

WATERFORD

Destination and Experience Development Plan

March 2025

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SECTION 1

**Waterford Destination
and Experience
Development Plan**

SUMMARY & CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

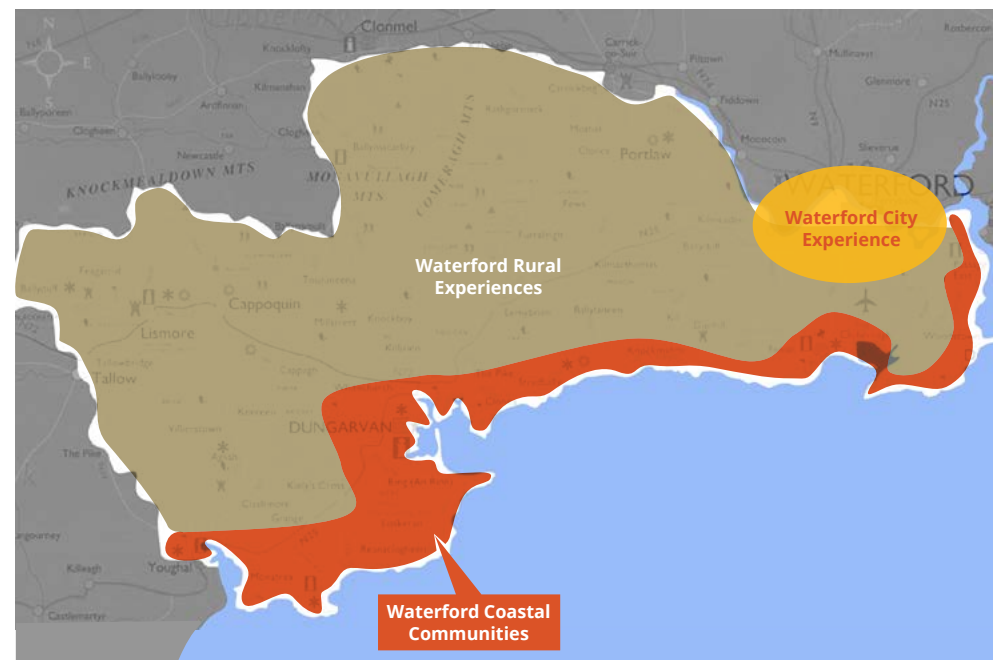
The Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan (WDEDP) is a five year sustainable tourism plan for Waterford City and County. The plan represents a five-year multi-stakeholder operational approach focusing on new product and experience development opportunities. It builds on existing tourism projects ensuring a connected destination approach between all tourism related investment activity. This includes projects currently underway, projects featuring in existing plans and new concepts designed to grow tourism across Waterford City and County.

A number of long term projects within the DEDP are designed to deliver the ten year vision for tourism in Waterford City and County. The projects outlined within the WDEDP include a mix of short to long term projects. In the implementation of the plan, short to medium term projects will be the priority. A number of these more immediate actions will also represent the initial stages required to activate the longer term projects identified within the plan.

The target outputs from the WDEDP are to grow the value of tourism as a key economic sector in Waterford, growing tourism employment, disperse visitors across the destination and increase the length of stay. The key target is to achieve sustained revenue growth and return to 2019 levels of tourism income by 2026. Equally, the development focus within the WDEDP is to ensure Waterford as a destination plays an integral role in growing the regional share of the market.

The strategic objectives of the Destination and Experience Development Plan are:

- Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Waterford and Ireland's Ancient East.
- Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism in Waterford.
- Ensure the destination is easy to access, navigate and consume.
- Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure that it can thrive and create sustainable jobs in local communities.
- Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development.



The development focus within the plan concentrates on Waterford City, Coastal Communities and Rural Waterford experiences and how these each integrate with each other to enhance the Waterford Visitor Experience. This spatial approach builds on established tourism networks/clusters across the county, emerging product and experience development opportunities and the requirement to present Waterford as a coherent destination experience. It will provide the visitor with access to a blend of urban, rural and coastal experiences each underpinned by the principles of sustainable tourism development.

The focus for each of the spatial categories is;

Waterford City Experience

Strengthen the appeal of Waterford City as a year round tourism destination and its role as a key accommodation hub to be the gateway to the county's coastal and rural experiences.

Waterford Coastal Communities

Increase the recognition of Waterford as a sustainable year round coastal tourism destination animated through our coastal communities and engaging coastal tourism experiences.

Waterford Rural Experience

Grow the number of sustainable rural tourism experiences linked to active rural tourism networks/ clusters that will motivate visitors to explore our rural communities through a blend of outdoor, cultural and heritage experiences.

The implementation of the WDEDP is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery over the course of the five year plan. Projects within the plan may only commence within the timeframe of the WDEDP. However, the final delivery of these projects after the timeframe of this DEDP will be key contributors to the ten year vision for Waterford and Ireland's Ancient East. A steering group will be formed to implement the WDEDP with key stakeholders responsible for project ownership and / or partnering in the delivery of the agreed actions within the plan.



1.2 IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST - REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Regional Tourism Development Strategies - 2023–2027 (RTDS) have been developed for each of Fáilte Ireland's four Regional Experience Brands (Ireland's Ancient East, Wild Atlantic Way, Dublin and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands). These plans provide the strategic framework for other tourism development strategies, most notably, Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) and County Tourism Strategies. A new destination development approach is central to the Ireland's Ancient East RTDS. It will ensure that appropriate interventions and supports are put in place to address the differences that exist in destination maturity levels across Ireland's Ancient East. The WDEDP has been developed to contribute to the overarching regional objectives for Ireland's Ancient East. These five objectives provide the basis for the strategic approach reflected within the WDEDP.

RTDS Strategic Objective 1: Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Waterford and Ireland's Ancient East.

Areas of focus within the Waterford DEDP

Develop an attraction of scale in Waterford City, maximise the urban regeneration investment in Waterford City to deliver an enhanced urban visitor experience and development of Waterford City as an international city destination with the capacity to disrupt regional tourism flow.

RTDS Strategic Objective 2: Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism in Waterford.

Areas of focus within the Waterford DEDP

Develop the appeal of Waterford City and County through the quality of the built and natural heritage, diversity of visitor attractions, experiences and a destination animated all year round by great festivals and events. Maximise the quality of the outdoor rural and coastal products through the creation of a strong outdoor orientation proposition linking best in class outdoor amenities.

RTDS Strategic Objective 3: Ensure the destination is easy to access, navigate and consume.

Areas of focus within the Waterford DEDP

Create the linkages between the Waterford Greenway, Blueways, coastal and mountain trails that motivate visitors to explore the full extent of Waterford's product and experience base. Ensure regional flows between Waterford and our South East neighbouring counties to grow the appeal of the South East as a visitor destination.

RTDS Strategic Objective 4: Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure that it can thrive and create sustainable jobs in local communities.

Areas of focus within the Waterford DEDP

Develop a new approach to industry collaboration across the county to present Waterford as a cohesive destination supported by engaged tourism networks/clusters.

RTDS Strategic Objective 5: Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development.

Areas of focus within the Waterford DEDP

Ensure tourism is an integral part of urban and rural development projects and continuity in the strategic alignment of future projects and investment. Grow the value of the tourism economy across Waterford as a stimulus for sustainable rural and coastal communities.

1.3 A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM APPROACH

Against the backdrop of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Government's commitments under the Climate Action Plan 2024 (and subsequent annual updates) and the Report of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group, 2021–2024, tourism must adopt a much more sustainable approach. The Covid-19 global pandemic has accelerated visitor consciousness of their role in sustainable tourism. There are new expectations among emerging visitor markets with changes evident in how they value local community experiences combined with increased levels of environmental awareness.

The WDEDP will focus on the following in meeting a county wide commitment to sustainability and ensuring it is a consistent element of all future destination development.

- Provide great visitor experiences highlighting Waterford's sustainability values.
- Enhance local capacity to develop new sustainable visitor experiences.
- Connect visitors to the destination's approach to sustainability at every stage of the visitor journey.
- Position Waterford as a destination renowned for its approach to economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability.
- Balance long term sustainability with economic value generation for communities across Waterford.
- Ensure a coherent approach to sustainability exists within the urban, rural and coastal communities of Waterford.
- Highlight destination co-responsibility for climate change and other sustainable challenges.
- Provision of tailored advice to tourism operators on sustainable tourism best practice.



1.4 WHERE WE ARE NOW

International benchmarking

The WDEDP was developed through a programme of stakeholder consultation and research process, reflecting the views of visitors, local tourism industry and the wider community. A programme of international benchmarking was also conducted to assess Waterford City and County against a number of comparable international tourism destinations that included Turku, Finland; Zadar, Croatia; Aalborg, Denmark; and the Basque Region, Spain. The key learnings from the international benchmarking include:

- International urban centres all perform a key role as a gateway and hub to service the wider destination. These are linked to the wider hinterland through strategic investment in outdoor trails, cycling amenities and Blueways enabling visitor dispersion and increased length of stay.
- There is clear evidence in major urban destinations to re-invent and re-imagine the design of the city integrating core tourism products, ensuring obvious tourism product linkages and how they influence visitor flow across the city.
- The development of an iconic visitor experience is key to establishing the destination and how it influences visitor flows across the wider region.
- There is strong evidence of regional networks aligned spatially and thematically e.g. food linking the destination and linking the region from the urban centre to the rural experience base.
- Innovative destinations have adopted a sophisticated approach to trail and outdoor activity development through the use of architectural and artistic innovation (observation and viewpoints, cafés / restaurants, sculptures, light installations and bridges).
- The integration of water resources into the destination proposition is a common approach between optimising urban waterfronts and activating the natural waterways. This includes increased levels of activity on the water, repurposing and the multiple use of buildings along the waterfront; provision of quality public spaces and amenities; acting as the focal point for events and celebrations; the source of appealing and engaging promotional imagery, high quality lighting installations and safe waterfront environments.
- Sustained success is achieved through local organisations (networks and networks/clusters) driving, co-ordinating and leading the destination's tourism activity.
- Urban and rural regenerative practices have focused on a willingness to juxtapose modern, often strikingly contemporary, design of structures alongside the innovative re-purposing of the built heritage.
- The identification and promotion of cultural, environmental and heritage icons consistently drive the destination marketing efforts ensuring a co-ordinated destination narrative aligned to core strengths.
- There is a consistent focus within the successful destinations of facilitating and supporting innovation, start-ups, digital delivery and data gathering.
- Destination event and festival development is based on use of strong local cultural stories as the inspiration for a contemporary events programme in addition to influencing the nature of outdoor activity experiences.



