, food and craic, this is a county for “city escapers” and “searchers of green spaces”. The added benefit is that within a short drive of Dublin and Belfast, Monaghan provides the perfect place to escape to without the long journey to get there.

Value Proposition: Immersion in Nature & Activity

MONAGHAN'S UNIQUE VALUE

- Immersion in Nature & Activity – a county in the embrace of the best of nature, from gentle rolling hills to beautiful lakes, quaint estate towns and hidden gems around every corner, no-where is far from anywhere and the accessibility of the county and its amenities makes the most of your time away.

(this can be developed further to embrace the wetlands, boglands, environmental sustainability)

Value Proposition: Border Walks – exploring Monaghan's unique place on the border and the

MONAGHAN'S UNIQUE VALUE

- Border walk. As is the case in any county which borders two countries, be it in Ireland, Spain, Italy or North America, having a foot in two cultures means that the way we walk is slightly different. Monaghan's unique culture blends two worlds of creativity & craft of people & place and presents to the visitor a truly unique story of **life walking the line**.

Using the Value Propositions

Value propositions, once finalised and agreed should then be used as a lens for event development, experience development, marketing communications, consumer targeting and trade advertising. This will help to give clarity to the consumer as to the offering of Monaghan and provide continuity in messaging which should deliver stronger return on investment. It is recommended that the trade also adopt and use the value propositions in their marketing communications, clearly messaging why the visitor should choose Monaghan.

A2.4 Approach to Marketing Campaign Development

Monaghan has, like many destinations, struggled to differentiate itself meaningfully in a very crowded and competitive marketplace. As a destination, it has focussed on different themed annual marketing campaigns to deliver messages across multiple platforms to broad audiences. In doing so, it has created a bank of creative assets which can be used into the future.

The recommended direction for future years is to focus on the motivation of individual audiences and create a more nuanced and personalised approach to marketing communications.

This does not negate the development of annualised marketing campaigns but does recommend that within that campaign that the messages are crafted to resonate strongly with different audience motivations and the appropriate channel for these audiences be used. This approach should provide much greater cut through and will help to create a tone of voice and point of differentiation for the county in their consumer communications. The development of a communication matrix to support this initiative is strongly recommended. This should outline the target audiences, the media they use, the type of motivations for travel they have and aligned messages with resonating focus. Any purchased media or advertising as well as organic reach should be clearly measured and monitored. A referral marketing approach, including development of a UGC strategy is outlined later in this document and should also be considered as a key part of any campaign development.

Should **sustainability be embraced** further as a core action by a selection of businesses, there are many advantages in terms of marketing that can be leveraged – from attaining awards and certifications (and the advantages of the reflective marketing and promotion of same), to building experiences, offerings, and themed breaks. There are some key messages that fall very naturally into the Monaghan offering, aligned to the strong recreational assets and generous natural landscape available for visitors and locals alike.

A2.5 Developing Network Strength, Creating Saleable Experiences, Partnership Experiences and Co-operative Marketing Opportunities

A key recommendation of the Monaghan DEDP was to drive networks and collaboration amongst the trade, given the early stage that Monaghan is in the tourism lifecycle, this initiative will require support from the council to help it to gather momentum. The Council resources can help to provide “joined up thinking” on this critical area of tourism development by linking the new event and marketing resources to the trade and the trade associations and clusters. This will help to accelerate experience development, collaboration, and partnership.

The Monaghan DEDP outlined how the destination should align to the overall regional objectives- one of which was “provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism”. In order to achieve this, the destination has to create visitor experiences and a range of things to do. In realising this ambition, the destination can present cohesive and easily consumable, bookable offerings to the public. These experiences are, in some cases, already in existence in some guise or another, but can be developed sustainably through collaborating at a local level.

Product and (saleable) Experience Development

With Monaghan in the early stages of destination maturity, this is the ideal time to focus on product development and creation of new experiences through leveraging partnerships and the network of Monaghan tourism and hospitality businesses. This recommendation is closely aligned to the strategic recommendations of the Monaghan Momentum broad training initiative and the creation of a Tourism and Recreation Forum as outlined earlier in this plan.

The establishment of new and suitably resourced supports (as outlined in Recommendations earlier) will aid Monaghan in this area of upping it game in demand generation and marketing communications.