Research and Consultations Conclusions

Accommodation Development

The current level of accommodation provision will not maximise the economic potential of tourism aligned with future product and experience investment. There is a requirement to grow the level of bed stock in the urban areas as core visitor hubs for the county. Equally, the county must leverage its outdoor potential through the addition of alternative and formal types of accommodation located in the county's rural and coastal communities. Visitor demand for alternative forms of accommodation will enhance emerging opportunities such as St. Declan's Way and other trails investment. However, in order to achieve sustained destination growth, the county must deliver a higher volume of hotel accommodation options particularly in Waterford City, Tramore and Dungarvan.

Enhancing the Waterford City Visitor Experience

The investment in Waterford City and the future planned urban regeneration creates a significant platform to benefit both the city and county. Waterford City currently represents a key accommodation base for the county. The development of the city's Cultural Quarter linking to the Greenway, City Centre and the Viking Triangle (to include the Bishop's Palace, Medieval Museum, Reginald's Tower, Christchurch Cathedral, Irish Silver Museum, Irish Museum of Time, Irish Wake Museum) will deliver a new urban experience that will encourage greater exploration of the city. The approach to visitor orientation and way finding will be crucial in motivating wider city exploration. However, the city visitor experience must match visitor expectations of an international urban destination. Equally, the visitor experience and product base will be enhanced with the Cultural Quarter providing a new opportunity to engage the visitor through local culture, craft and creative experiences. In developing the urban experience, each city quarter must be seamlessly linked, deliver its own unique experiences, but aligned to a coherent urban tourism proposition. The extension of the Waterford City experience to link with Tramore will broaden the market appeal and develop a unique urban coastal positioning.



Creating a Regional Iconic Attraction

The development of an attraction of scale in Waterford City is required to provide a stimulus for regional tourism transformation. The proposed Attraction of Scale concept and the regeneration of the north side of the river and within or in the vicinity of the North Quays requires further examination. International benchmarking against comparable port and riverside cities highlights the requirement for Waterford to deliver an iconic attraction and focal point for transformation to become the basis for regional tourism growth. The development of an attraction of scale will accelerate the opportunity for the supporting visitor experiences to prosper and grow the city's capacity to become a vibrant year round urban destination.

The research has identified a number of thematic and product linkages to develop regional itineraries and encourage wider exploration of the South East region. The investment into the Waterford Greenway linked to the New Ross trail head (South East Greenway) is the foundation for additional greenway extensions and spurs linking Waterford, Wexford and Kilkenny communities. The greenway investment has been transformational. However, Waterford City requires investment in an iconic attraction that will further influence visitor flows into the region, particularly appealing to the international marketplace.

Influencing Regional Visitor Flows

Waterford possesses a vast and diverse portfolio of outdoor amenities with appeal to domestic and international audiences. The product development approach employed for the Waterford Greenway has elevated the county's profile for outdoor experiences. Linking the existing outdoor assets introduces the visitor to the full scale of coastal, mountain, river and trail based experiences within easy reach. There is a requirement to elevate the accessibility of these amenities and outdoor experiences and integrate them as part of an overall destination experience e.g. coastal county, river based experiences and accessible mountain trails.

The appeal of the Waterford Greenway highlights how a co-ordinated product focus has delivered for the local community and how it has been the catalyst for subsequent waves of investment linking Waterford to New Ross and links to the Tipperary Blueway. The quality and accessibility of the county's outdoor activity product provides an immediate platform to become a leading destination for outdoor experiences. This destination focus will support season extension, visitor dispersion and the ability to extend the length of visitor stays in the county. The

visitor proposition must be linked and presented as a coherent outdoor destination and create a platform for existing networks/clusters to grow their experience base aligned with a co-ordinated destination focus on linking the mix of accessible Waterford outdoor experiences.

Coherent Destination Approach – Collaboration

The evidence of the research and consultations highlights the need for greater levels of industry collaboration to present Waterford as a coherent destination. Successful international and domestic destinations consistently demonstrate the value of collaboration as the basis for sustained tourism growth. A focus on attracting international visitors to stay for longer requires a co-ordinated destination wide effort. It will necessitate urban networks/clusters working together and equally working with their rural and coastal counterparts across the county. The international visitor research identified the need for a more integrated destination approach to address the presentation of pockets of the destination working in isolation. In the absence of greater industry collaboration, the economic potential of the sector cannot be realised, and furthermore will limit the county's capacity to progress from its current levels of destination maturity.

Sustainable Community Experiences

The proposed enhancement or development of new destination experiences requires a new approach to community based tourism. Emerging opportunities across the core product areas present rural and coastal communities with new avenues to engage with tourism. The formation of five networks/clusters in the county (Waterford Estuary, Copper Coast, Comeragh Uplands, Gaeltacht na nDéise, and the Blackwater Valley) provides an immediate focus for growing the local experience base and realising the value of tourism for the community. The networks/clusters are established against a background of rural trails-based opportunities, unique cultural experiences and coastal communities set against the backdrop of an UNESCO Geopark. The opportunity will be realised through encouraging slow exploration of Waterford communities. It will require a new focus on experience creation within the networks/clusters and future collaboration to cross promote network/cluster experiences with new approaches to packaging. Collaboration within the networks/clusters and between networks/clusters will be the pre-requisite to generating an economic dividend for the local communities and the provision of an expanded range of reasons for visitors to explore the wider destination.

1.5 WHAT THE PLAN IS ADDRESSING

Opportunities

Outdoor Activity Destination

- Achieve outdoor activity destination leadership through product development and connect land and water based experiences to support season extension.
- Develop slow tourism experiences maximising existing trails and routes, waterways and coastal routes.
- Build on the county's association with cycling and cycling infrastructure to become Ireland's premium cycling destination.
- Develop sustainable niche eco-tourism accommodation networks/clusters linked to the outdoor product development focus for the county.

Waterford City as a Catalyst

- Development of the city experience and exploration base for rural and coastal Waterford.
- Greater levels of integration of Tramore with the Waterford City experience to deliver an urban coastal activity base of significance.
- Leveraging the heritage of artisans and craftsmanship in Waterford and international recognition of Waterford Crystal with a Cultural Quarter development approach.

Rural Tourism Networks/Clusters

- Develop the five established rural networks/clusters to become more strongly aligned with the delivery of unique rural and coastal experiences focused on slow exploration of the county's outdoors, culture and heritage.
- Development of St. Declan's Way as an international pilgrim route and catalyst for community tourism engagement.
- Eco-tourism experience approach in the Copper Coast aligned with its UNESCO Global Geopark status and commitment to sustainable destination development.
- Deliver accessible bilingual and cultural experiences linked to the Gaeltacht community.

Developing an Innovative Experience Base

- Innovative linking of existing networks/clusters of visitor attractions from the Viking Triangle to Mount Congreve.
- Quality and diversity of existing town and village experiences as the basis for day and evening time experience development e.g. Dungarvan, Lismore, Dunmore East and Ardmore.
- Develop strong regional product and experience links to create a regional experience network e.g. food, gardens, Big Houses, creatives and greenways.
- Build on the accessibility of water and land based amenities linked to Big Houses creating new ways of interpreting the heritage story of Waterford.



Challenges

Accommodation Supply

- Address the accommodation supply shortages in rural and coastal communities across Waterford.
- Requirement for increased levels of hotel bed stock in urban hubs to include the addition of quality four star hotel properties.
- Limited accommodation available in areas with strong product opportunities with the capacity to influence visitor flow to rural parts of the county.

Industry Capabilities & Collaboration

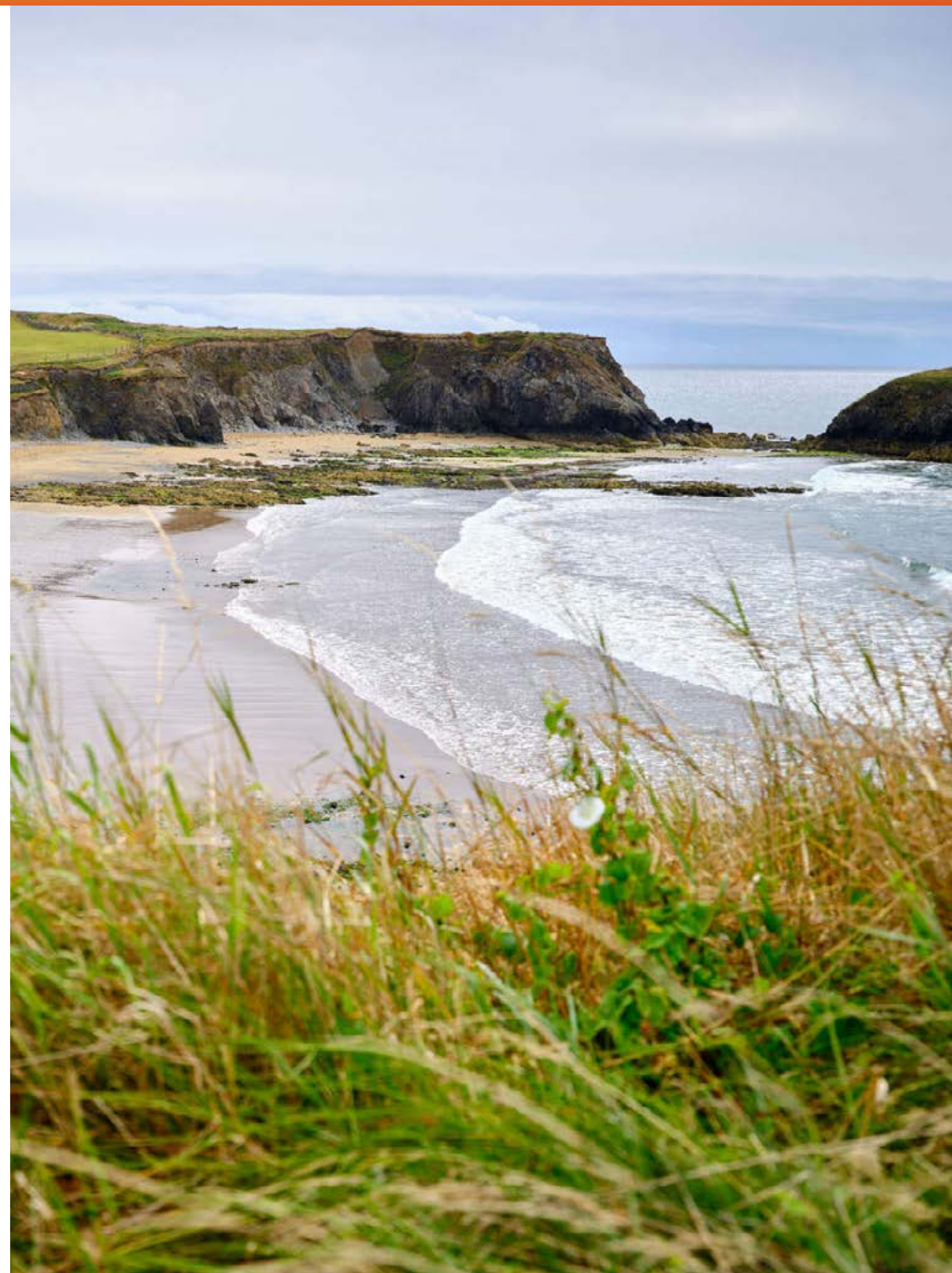
- Current levels of county wide industry collaboration not presenting a coherent destination to international visitors.
- Building on existing capability levels of coastal and rural communities required to develop tourism experiences aligned with the vision for the WDEDP.
- Tourism entrepreneurship levels are low across product areas of growth potential e.g. activity providers.
- Limited evening time provision for families in the main accommodation hubs in the county.
- Development of year round experiences and night time economy activity.

Developing the Outdoors

- Lack of accessibility for river based activities and enhancement of Blueway experiences.
- Access to suitable lands to develop additional cycling off-road infrastructure such as mountain biking to contribute to the county's cycling product profile.
- Existing public transport limits on number of bikes that can be carried on trains into a prospective cycling county.
- Sustainable management of visitor volumes at signature outdoor locations across the county.

Visitor Orientation

- Integrating the Comeragh's and north of the county as a key element of the Waterford visitor experience.
- Limited levels of industry collaboration cross promoting the mix of urban and rural experiences across the county.
- Rural communities not traditionally engaged in tourism development and pace of their development.
- Maximising the wider regional opportunities creating reasons to disrupt existing visitor flow patterns.



1.6 DESTINATION VISION

Vision 2035

Outdoor activities animate the distinct Waterford coast, mountains and countryside. Visitors are inspired to immerse themselves in these activities and the Waterford story told through epic heritage experiences delivered in vibrant urban centres and welcoming rural communities.

Our Vision will be delivered by:

Waterford being recognised as a national outdoor activity destination through the quality of its outdoor trails, greenways and water-based experiences.

Visitors to Waterford being motivated to explore the county through the Waterford Orientation Project, a network of connected greenways, trails, blueways, coastal, mountain and pilgrim experiences.

Waterford recognised as Ireland's family destination activated through county wide tourism networks/ clusters collaborating to deliver great visitor experiences in our rural and coastal communities.

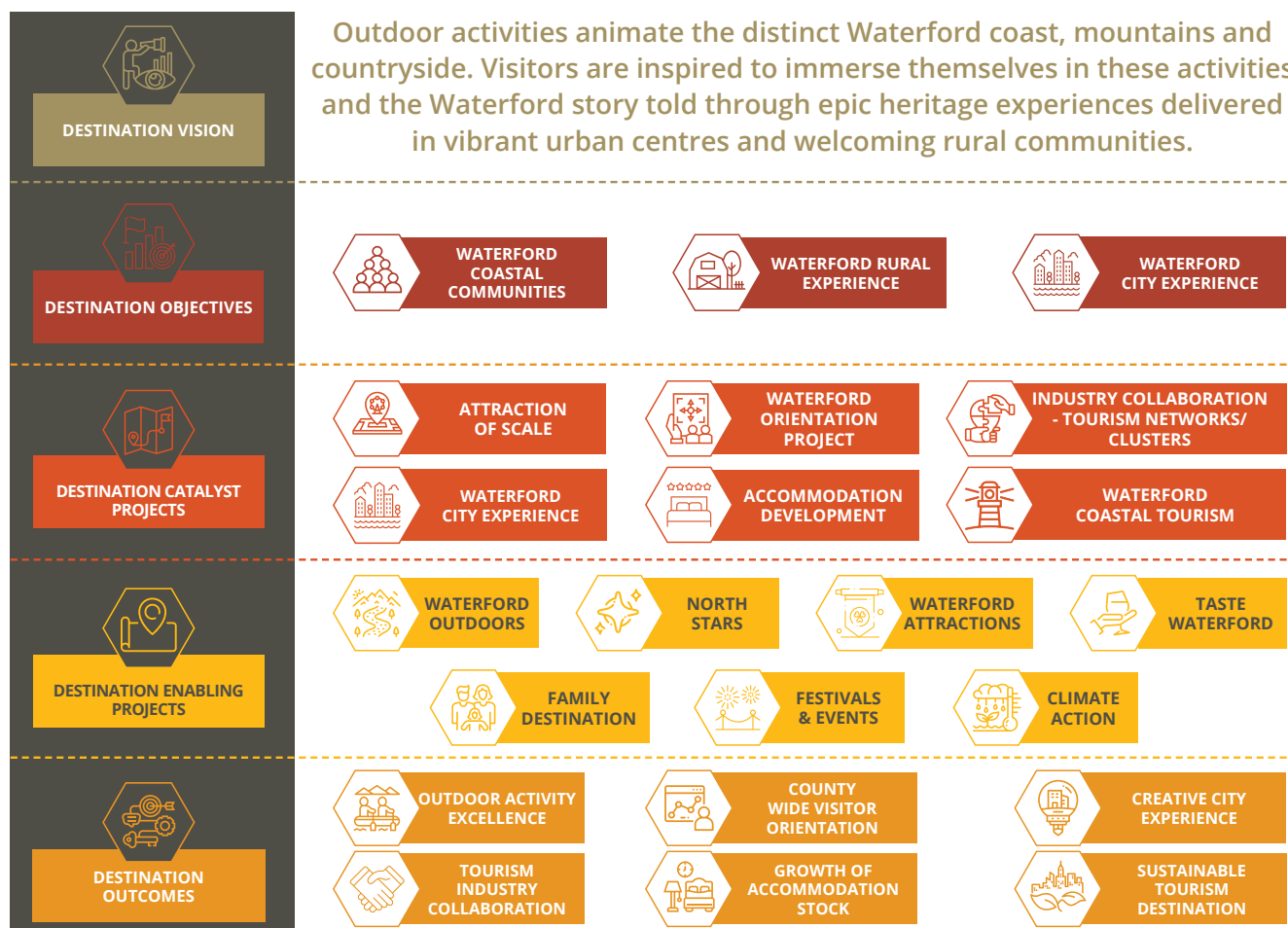
Developing a new attraction of scale in Ireland's oldest city which will be the catalyst to disrupt regional tourism flows and generate new levels of demand for the Waterford experience in the international market.

Building on the city's rich heritage, the Waterford experience will be animated by new levels of creative tourism experiences brought alive through the energy of Waterford events and festivals hosted in the vibrant Viking Triangle and Cultural Quarter.



1.7 HOW WE ACHIEVE THIS VISION

The destination and experience development approach for Waterford is concentrated on developing the three interconnected aspects of the destination; namely, the city experience, the coast and its rural communities. The approach is designed to create a coherent Waterford visitor experience that proves motivational for domestic and international visitors. To achieve this, a number of strategic projects have been identified that will disperse visitors across the county, link the urban accommodation centres with quality outdoor and community based experiences while developing the visitor experience in Waterford City. There is an increased focus on industry collaboration and adopting new ways of working together through tourism networks/clusters to enable industry stakeholders maximise future product and experience development investment in the destination.



Six projects have been identified as the catalysts for destination development for Waterford. They include delivering outdoor excellence in establishing the county as a national outdoor centre and examining new ways of linking the county's natural heritage. A new level of focus will be placed on developing the Waterford City experience leveraging urban regeneration investment and the quality of existing heritage and cultural attractions. A potential new large scale visitor attraction will be central to the role of the city disrupting future regional tourism flows. New levels of tourism industry collaboration will underpin each of these catalyst projects working towards the collective goal of sustainable tourism development. These six destination catalyst projects, in addition to a number of destination enabling projects, will be delivered through a series of actions detailed in the WDEDP Action Plan.

Destination Projects Overview

Project 1 – Attraction of Scale

The Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy establishes the need for investment in tourism products that will disrupt existing visitor flow patterns. Realising the opportunity for the South East requires investment in an iconic visitor attraction. Changing visitor movement patterns requires a new “hero” experience to motivate domestic and international visitors to consider visiting Waterford City. The immediate project focus will be the development of a visitor attraction masterplan for the north side of the river and within or in the vicinity of the North Quays that will also establish the linkages to the South Quays, Cultural Quarter, Viking Triangle and the City Centre experience.

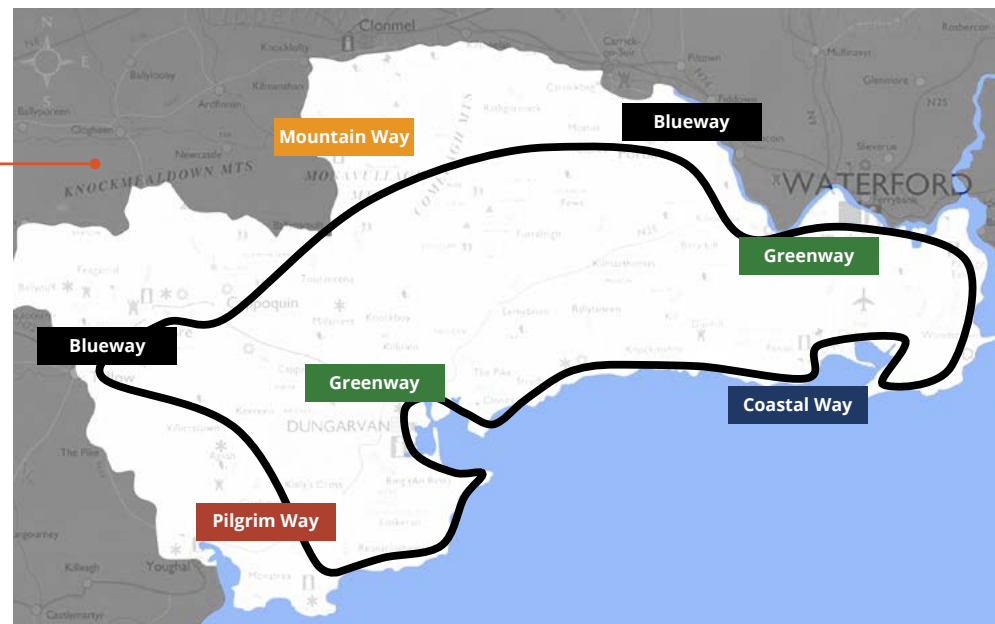
The delivery of a visitor attraction of scale on the north side of the river and within or in the vicinity of the North Quays will have a two-fold impact. It will represent a stimulus for tourism in the city and county while becoming a focal point in transforming the South East region as an international tourism destination. The development of an attraction of scale will also become the catalyst for further rounds of local and regional investment e.g. new accommodation stock and county wide growth of supporting visitor experiences.