Sustainable tourism initiatives - as outlined in the Monaghan DEDP, sustainable tourism development is the cornerstone of any strategic destination growth plan and the new network resource should be particularly focused on building sustainable tourism partnerships and initiatives across the board. This could and should include a range of businesses from accommodation providers, outdoor activity providers, visitor attractions, hospitality operators etc. The development of Monaghan as a tourism destination which is responsible and future-thinking is also aligned with the rich outdoor offering of the county and the unspoilt and undiscovered value proposition. A full suite of messaging around the work that individual businesses are doing in sustainability and destination experiences is recommended- a suggested approach for this is outlined below.

Developing a bank of sustainable experiences as a differentiator for Monaghan- Fáilte Ireland recently called out “Driving Climate Action” as one of their strategic priorities – with several benefits, not only to the environment, as a reason for tourism businesses to embrace the initiative. It identifies reduction in business costs, brand, and reputation enhancement and crucially, in terms of marketing, helping businesses to increase demand, as reasons for adoption of sustainable practices¹⁴. They see it as a win-win proposition.

There is potential for Monaghan as a county, to support independent tourism businesses in building responsible and sustainable experiences and communicating these actions to potential audiences to bridge the “Say-Do” gap. It would also create a compelling reason to visit and a differentiated tourism offering through the development of sustainability as a core driver of certain tourism experiences / businesses. This activity aligns to the broader Failte Ireland strategy, and the recommendations laid out in the DEDP. It is important that any business that embraces sustainability or the development of sustainable experiences, does so meaningfully. Responsible action and experiences must be clearly identified so that it is not perceived as “greenwashing” which will adversely affect the brand reputation of the destination. As detailed in the Fáilte Ireland Sustainable Tourism in Ireland Report, tourism businesses and providers need to “think about creating sustainable experiences holistically” focusing on genuine impact, the correct proof points and experiences that are sustainably enjoyable and immersive¹⁵.

Gentle, Immersive, Responsible Travel as a Differentiator for Monaghan- Monaghan represents a very authentic tourism offering which has not been sullied by over development, with the landscape representing what would be considered “quintessentially Irish” especially the rolling drumlins, picturesque cottages, farms and outbuildings. The people also represent a genuine and real reflection of Irish hospitality.

¹⁴Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Roadmap (see Appx 1)

¹⁵Fáilte Ireland Sustainable Tourism in Ireland- understanding the opportunity Report 2022 (see Appx 1)

Given the surprising and somewhat unknown nature of the destination, there is an opportunity to position Monaghan as an immersive experience that unfolds at a different pace, the pace the traveller themselves set, allowing for discovery of the real side of Ireland, one that is hard to find today.

This is the idea of **area-based tourism**, where visitors come and explore at their own pace, unhurried and immersed in the surprises around every corner.

Development of experiences or offers that enable the visitor to explore Monaghan as a slower tourism destination and to discover the surprising nature of the county could be considered to attract different audiences, especially those who are looking to reconnect. Aligned to the value propositions of place and nature and the outdoors, key messages for Monaghan could include “Gentle your footprint” and “Immerse yourself in the surprising”.

Arts, Crafts and Creativity. Another key value identified through the marketing workshop was the strength in the county offering around craft and creativity, from lace makers to glass blowers to artists and a deep literary heritage of the written word, the county offering is rich and varied. Development of an Arts and Craft network which supports and promotes the creative industry in the county and develops immersive experiences and product offerings for the tourism market is advised for consideration. It is recommended to recognise the extraordinary contribution of the literary community of Monaghan to the national consciousness. Making this an accessible experience for visitors provides a differentiator and acknowledges the important impact of this contemporary community.

Exploring Estate Villages - One of the key strengths of the county is the natural necklace of estate villages which could be leveraged to help visitors to explore the county and uncover the stories at their own pace, this is linked to the potential of Monaghan as a slower area-based tourism destination and the visitor’s desire to immerse themselves in the undiscovered. Leveraging authentic product development in a series of different small locations around the county aligns to the value proposition of **Place** and facilitates the exploration of **People** as another key theme through the unscripted nature of the local interactions which the visitor values highly. Giving visitors a reason to visit a village (or a selection of them) and providing something to do, to see, to experience or to visit will support overall destination dwell time.

A simple way to start this would be to develop the “poetry jukebox” concept which is in place in Inniskeen across multiple villages. The content of the jukebox could be themed to key Monaghan creatives and personalities and their area of work- for instance comedy from Oliver Callinan and Ardal O’Hanlon, pieces from Frank McNally, Ruth McCabe, music of Big Tom, etc.