Project 2 – Waterford Orientation Project

The success of the Waterford Greenway represents a key milestone in the county's tourism development and has altered the way visitors engage with the destination i.e. encouraging slower exploration of the county. Waterford is punctuated by trails, waterways, coastal experiences and mountain routes. From a visitor perspective, it currently lacks coherency in how the visitor is encouraged to explore the wider destination. The creation of a unifying outdoor experience approach is recommended i.e. the development of a Waterford Orientation Project. It will deliver a looped county route based on linking the county's greenways, blueways and emerging coastal ways, pilgrim ways and mountain ways. The Waterford Orientation Project will integrate the existing outdoor amenity infrastructure and inform future investment requirements to create a county wide route linking great outdoor experiences, encouraging slow tourism in local communities and provide an integrated product base designed to retain visitors for longer.

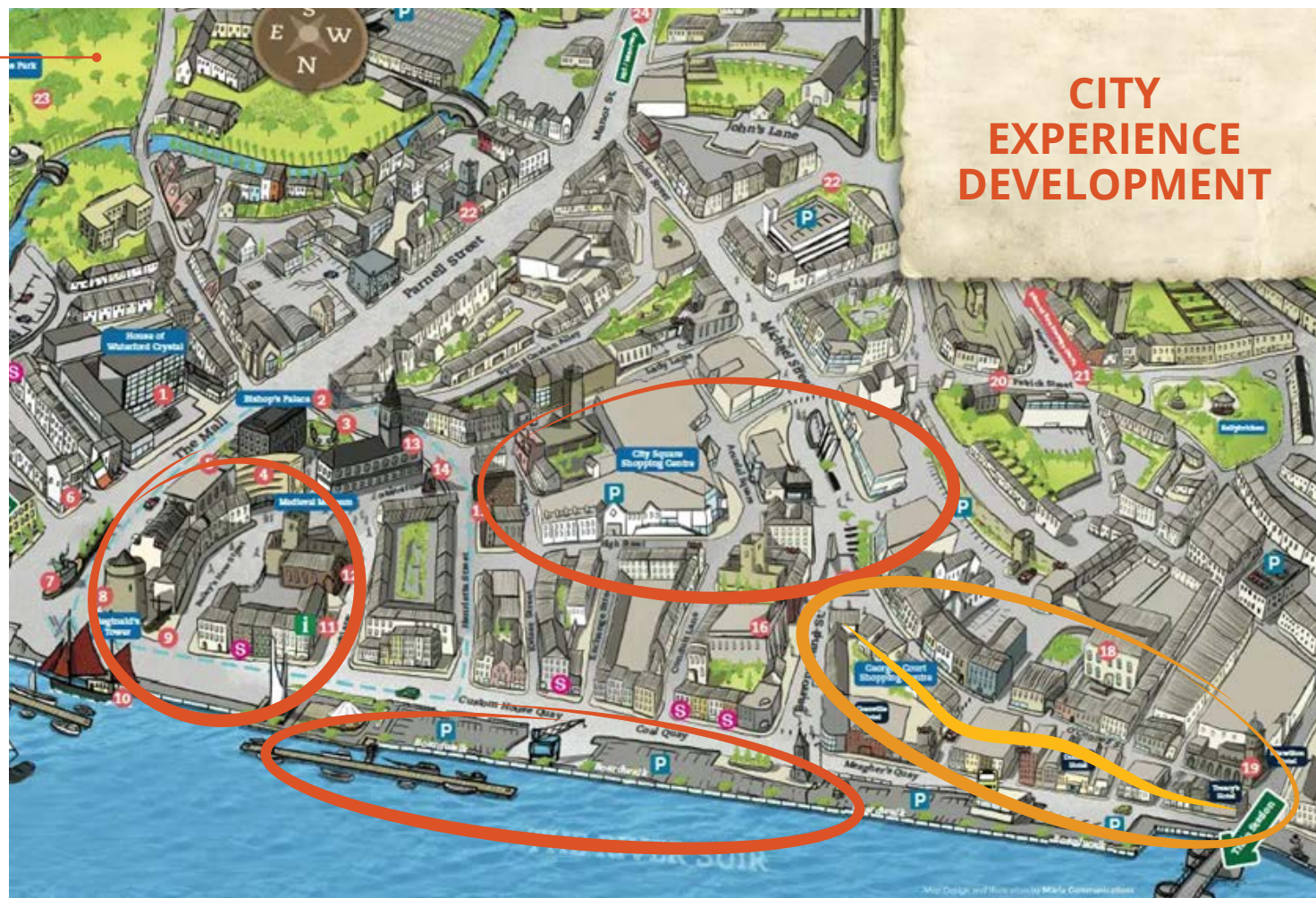
Project 3 – Industry Collaboration - Tourism Networks/Clusters —

Sustainable destination development can only be achieved through collaboration. The projects identified within the WDEDP process provide the platform for new levels of tourism industry collaboration. It will include project based collaboration, enhancing the capacity of existing and emerging tourism networks/clusters while motivating businesses to work together across the county. The formation of five rural networks/clusters in the county (Waterford Estuary, Copper Coast, Comeragh Uplands, Gaeltacht na nDéise, and the Blackwater Valley) represents an important starting point for a sustained destination development. The development of the networks/clusters and the strengthening of local tourism networks are essential elements of destination collaboration. Their outputs will play a key role in motivating visitors to explore more rural and coastal communities and provide more reasons to stay longer within the destination. Waterford will also require the development of functioning urban networks/clusters providing the platform for industry engagement and adopting a consistent county wide approach that can interact with the ongoing rural cluster activity.



Project 4 – Waterford City Experience

Enhancing the tourism experience of Waterford City to become an international city destination is an essential element of the overall development approach. As home to the largest volume of hotel stock and cultural/heritage attractions, it represents the gateway to the county's coastal and rural experiences. A number of destination projects will contribute to the continued growth of the tourism economy in Waterford City, including an iconic attraction of scale and developing the city's cultural experience. The investment in the Cultural Quarter, city wide placemaking and public realm projects will be key enhancements of the city experience. The development of the Cultural Quarter will create many benefits outside of its urban regeneration focus. It will encourage new visitor flow across the city and will extend the tourism reach into the Viking Triangle and the city centre. The creation of a city greenway trail head located adjacent to the Cultural Quarter and accessing the Viking Triangle will book-end the core city experience. Visitor orientation and the enhancement of the urban 'Quarters' will be central to realising the tourism opportunity for the city. The continued development of the Waterford City experience will also include enhancing the existing calendar of festivals and events, growing the evening time economy while enhancing the status of the city as a key regional tourism hub.



Project 5 – Accommodation Development

The northern geography of Waterford features a significant collection of built and natural heritage experiences. The experience base is comparable to many more mature destinations but currently lacks a focus to motivate visitors to explore lesser established parts of the county. A number

of projects have been identified as North Stars designed to influence greater visitor flow into the north of the county. These include the development of St. Declan's Way linking local communities from coastal areas and introducing visitors to unique rural and urban experiences such as Lismore and Mount Melleray. The area surrounding the

Comeraghs over to the River Blackwater offer significant outdoor activity potential that will each feed into the development of the Waterford Orientation Project. Each project requires appropriate visitor management planning and examination of the elements that will support sustainable tourism development and have a positive impact on local communities. To achieve long term success, the North Star projects will require the activation of a number of enabling projects from accommodation development to enhancing the capacity and capabilities of the rural community networks/clusters to develop local tourism.

Project 6 – Waterford Coastal Tourism

Waterford has secured investment for two Platform for Growth activity centres to deliver coastal tourism activity hubs in Tramore and Ardmore. The investment will create a new focus for coastal experiences and will enable the county to elevate its association as a coastal destination. Equally, a new focus on slow coastal tourism exploration is required to align with the Copper Coast's UNESCO Geopark status and a value over volume experience approach for coastal communities. Across the Waterford coastline, from the Ireland's Ancient East surfing centre in Tramore and Ardmore to the Copper Coast, Dungarvan, Dumore East and the Gaeltacht coast of An Rinn, each community has a platform to deliver highly differentiated coastal tourism experiences.

Destination Enabling Projects

A series of enabling projects are central to the development of the Waterford destination and capitalising on opportunities presented in areas such as the family market, community tourism, attractions, festivals and food in tourism experiences. Seven enabling projects include growing the profile of Waterford as a family destination and ensuring a coherent industry approach through packaging and experience development to grow the share of the family market. The development of the visitor attraction experience in Waterford will look to deliver an experiential approach to new ways of interpreting heritage stories. A number of product opportunities (North Stars) are emerging with the capacity to strongly influence visitor consideration of rural Waterford. These include opportunities around St. Declan's Way, River Blackwater and the Comeraghs. Climate Action and the overall destination approach to sustainability will be an essential consideration in each project and action implemented in the delivery of this WDEDP.



The current and subsequent phases of greenway development within the county will result in greater levels of regional connectivity. The approach to regional connectivity will also examine how existing international routes such as EuroVelo 1 or regional product linkages such as food or gardens can deliver a sustainable tourism impact for local communities.

Waterford City is host to a calendar of acclaimed festivals and events animated by a vibrant arts and cultural community. Waterford will strive to build on the ownership potential of key off peak periods by adopting a strategic event development approach linking city and county. This approach will require the examination of priority events of scale supplemented by county wide activity. Food has become an integral part of the Waterford destination narrative. The rural and coastal focus of the WDEDP provides new opportunities to embrace food and drink as supporting experiences. The expansion of the food and drink network across the destination will be an important contributor to enhancing the rural and coastal experience base.

1.8 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the WDEDP is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery and is structured around a multi annual action plan. The key stakeholders will take ownership or partner on the delivery of the key tasks required to implement the WDEDP. It represents a five-year operational plan providing a commercial destination development focus that builds on existing project plans and integrates all related activity for a co-ordinated programme of activity. This includes projects that are currently being implemented, projects featured in existing plans and new concepts to grow the destination's capacity for new visitor experience development.



SECTION 2

**Waterford Destination
and Experience
Development Plan**

APPROACH

2.1 WATERFORD DEDP OBJECTIVES

The following represent the overall objectives for the WDEDP based on stakeholder input, alignment with existing and new opportunities for the destination and how the plan contributes to the delivery of the Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy.

Strategic Goal 1:

Motivate the domestic and international consumer to visit Waterford and Ireland's Ancient East.

Strategic Objectives

- Develop a year round world class tourism destination supported by a mix of compelling urban and rural experiences that motivate domestic and international visitors to visit Waterford.
- Examine the opportunities provided through future strategic development sites in the city and county to include an attraction of scale.
- Develop a more integrated Waterford City visitor attraction experience linking key attractions animated by new approaches to experience innovation.
- Develop Waterford as a destination of excellence for outdoor activities incorporating greenways, blueways, coastal routes, pilgrim routes and mountains.
- Leverage the success of the Waterford Greenway to develop new Greenway experiences in the county, links to the Greenway and new ways of encouraging visitors to explore Greenway communities.



Strategic Goal 2:

Provide the visitor with more reasons to stay, increasing the economic impact of tourism in Waterford.

Strategic Objectives

- Develop the Waterford City visitor experience that encourages increased levels of visitor movement across the city through new experience development within vibrant city quarters.
- Maximise the investment in the city's Cultural Quarter to create distinctive urban and cultural visitor experiences.
- Develop Dungarvan and Tramore as key destination visitor hubs building on their strengths for outdoor recreation and gateways to coastal and rural tourism experiences throughout the destination.
- Maximise the unique cultural experience development opportunity presented by the Gaeltacht linking the cultural sustainability of the Irish language with visitor experiences.
- Grow the accommodation base in Waterford City, Dungarvan and Tramore while exploring the opportunity to increase the volume of niche visitor accommodation options in rural destinations.
- Grow the tourism enterprise base delivering saleable experiences to support the ambition of Waterford to become an outdoor activity centre of excellence.



Strategic Goal 3:

Ensure the destination is easy to access, navigate and consume.

Strategic Objectives

- Create an innovative destination approach to visitor orientation and connectivity through the development of a Waterford Orientation Project to disperse visitors across the county linking the county's natural and built heritage with outdoor amenities and creating a looped county visitor exploration route.
- Leverage the Waterford Orientation Project to integrate county wide experiences in areas such as food, gardens and cultural experiences.
- Develop the opportunity for Waterford to be a key element of the future Dublin to Cork Greenway and any future possible seaway propositions.
- Achieve regional connectivity through regional product opportunities such as Greenways, coastal routes and EuroVelo and the development of experience focused trails such as food, culture and heritage.



- Maximise the coastal tourism opportunity for the destination and the development of an iconic Waterford coast walking trail.
- Develop St. Declan's Way as an international pilgrim trail supported by iconic trail head experiences in Ardmore and Mount Melleray linked to Cashel.
- Achieve greater levels of visitor dispersion across the county by maximising the opportunity presented by natural heritage assets that include the Blackwater River, River Suir and the Comeraghs.

Strategic Goal 4:

Enable and assist the industry to grow its capacity and capability to ensure that it can thrive and create sustainable jobs in local communities.

Strategic Objectives

- Work with the tourism industry to grow the range and quality of visitors experiences aligned with the vision for the WDEDP.
- Develop a coherent destination approach to encourage new levels of collaboration in Waterford City and County in experience development and how the industry collectively motivates the visitor to explore the wider destination for longer.
- Strengthen the tourism networks' capacity to work together through the rural networks/clusters network and the development of new urban tourism networks/clusters.
- Build the tourism industry's capacity to align with future niche destination positioning opportunities for Waterford such as family destination, cycling destination and excellent outdoor activity base.
- Develop the day time and evening time opportunity to create vibrant Waterford towns and villages and maximise the economic value of tourism for local communities.



Strategic Goal 5:

Build committed stakeholder and industry partnerships to guide sustainable destination development.

Strategic Objectives

- Achieve low carbon and sustainable growth in the development of urban and rural visitor experiences that contribute to the county's ambition to become a leading sustainable tourism destination.
- Collectively work towards reducing the carbon footprint of tourism.
- Ensure tourism is integrated as a key element of future strategic development sites in the city and county.
- Develop a county wide approach to grow access to slow tourism experiences as a key element of sustainable tourism development for Waterford.
- Ensure tourism is integrated into future urban and rural regeneration activity in developing the city and county as a great place to live, work and visit.



2.2 ACHIEVING OUR VISION

The destination vision, aligned with the strategic objectives for developing tourism in Waterford, reflect the ambition of the collective stakeholder base. Sustainable tourism development across the destination is centred on a strengths based approach and establishing new ways of working together. It will build on the depth of the outdoor product, and Waterford's track record of success in product development that has been transformational from an economic and community perspective. The approach is centred on a spatial approach and ensures linkages from a product and experience perspective that will motivate visitors to explore more of the urban, coastal and rural Waterford experience.

The destination development focus will build on existing centres of product excellence and will invest in areas with the capacity to grow and create more reasons for visitors to explore more of the county and increase the length of time spent in local communities. Six catalyst projects outlined hereafter in addition to a series of enabling projects represent the basis for the five year implementation plan. The catalyst projects are summarised as follows;



Key Destination Catalyst Projects



1. ATTRACTION OF SCALE

Objective

Develop an iconic attraction of scale in Waterford City with the capacity to transform the city, county and the South East as a tourism destination.

Overview

Waterford City lacks a “hero” visitor attraction with the capacity to transform the region’s positioning within the international market place. The development of an attraction linked to the north side of the river and within or in the vicinity of the North Quays offers an iconic setting with the capacity to significantly alter visitor flows into the City and region. International bench-marking of Waterford with comparable regional port cities highlights the scale of impact such strategic investment can have. It would provide a regeneration focus for the north side of the river and within or in the vicinity of the North Quays but would equally act as a stimulus for wider development activity across the South Quays into the Cultural Quarter, Viking Triangle and City Centre. The wider region requires an attraction of scale that has strong appeal to the international market. The investment has the capacity to address current visitor flows and create the local conditions to encourage longer dwell time in the city and county. It should also generate new volumes of visitor numbers exploring the city and building the visitor base for existing attractions to appeal to.

Activating the Project

The following represent a number of actions/projects to deliver the attraction of scale. A complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

	Project	Timeframe	Lead	Partners
Attraction of Scale	Develop a Visitor Attraction of Scale for the north side of the river and within or in the vicinity of the North Quays of Waterford City to become a transformational project for tourism across the South East Region.	ST	WCCC	FI, PS

Sustainable Tourism Implications

Visitor – Grow the attractiveness of Waterford City as an international destination and motivate visitors to consider the South East region.

Industry – Create a platform for tourism industry engagement to leverage increased levels of visitor footfall and regional impact. Develop the supporting experiences across the destination that will contribute to disrupt regional visitor flows and provide more reasons for visitors to stay longer and explore more of the city and county.

Community – Ensure the regeneration of the North Quays includes an attraction of scale within its vicinity that is a stimulus for a wider regenerative approach extending into the city and county.

Environment – Develop new visitor experiences linked to the attraction of scale without any impact on the natural or built heritage of the area.





2. WATERFORD ORIENTATION PROJECT

Objective

Develop the profile of Waterford for outdoor excellence through the creation of a discovery trail and orientation project linking the county's natural amenities and outdoor activities to motivate our visitors to explore the wider destination.

Overview

Waterford offers visitors access to an enviable and diverse collection of outdoor amenities from greenways, coastal routes, rivers to rural experiences. The ability to introduce visitors to the wider product requires an integrated approach that will encourage consideration of less established and emerging destinations within Waterford. Linking the Waterford Ways as a product development focus (greenways, blueways, pilgrim, coastal and mountain ways) will deliver a blended outdoor experience easily accessed and understood by domestic and international visitors. The creation of a linked discovery trail loop across the county will provide a coherent product development focus and the basis for experience development through existing rural networks/clusters. The trail will influence visitor flows around the county linking mountain experiences with coastal trails, greenways with river experiences and encouraging visitor discovery of new community experiences. The discovery trail will provide a framework for developing the county's outdoor excellence narrative and create a county wide platform for community engagement.

Activating the Project

The following represent a number of actions/projects to deliver the Waterford Orientation Project. A complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

	Project	Timeframe	Lead	Partners
Waterford Orientation Project Analysis	Undertake an analysis of the requirements to develop an orientation approach across County Waterford linking key natural heritage locations and outdoor activities. It will examine how to influence visitor flow between the southern and northern communities of Waterford through the development of motivational outdoor experiences building on existing infrastructure such as coastal experiences, greenways, blueways and walking trails and enhance existing outdoor resources to create a logical orientation route.	ST-MT	FI, WCCC	LCG

Sustainable Tourism Implications

Visitor – Create a coherent destination approach to motivate visitors to explore our coastal and rural communities linked by outdoor activities.

Industry – Create a platform for destination networks/clusters to work together to collectively deliver the Waterford Orientation Project.

Community – Develop new ways of introducing visitors to sustainable and slow tourism opportunities across our communities.

Environment – Promote sustainable engagement with the natural heritage of the county through slow tourism experiences.





3. INDUSTRY COLLABORATION - TOURISM NETWORKS/CLUSTERS

Objective

Deliver a collective approach to destination development through the development of the tourism networks/clusters to create approaches to collaboration across the county.