Immersion in Nature, On and Off Water- One of the greatest strengths of Monaghan is the extensive natural landscape to be explored and enjoyed. Developing products and experiences that help the visitor to immerse themselves in nature, be it on water or on land, will be important to delivering on the strategic vision and value proposition of the destination. It is recommended that the council, working in partnership with Coillte, Inland Fisheries and Waterways Ireland act as a catalyst for experience development with the activity providers (existing and potential).

Other Partnership Opportunities:

It is worth considering the special relationships that Monaghan has developed over the last three decades, especially that with Prince Edward Island (PEI), the smallest of the Canadian Maritime Provinces. This fraternal relationship has the potential to grow not just from a destination promotion perspective (i.e. bring in more visitors) but also through the SME / micro business sector building creativity linkages. Monaghan has a platform into the eastern provinces of Canada through this relationship being strategically developed over the lifetime of this strategy.

Food is another strong potential experience driver for the county, the most recent marketing campaign- summer series of 2022 concentrated on the food offering and included a focus on restaurants and food producers. The development of food trails, tours and experiences which explore Monaghan's developing foodie culture needs heightened integration into the Monaghan offering especially as this sector grows in its own right and opens up new markets at home and abroad.

Finally, there are a myriad of other experience development opportunities that can be further developed, or which might emerge over the lifetime of this plan, and which may become more relevant or robust as the destination matures.

Destination Monaghan Cluster Marketing Initiatives

As part of the Monaghan DEDP, Fáilte Ireland are facilitating cluster workshops and supporting collaborative trade led initiatives through training and other supports. This presents an opportunity for Monaghan and the county council to leverage these cluster led initiatives and promote the co-operation between the clusters on the destination's owned channels.

The work of the cluster members will also support the council's role in the development of product and experience development as outlined in the section above and will help to accelerate this process.

The cluster is voluntary in nature and will have an appointed leader/ co-ordinator and will work to identify suitable initiatives which the trade can lead and through this foster a culture of collaboration and experience development. It is recommended that where possible, the cluster work be aligned to the key value propositions of the county as laid out earlier in this plan.

Clusters also benefit the county marketing strategy by harnessing collaborative and partnership marketing initiatives- simple actions such as each member of the trade adopting an agreed #hashtag or tagline, call outs of other business on social channels, carrying specific messages in their marketing or on their websites and generally presenting a cohesive brand and offering to the consumer marketplace.

The new tourism marketing resource and the event resource of the council should liaise closely with this cluster both to identify opportunities and content that the council can use and to keep the cluster informed on any further developments that might support the work of the group.

A2.6 Distribution Strategy

A distribution strategy refers to the channels that are employed to facilitate marketing messages reaching their target audience. Essentially it answers the question- “Where can I find information on tourism in Monaghan?”

To date the distribution strategy for Monaghan marketing has been fulsome- including owned channels like website and socials, earned channels through PR initiatives, some limited paid activity, and some limited shared activity.

Once a cohesive plan around Monaghan’s messaging is finalised, it is recommended to employ a broad distribution strategy which will serve to amplify the voice of Monaghan within the currently noisy and busy domestic tourism landscape.

Distribution strategies can be considered for their reach both nationally and internationally, online and offline and via a number of different lens- for simplicity, they are categorised using the Corcoran model of media below:

Owned channels – Website, Social Channels, email marketing – these are the owned channels of the destination and ones over which the marketing team have total control.

Paid Channels – This employs the use of paid advertising online via search engines like Google and Bing this could also include influencer channels when paid activity is undertaken it also includes paid advertising in newspapers, magazines, paid outdoor media etc*.

Partnership Channels- Partnership channels, include any entity with whom Monaghan formally partners, usually it includes the owned channels of specific tourism partners such as Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, other destination tourism channels (Mad about Monaghan, Visit Cavan for example), community affiliations, individual businesses etc. Usually there is some element of reciprocity in terms of partnership distribution, but not in all cases. The resulting media from these channels is often referred to as shared media or referral media.

Third party Channels- this would include platforms like Expedia, Viatour, Booking.com, travel channels like Trip Advisor, Trivago etc These channels are defined by the fact that they facilitate booking of specific facilities, but they also serve an important purpose in building destination awareness and have a strong Billboard effect.