Overview

The destination must be presented and packaged to visitors in a coherent and consistent manner. Each area within the county must be presented as easily accessible or linked with parts of the county and seamlessly blending urban, rural and coastal experiences within the overall Waterford destination narrative. The continued development of tourism networks/clusters and project based collaboration will represent the initial focus. Increased levels of collaboration will be central to the success of the WDEDP and represent the basis for sustainable tourism development. Future training and capability building will be aligned to this collective tourism industry approach. The development of the cluster approach will also play a key role in enabling of regional opportunities. Future consideration of regionally connected thematic trails will leverage the capacity of networks/clusters to form strategic links with other networks/clusters. It will support the distribution of visitors across the region and maximise the investment of connecting trails e.g. greenways and food or local heritage experiences.

Activating the Project

The following represent a number of actions/projects to deliver the collective tourism industry approach. A complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

	Project	Timeframe	Lead	Partners
Collective Tourism Industry – Networks/Clusters Development	Develop the structures and networks to create a county wide approach to collectively grow tourism, the range and diversity of experiences, and new ways of working together to build a sustainable tourism destination. Create a short term collaborative targets roadmap for Waterford to include existing networks/clusters, networks and tourism businesses across the county. This will include (Waterford Estuary, Copper Coast, Comeragh Uplands, Gaeltacht na nDéise, and the Blackwater Valley)	ST-LT	FI, WCCC	PS, LTN, LCG

Sustainable Tourism Implications

Visitor – Deliver a new approach to packaging the destination and creating new visitor experiences.

Industry – Working together to attract domestic and international visitors and growing the economic impact of the sector across the county through new levels of collaboration.

Community – Developing tourism networks/clusters capacity to introduce the visitor to engaging local Waterford communities.

Environment – Building awareness of sustainable tourism approaches through a collective destination approach.





4. WATERFORD CITY EXPERIENCE

Objective

Develop Waterford City as a year round tourism destination and gateway to Waterford coastal and rural communities and experiences.

Overview

Developing a quality urban tourism environment in Waterford City is key to enhancing the destination gateway role of the city. The investment in the Cultural Quarter is an important catalyst in the enhancement of the overall city experience. Strong performing international urban destinations require a number of fully functioning tourism “Quarters” that provide the basis for visitor exploration and grow the city’s experience base. The development of the city trail head at the Cultural Quarter will be a significant enhancement of the Greenway experience. The corresponding development of the Cultural Quarter and visitor orientation links with the Viking Triangle and its attraction base (Bishop’s Palace, Medieval Museum, Reginald’s Tower, Christchurch Cathedral, Irish Silver Museum, Irish Museum of Time, Irish Wake Museum) will expand the city centre tourism focus.

A wide range of projects will be required to enhance the city experience from master planning the Viking Triangle to examining how the city delivers future festivals and events. The role of the city as a night time economy hub will require industry wide buy-in to expand visitor options during the evening time. The city’s accommodation base will play an important role in developing the destination’s family market positioning while growing the range of day and evening experiences will be an integral element in achieving this goal. The WDEDP contains a range of projects that directly impact on the development of Waterford City as an international destination. This includes the attraction of scale, greenway linkages to Tramore extending the urban and coastal visitor experience and regional connector projects building on the connectivity opportunities with neighbouring counties such as the Greenway and EuroVelo.



Activating the Project

The following represent a number of actions/projects to deliver the Regional Connectors Project. A complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

Sustainable Tourism Implications

Visitor – Strengthen the appeal of Waterford City as an international visitor destination and year round domestic destination.

Industry – Development of the industry capacity to build on emerging tourism and city regeneration investment opportunities.

Community – Motivate visitors to explore the wider urban communities of Waterford City and contribute to local sustainable employment opportunities.

Environment – Embrace an urban tourism development approach adopting a sustainable tourism framework and incorporating sustainability as a differentiator in how Waterford City experiences are delivered.



	Project	Timeframe	Lead	Partners
Cultural Quarter and Creative Experiences	Assess the opportunity to maximise the investment in the Cultural Quarter to develop the area as a focal point for cultural day time and evening experiences and a location to orientate visitors across the city quarters linked through a new approach to visitor orientation. Examine the requirements to develop creative hubs in the Cultural Quarter providing the opportunity to Meet the Makers linking the Cultural Quarter to rurally based creatives such as the immersive glass making/ crystal experiences leveraging the glass craftsmanship heritage of the city.	ST-LT	WCCC	FI
Waterford City Visitor Orientation	Implement a coherent wayfinding and visitor orientation approach that links the core visitor quarters of the city and influences increased levels of visitor flow across the city. Develop an enhanced approach to visitor orientation for Waterford City to link the core tourism zones of the Viking Triangle, Cultural Quarter and vibrant City Centre.	ST-MT	WCCC	FI
Viking Triangle Tourism Experience Masterplan	Assess the required steps to heighten the awareness of the Viking Triangle as a coherent tourism zone within Waterford City through placemaking, animation and examination of innovative lighting to deliver a day and night time experience. Create and implement a phased plan for the placemaking requirements of the Viking Triangle to create a sense of arrival and a stronger awareness of the Viking proposition.	ST	WCCC	FI
Night Time Economy	Develop an evening time economy plan for Waterford City with specific focus on core tourism zones of the Viking Triangle, Cultural Quarter and a vibrant city centre. It will also assess the potential for Dark Tourism thematic experiences in Waterford City integrating the night time economy with the Museum for Irish Wakes.	ST-MT	FI	WAN



5. ACCOMMODATION DEVELOPMENT

Objective

Grow the volume and diversity of accommodation stock distributed across our urban and rural destinations.

Overview

The county requires an increase in bed stock across each of the defined areas within the WDEDP. Waterford City and Dungarvan represent the main urban access points to the destination. Both destinations have an immediate requirement for additional bed stock and growing hotel capacity. A number of key coastal areas such as Tramore and Dunmore East equally have the capacity to grow their accommodation capacity. Strategically important towns such as Lismore require further consideration in addressing the limited accommodation supply which is hampering sustained growth.

The growth of alternative forms of accommodation from glamping, quality hostels, and boutique guest houses to eco themed developments can address existing destination accommodation gaps, particularly in rural and coastal locations. This will be essential to support the destination's outdoor activity opportunity and align accommodation development with emerging product areas such as St. Declan's Way and greenway / blueway development.

Activating the Project

The following represent a number of actions/projects to deliver the Accommodation Development Projects. A complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

	Project	Timeframe	Lead	Partners
Waterford Accommodation Strategy	Develop the Waterford accommodation base to meet projected future demand across the county to include a projected minimum level of bed stock across a range of accommodation options.	ST-LT	WCCC	FI PS

Sustainable Tourism Implications

Visitor – Create motivational itineraries through an enhanced product base that encourages visitor flow into the northern region of the county.

Industry – Develop a new packaging approach integrating the natural heritage of the northern area of the county, working in partnership with the greenway and coastal communities.

Community – Create year round opportunities for local communities to benefit from tourism in the county.

Environment – Engage the visitor with sustainable tourism experiences and natural heritage with appropriate levels of visitor management approaches.





6. WATERFORD COASTAL TOURISM

Objective

Increase the value of tourism for coastal communities through the sustainable development of Waterford as an active coastal tourism destination.

Overview

An integrated coastal tourism proposition for Waterford is required. It will link planned Platforms for Growth investment, maximise the UNESCO Global Geopark designation for slow tourism and assess the potential to create an iconic coastal path. There are many pockets of local experiences and unique coastal vantage and exploration points from cliff walks to coastal trails that will be examined to determine how to link the Waterford coastal experience.

The coastal tourism opportunity development will include the assessment of the potential of a coastal way route and include the innovative delivery of a regional coastal blueway. The approach will maximise the investment in Platforms for Growth activity centres in Ardmore and Tramore while looking to develop Tramore as a major coastal activity hub linked to the Waterford City experience. The opportunity to supplement the product focus from land based activity to incorporate more water activity in Dungarvan and nearby communities such as An Rinn will be explored. The Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark will strive towards a vision for sustainable coastal tourism and how visitors access best in class eco-tourism experiences.

Activating the Project

The following represent a number of actions/projects to deliver the Waterford Coast projects. A complete list of projects and action plan is included in Section Three – Delivery.

	Project	Timeframe	Lead	Partners
Coastal Excellence	Work to achieve and maintain Blue Flag status at as many Waterford beaches as possible to contribute to the Waterford coastal experience. In the absence of appropriate infrastructure for Blue Flag status, WCCC will work to achieve Green Coast Awards.	ST-LT	WCCC	

Sustainable Tourism Implications

Visitor – Position Waterford as a coastal tourism destination to deliver year round experiences resulting in season extension.

Industry – Build on the opportunity provided through the Platforms for Growth investment and coastal experience development focus to attract visitors based on the county's rich marine experience base.

Community – Motivate visitors to engage in slow exploration of our coastal communities to generate a year round tourism dividend across the Waterford coast.

Environment – Develop a best in class approach to sustainable coastal tourism management and identify how we influence visitor engagement with our coastal and marine heritage.



2.3 DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECTS



North Stars

The northern geography of Waterford features a significant collection of built and natural heritage experiences. The experience base is comparable to many more mature destinations but currently lacks a focus to motivate visitors to explore lesser established parts of the county. A number of projects have been identified as North Stars designed to influence greater visitor flow into the north of the county. These include the development of St. Declan's Way linking local communities from coastal areas and introducing visitors to unique rural and urban experiences such as Lismore and Mount Melleray. The area surrounding the Comeraghs over to the River Blackwater offer significant outdoor activity potential that will each feed into the development of the Waterford Way Discovery Trail. Each project requires appropriate visitor management planning and examination of the elements that will support sustainable tourism development and have a positive impact on local communities. To achieve long term success, the North Star projects will require the activation of a number of enabling projects from accommodation development to enhancing the capacity and capabilities of the rural community networks/clusters to develop local tourism.



Waterford Attractions

Visitors are looking to engage with visitor attractions in a more experiential way through human interaction, living history and the incorporation of technology in telling the local story. The Viking Triangle delivers a unique collection of attractions with the House of Waterford delivering an internationally recognised experience. The market reaction to the investment in Mount Congreve and new approaches to experience delivery provides evidence of the success borne from new ways of interpreting heritage stories. It provides a template in how visitor attractions must incorporate new approaches to experience delivery. This equally applies to community led attractions in how they embrace new ways to deliver a visitor experience on site. The visitor market is evolving to demand new ways of telling the cultural and heritage story and attractions must react accordingly. The focus for visitor attractions should be experience led and must be grounded in the prioritisation of new commercial and operational approaches ahead of any focus on major capital investment.



Taste Waterford

Food has become an integral part of the Waterford destination narrative. A food and drink network has evolved to deliver a series of immersive food and drink experiences providing opportunities for the visitor to meet local food champions. The rural and coastal focus of the WDEDP provides new opportunities to embrace food and drink as supporting experiences. The development of new artisan food producer experiences and Meet the Maker opportunities offer immediate development potential. The alignment with existing rural networks/clusters will be important to stimulate new ways of packaging experiences and itinerary development linked to the food and drink theme.

The expansion of the food and drink network across the destination will be an important contributor to developing the rural and coastal experience base. Building on the success of local food festivals will highlight the range of food and drink experiences across Waterford. The capacity of such events to encourage wider destination exploration through Meet the Maker experiences will add to longer term legacy impacts from such events. Increasing the levels of local food included on local menus should be a destination priority and linking the Waterford food journey with the night time economy featuring local producers on local menus.



Family Destination

Waterford has a long-time association as a family destination within the domestic market. The mix of product from attractions, coastal activities and the success of the Waterford Greenway are central to this market positioning. A reinvigorated industry led approach to developing the family market opportunity is now required. The product development focus across the county provides an immediate platform to grow the family destination association. A coherent industry approach through packaging and experience development focused on growing the share of the family market is required. Urban accommodation hubs must adopt a wider focus beyond the day time economy and expand the evening time options for families.



Festivals and Events

Waterford City is host to nationally acclaimed festivals and events animated by a vibrant arts and cultural community. This national event profile has evolved to position Waterford as a leader in developing a number of significant peak and off peak season events. Further opportunities exist to grow the off peak schedule linked to Ireland's Ancient East activities such as Samhain/Halloween/Christmas while the outdoors destination development requires associated events to showcase the county's diverse natural heritage. Waterford should strive to build on the ownership potential of key off peak periods by adopting a strategic event development approach linking city and county. International urban destination bench marking reinforces the requirement of quality event programming in successful destinations. The Waterford urban experience must be animated through a rich programme of cultural events and festivals. The investment in the Cultural Quarter must be matched by a corresponding spring board event

or festival to grow market awareness of the new cultural offering. The strategic approach will require consideration of priority events of scale supplemented by county wide activity that showcases the core destination themes and opportunities e.g. outdoors and activity, culture and family, rural culture.



Waterford Outdoors

Waterford's outdoor amenity potential has the ability to create international scale experiences through its connectivity, ability to support networks/clusters development and potential for experience innovation. Greenway developments have become an integral part of the Waterford destination narrative. The expansion of greenways, linkages with bordering counties combined with coastal tourism hubs presents Waterford with an opportunity to develop the county as Ireland's outdoor activity destination. Delivering a coherent destination message highlighting the quality of the outdoor experience will match the ongoing investment in strengthening the outdoor activity assets across Waterford.



Climate Action / Sustainable Tourism

Destination commitment to meeting climate action targets will be a key factor in how the Waterford visitor experience is delivered. The ambition to enhance the county's sustainable tourism credentials will be evident in how Waterford is presented as a rural, coastal and urban destination. It will require collective engagement in how the destination reduces its carbon footprint bringing together our local communities, agencies and the tourism industry to work on county wide initiatives.

2.4 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The overarching objective of the WDEDP is to achieve tourism sector recovery and to sustainably increase the economic benefit of tourism across the county. It provides a destination development focus aligning all stakeholders with an agreed vision through the adoption of a five year pathway.

Specific KPI's will be baselined and monitored throughout the lifecycle of the plan. The impact of the WDEDP will be measured through the monitoring of key metrics that examine the commercial development of tourism across the area.

The measurement of success will be based on the VICE model for sustainable tourism to include analysis of the following areas over the course of the WDEDP.

1. Visitor - Demand side conditions
2. Industry - Supply side conditions
3. Community
4. Environment

Visitor

1. Increase bednights across Waterford YoY ahead of regional average from year three of implementation of the WDEDP.
2. Increase in visitor numbers in off peak season.
3. Increase the value of visitors to Waterford over volume.
4. Increase visitor satisfaction ratings.

Industry

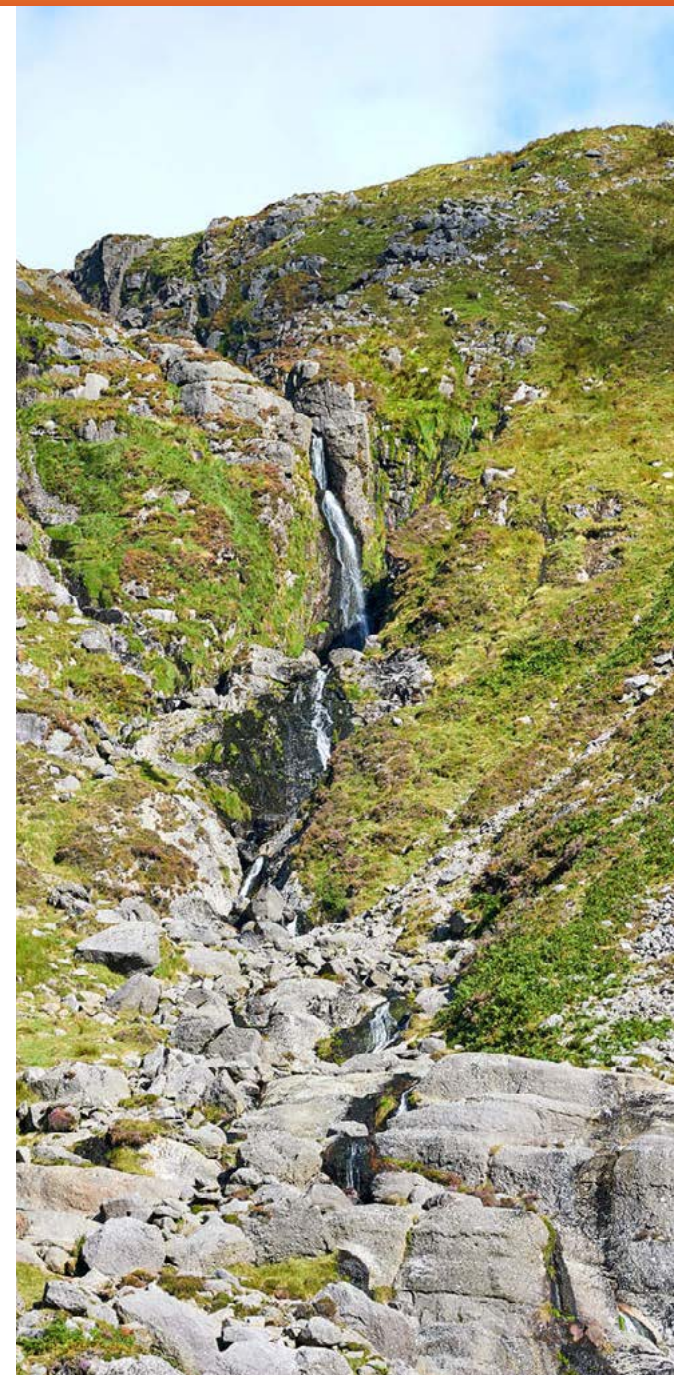
5. Increase saleable products (five new or improved saleable experiences per annum) and a tailor made distribution plan for the destination.
6. Season extension: Progress towards extending the season and annual opening hours across the destination.
7. Increase the volume of saleable experiences through product networks/clusters linked to the spatial approach and strengthening the capacity of destination hubs to attract and retain visitors in the destination for longer.

Community

8. Maximise the tourism impact for local communities through the Waterford Orientation Project, trails, Greenway and Blueway projects.
9. Create a network of authentic community experiences linking the rural communities through cluster development.
10. Build the capacity of the tourism industry and the local community to maximise the opportunity provided by the WDEDP.

Environmental

11. SEA Environmental Monitoring Programme developed as part of the SEA process (replicated in Appendix 1 of this report) will be used to monitor the significant environmental effects of implementing this plan.
12. Develop recognition as a sustainable tourism destination differentiated by the opportunities for the visitor to engage in slow and responsible tourism activity.



SECTION 3

**Waterford Destination
and Experience
Development Plan**

DELIVERY

3.1 WATERFORD DEDP ACTION PLAN

The implementation of the WDEDP is based on stakeholder commitment to project delivery. It represents a five-year operational plan creating a destination development focus for Waterford. It builds on existing project plans, integrating all related activity for a coordinated series of outputs. These include projects that are being implemented, projects featured in existing plans and new concepts to build the destination's capacity for new visitor experience development.

A list of actions relating to all proposed projects has been devised. All stakeholders will be consulted in relation to the delivery of the identified actions. Each of the stakeholders listed below will be tasked with delivering on actions which will help to shape the plan and ultimately ensure the success of the project over the next five years.

The implementation of the WDEDP will be overseen by the creation of an implementation team that will operate until 2030. The WDEDP implementation team is tasked with supporting the following objectives:

- Support the delivery of the Waterford DEDP.
- Drive growth as per the agreed KPI's in the action plan.
- Lead and manage the action plan ensuring alignment around the prioritisation and delivery of key projects.
- Creation of a representative area wide body which ensures there is a mechanism in place that allows two-way communication between the implementation team and any sub groups which may be formed.
- Ensure that the destination catalyst and enabling projects support the delivery of experiences identified in the plan and are delivered within the five year timeframe.
- Provide a space where stakeholders can share new ideas with partners.
- Creation of a common tourism voice and a powerful tourism network that promotes each other's interests.

The WDEDP implementation team will form will represent key stakeholders and representatives from the area. It will be chaired by an independent chairperson with the ability to focus the group in the delivery of the actions required to implement the WDEDP.