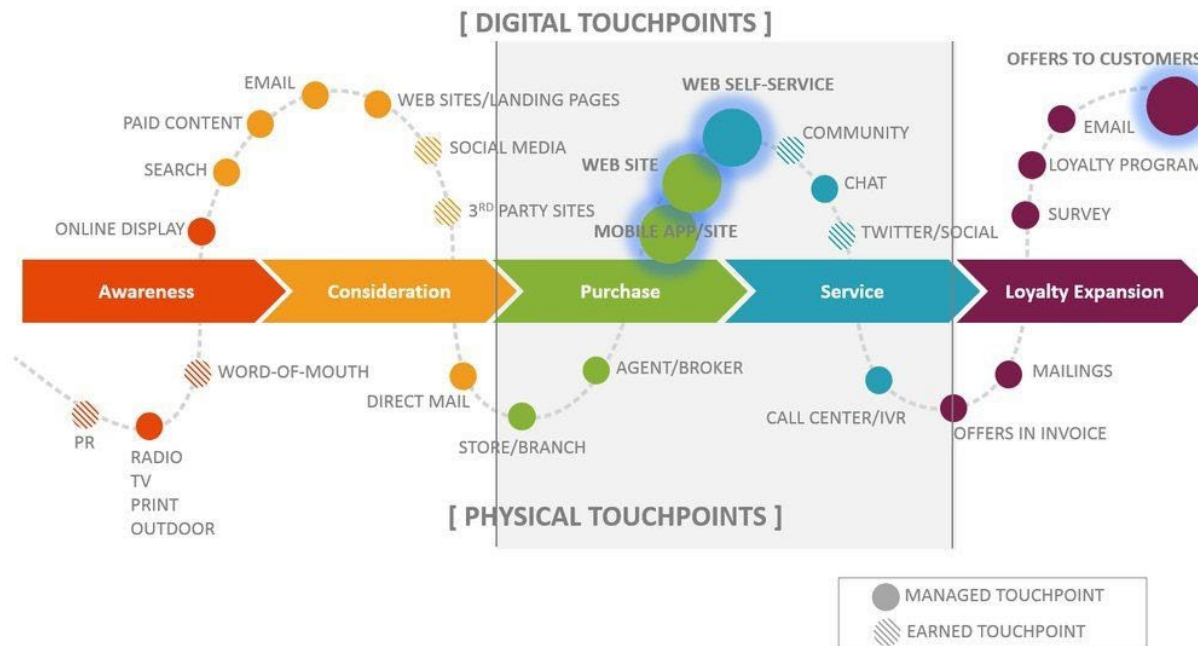
** It is important to note that paid and partnership channels can also overlap – in some cases a partnership channel may become a paid channel and vice versa. Most channel distribution will include some paid and non-paid activities, the actual channel of choice should be selected based on multiple criteria such as budget, messaging, time of year, audience reach etc.*

Customer Journey Touchpoints – understanding and applying distribution and content strategy appropriately.

Customer journey touchpoints refers to the different points of engagement and communication the visitor will have with Monaghan, from awareness to consideration, purchase, and post stay advocacy. Using a customer journey map to support the distribution strategy is advisable, especially given the relatively low levels of awareness in the minds of the consumer for Monaghan as a tourism destination. Customer journey mapping helps to understand customer needs more clearly, to identify the type of content the customer should see at different stages of their journey, improves touchpoints at all key stages of the visitor journey and is important opportunity to reinforce the brand and market positioning of Monaghan.

The figure below details how mapping a customer journey gives rise to the need to have multiple information touchpoints of different natures. Creating a holistic approach to marketing and a focus on reaching the customer at each point of the journey with the correct message and on the correct channel is important in terms of building awareness and demand.

Customer Journey Touchpoints



Creating a Referral Marketing Approach for Monaghan

Arguably the most effective form of marketing is the original kind, “word of mouth” recommendations- This form of “referral” marketing is proven to be the most powerful type of promotion, as the recommendation comes from a trusted source.

It is recommended that Monaghan leverage referral marketing as strongly as possible over the coming years. This summer’s (2023) campaign “tell them I sent you” links into this concept of sharing advice on good things to see and do in Monaghan and could be developed more strategically. This would support the cross selling of the destination amongst the trade AND encourage visitors to Monaghan to spread the word about their visit both while in the destination and when they return home. A practical application of the customer journey touchpoints detailed above and the development of a referral marketing approach for Monaghan would be to embrace the “offers in invoice” and create a welcome back offer for any visitors who have utilised a service provider.

User generated content is mission critical for the development of a referral marketing strategy, supporting the awareness and consideration points of the customer journey. By facilitating sharing of stories and good times using a few simple tactics like a Monaghan Memories (or similar) hashtag #MonaghanMemories, is a simple first step. Over 90% of consumers say UGC (user generated content) holds more influence over their buying decisions than promotional emails and even search engine results¹⁶ 79% of people say UGC highly impacts their purchasing decisions. A more robust approach to developing great UGC is also recommended over the coming years. In terms of paid advertising, User generated content ads on social media is proved to generate 73% more positive comments on social platforms compared to traditional advertising and UGC based ads also get higher click through rates and a 50% reduction in cost per click than professionally made brand ads¹⁷.

It is recommended that as part of the annual marketing plan that referral marketing strategies be considered and employed not only at the destination level but be encouraged across trade and hospitality.

¹⁶Source: Hubspot
¹⁷Searchlogistics.com

Development of a Community Marketing “Toolbox”

A recommendation of this plan is that the Tourism Unit marketing team develop a bespoke marketing toolbox for the trade of the county. One of the key requirements of good marketing is cohesive and consistent messaging. As is the norm, the quality and consistency of marketing undertaken by tourism businesses across the county is varied. The development of a suite of images, taglines, templates, and a simple marketing guidelines for messaging Monaghan’s unique value should be created and made available to all tourism (and non-tourism) businesses.

By providing the trade with these assets readily available at their discretion, the trade will be empowered to deliver appropriate messages of Monaghan across their channels and support the partnership and collaborative marketing approaches that this plan outlines.

A2.7 Developing a Brand that Reflects the Destination

The current “*More to Monaghan*” brand has served the destination in the early stages of its destination development journey, however, at his critical juncture and with plans for large scale capital development well underway there is an opportunity for Monaghan to create a refreshed and reimagined brand that is more reflective of the overall vision for the destination reflected through this document.

Successful brand building includes **25 elements** which become part of the overall offering. These include considerably more than the visual representation of the brand (logo, colour palette etc) which while are important, are driven by the development of a number of more critical areas.

It will be necessary for Monaghan to give thought to areas such as values, vision and mission, brand personality and story, brand voice, signature stories, key messages and channel development, and also to the development of brand reputation and positioning. It is noted that some of these topics are addressed in the findings of this strategy and these can be used to accelerate the process for the destination.

While this is not an immediate project, it is recommended that a new brand strategy be created for the destination over the lifetime of this plan (by 2028), this will allow for the evolution of the destination offering to be communicated appropriately as it matures and the offering develops. The exercise should be built upon sound evidence, appreciation for the target markets (and the competition) and be innovative enough to break through the glass ceiling holding back tourism development in the county.

A2.8 Measurement & Monitoring

It is recognised that Monaghan already employ good measurement of paid initiatives across the activity cycle. As the marketing approach evolves and with the additional resources available to the Tourism Unit, it is recommended that a suite of quarterly reporting be created aligned to annual KPIs laid out in the marketing plan. All should relate back to the overall targets / KPI's in the overall strategy 2023-2028. Developing a quarterly marketing impact report is recommended which outlines the extent to which the different KPIs have been achieved and should include (but not be limited to) some of the following metrics:

- Website performance statistics, including growth in unique visitors.
- Social Media Reach, follower acquisition and engagement

- Email marketing open, click through, list unsubscribe rates.
- Public Relations- value and quality of earned media.
- Partnership metrics- partnership engagement and experience development.

Developing the mechanics for capturing macro visitor metrics, such as economic impact of visitors to the county, length of stay, visitor dispersion and seasonality should also be captured, measured, and analysed over time. The continued working relationship with Failte Ireland in these practical aspects is to be commended.

A2.9 Conclusion

Monaghan is in the early stages of its development as a tourism destination, but the potential to drive demand among targeted audiences to the destination is enormous, especially given the ambitious capital development projects under consideration. Once these projects are realised over the coming years, the destination will be well placed to leverage these facilities to build further success especially if we see a corresponding increase in the county's accommodation base.

This marketing plan sets out the foundations for a coherent, effective and value for money tourism destination marketing approach for Monaghan- the identification of target audiences, the creation of value through the development of experiences aligned with recommendations of the DEDP, the creation of resonating value propositions and the communication of that value through employing a robust distribution strategy which leverages referral marketing and user generated content.

Facilitation of partnership initiatives and cooperative marketing is a cornerstone of the recommendations and a brand refresh aligned with the potential of the destination will further aid the positioning of Monaghan and development of awareness for the destination into the medium term.

In conclusion, while Monaghan is in the early stages of the tourism destination lifecycle, there are many important activities that can be undertaken to support the destination as it grows in maturity, capacity and offering. The recommendations outlined in this section seek to support the vision of the county, the ambitions of the stakeholders and to leverage the great potential which has been identified in the destination.



Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin
Monaghan County Council

This strategy has been developed on behalf of Monaghan County Council

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