Table of Acronyms

Chambers	Chambers – Business Representative Groups
ETB	Education and Training Board
FI	Fáilte Ireland
IL	Commission for Irish Lights
KKCC	Kilkenny County Council
LCG	Local Community Groups
LDA	Local Development Agencies
LEADER	Waterford LEADER Partnership
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
LTN	Local Tourism Network
MI	Mountaineering Ireland
MMC	Mount Melleray Community of Cistercian Monks
MV	Munster Values
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OPW	Office of Public Works
PF	Purple Flag
PS	Private Sector
RLA	Regional Local Authorities
SETU	South East Technological University
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
TW	Taste Waterford
UnG	Udúráis na Gaeltachta
VW	Visit Waterford
WCCC	Waterford City & County Council
WKCC	Wicklow County Council
WLP	Waterford LEADER Partnership
WSP	Waterford Sports Partnership
WT	Waterford Treasures
WXCC	Wexford County Council

3.2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To ensure the successful implementation of the WDEDP experiences and the creation of a sense of place, the following guiding principles have been established to guide certain recommendations and projects listed in this section.

- All projects are self-sustainable, meaning they have access to capital and are not relying solely on grant aid to be developed or maintained.
- All projects are on-message with the WDEDP experiences and are aligned to the broader mission of Ireland's Ancient East proposition and regional brand.
- All projects focus on setting the area apart from its competitors, contributing actively to creating a strong sense of place with a unique feel and ensuring visitor needs are catered for across the day and evening time.
- All projects add value to the area and provide a direct and demonstrable link to either extending visitor length of stay, extending the length of the tourist season or developing a new market.
- Principles of responsible and sustainable tourism development are embedded in each action, creating better places to live in and to visit.
- All stakeholders will demonstrate a strong and sustained willingness to working as a collaborative network.

TIMING OF ACTIONS WITHIN THE DEDP

SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
Year 1	Years 2-4	Years 5-6
2025	2026-2028	2029-2030



CATALYST PROJECT 1: Attraction of Scale

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
ATTRACTION OF SCALE	Develop a Visitor Attraction of Scale for the north side of the river and within or in the vicinity of the North Quays of Waterford City to become a transformational project for sustainable tourism across the Southeast Region in accordance with the NQ SDZ Planning Scheme and associated SEA, NIS and SFRA.	ST	WCCC	FI, PS

CATALYST PROJECT 2: WATERFORD Orientation Project - ANALYSIS

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
WATERFORD Orientation Project - ANALYSIS	Undertake an analysis of the requirements to develop an orientation approach across County Waterford linking key natural heritage locations and outdoor activities. It will examine how to influence visitor flow between the southern and northern communities of Waterford through the development of motivational outdoor experiences building on existing infrastructure such as coastal experiences, greenways, blueways and walking trails and enhance existing outdoor resources to create a logical orientation route.	2024-2025	WCCC	FI, LCG

CATALYST PROJECT 3: Industry Collaboration - Tourism Networks/Clusters

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
COLLECTIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY - Network/Cluster Development	Develop the structures and networks to create a county wide approach to collectively grow tourism, the range and diversity of experiences, and new ways of working together to build a sustainable tourism destination. Support the capability building requirements of five rural destination networks/clusters (Waterford Estuary, Copper Coast, Comeragh Uplands, Gaeltacht na nDéise, and the Blackwater Valley) to align their experience development focus with the opportunities identified within the Waterford DEDP and deliver a programme of supports to develop best in class community tourism experiences and the development of vibrant community tourism hubs supporting the development of trails and Waterford Ways.	2024-2026	FI, WCCC	PS, LEO, LTN, LCG, VW, LEADER

CATALYST PROJECT 3: Industry Collaboration - Tourism Networks/Clusters

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Collective Tourism Industry Promotion through Visit Waterford	Build a community of tourism stakeholders that collectively contribute to the development and promotion of Waterford as a global tourism destination of choice. Develop and deliver an annual promotional plan and marketing campaigns that align with the growing community of stakeholders and FI/TI marketing strategies.	2025-2029	VW	WCCC/ FI
Digital that Delivers - Industry Capability Development	Undertake an assessment of the digital capabilities of the local tourism industry supported by the delivery of a digital skills training programme under Digital that Delivers.	2024-2026	FI	LEO
Training Partnerships	Undertake a periodic review of capacity building requirements for the tourism industry with all relevant training agencies to ensure alignment of training investment with the WDEDP, cluster development and industry collaboration.	2024-2026	FI	ETB, SETU, LEO, LEADER, VW, MV
Regional Experience Trails / Network/Cluster Development	Undertake a network/cluster development approach to establish product networks with the capacity to work together to create regional linkages and creating new ways of influencing visitors flows between Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny and Tipperary. This will include building on the development of the South East Food Stories to create an internationally recognised Regional Food Trail and examination of new networks/clusters opportunities such as a South East Creatives experience network delivering an experiential "Meet the Creator" approach introducing visitors to a mix of urban and rural artisan producer's experiences.	2025	FI	LEADER, PS, TW, LEO, WCCC, MV
Gaeltacht Cultural Experiences	Examine the requirements to develop unique Gaeltacht experiences in An Rinn and Sean Phobal and create specific Irish speaking visitor experiences integrated with the local heritage and activity experience base. Examine the opportunity to develop the outdoor activity potential of the Gaeltacht through the establishment of a social enterprise to address local product and experience gaps. Examine the development of Parents and Family Experience Programmes in conjunction with Coláiste na Rinne and Comhlucht Forbartha na nDéise.	2025	UnG	LCG, FI

CATALYST PROJECT 3: Industry Collaboration - Tourism Networks/Clusters

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Great Houses & Gardens Network	Create an experience development programme for the network of Great House owners to expand the range of saleable experiences on a year round basis leveraging the day time and evening economy opportunity. This will also include an assessment of opportunities such as Mount Congreve to become an orientation resource to influence visitor flow to other Great House and Gardens experiences across Waterford and the region.	2025	PS, WCCC	FI
Waterford Estuary Network/Cluster Development	Through appropriate training empower the communities of water estuary to identify and assess the opportunities to develop Waterford fishing heritage experiences the combined access activity and culture to tell a unique community and food story.	2025-2026	LEADER	LCG, WCCC
Cappoquin	Examine the requirements to develop Cappoquin's potential to grow into an outdoor recreational hub.	2025	WCCC	LEADER
Kilmacthomas	Undertake an opportunity site scoping exercise to examine the potential of the Workhouse in Kilmacthomas as a destination tourism opportunity site.	2025	PS	WCCC
Portlaw	Examine the future use of the Tannery site as a potential rural recreation site complementing the ongoing enhancements and creation of new outdoor activity experiences e.g. connecting the canal to the Tannery.	2026	PS	WCCC

CATALYST PROJECT 4: Waterford City Experience

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
COLLECTIVE TOURISM INDUSTRY – Network/Cluster Development	Assess the opportunity for the Cultural Quarter to develop the area as a focal point for cultural day time and evening experiences and a location to orientate visitors across the city quarters linked through a new approach to visitor orientation.	2024-2026	WCCC	FI
	Examine the requirements to develop creative hubs in the Cultural Quarter providing the opportunity to Meet the Makers linking the Cultural Quarter to rurally based creatives such as the immersive glass making/crystal experiences leveraging the glass craftsmanship heritage of the city.			
	Develop the Waterford Cultural Quarter as Ireland's most vibrant, innovative, urban creative district. Support the development of the key projects to deliver the Cultural Quarter experience for the local community and visitors to include the following:			
	O'Connell Street: the development of shared space and public realm.			
	Beech Tower Square: the development of the public space.			
	Live, Work and Play multipurpose focus for 11 buildings/spaces to animate the Cultural Quarter: Examine the tourism potential of the 11 buildings/spaces within the Cultural Quarter that represent key opportunity sites to be blended with the public realm investment.			
	New Street at Jenkins Lane.			
	Gateway Plaza and gateway to the Waterford Greenway.			

CATALYST PROJECT 4: Waterford City Experience

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Waterford City Visitor Orientation	Implement a coherent wayfinding and visitor orientation approach that links the core visitor quarters of the city and influences increased levels of visitor flow across the city. Develop an enhanced approach to visitor orientation for Waterford City to link the core tourism zones of the Viking Triangle, Cultural Quarter, North Quays and vibrant City Centre.	2025-2026	WCCC	FI
Viking Triangle Tourism Experience Masterplan	Assess the requirements to heighten the awareness of the Viking Triangle as a coherent tourism zone within Waterford City through placemaking, animation and examination of innovative lighting to deliver a day and night time experience. Create and implement a phased plan for the placemaking requirements of the Viking Triangle to create a sense of arrival and a stronger awareness of the Viking proposition.	2025-2027	WCCC	FI
	Examine the possibility of a permanent performance space in the heart of the Viking Triangle to grow the scale and diversity of evening economy activity.			
	Examine the opportunity to develop an enhanced Friary experience with the OPW to contribute to the overall Viking Triangle experience.			
	Examine the requirements to enhance City engagement with the Greenway to create a cultural trail head and the inclusion of trail head linkages to the Viking Journey theme and linking the Cultural Quarter with the Viking Triangle.			
Night Time Economy	Develop an evening time economy plan for Waterford City with specific focus on core tourism zones of the Viking Triangle, Cultural Quarter and a vibrant city centre. It will also assess the potential for Dark Tourism themed experiences in Waterford City integrating the night time economy with the Museum for Irish Wakes.	2025-2026	WCCC	WAN, FI, PF

CATALYST PROJECT 4: Waterford City Experience

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Urban Animation	Examine the opportunity incorporating urban animation, placemaking and outdoor dining spaces across the city to grow the Waterford night time economy through the development of evening events and night time visitor experiences.	2024	WCCC	FI, PF
Tourism Retail	Assess the development opportunities for retail in our urban centres as part of the overall tourism experience using Waterford City and Dungarvan as programme pilot sites.	2025	Chambers	WCCC
University City	Examine the potential for growth in the MICE market attracting conferences and events associated with the university and the development of associated event programmes and experiences to showcase Waterford to delegates.	2025-2027	SETU	WCCC
Waterford Airport	Support the capacity of Waterford Airport to attract additional levels of inbound visitors and the development of the product base that appeals to international buyers.	2024-2026	PS	LTN
Waterford South Quays	Explore the development of a new vision for the South Quays in Waterford City to understand how the city, community and visitors engage with the River Suir as a key focal point for the Waterford City experience and how it will link to the future North Quays development activity.	2026	WCCC	
Waterford City Walls	Develop the opportunity through the Waterford City Walls project to create a range of new urban spaces for performance and cultural events and as a means of orientating visitors across the city. Implement the next phases of the City Walls project examining future scope for the creative incorporation of the City Walls into the Waterford City visitor experience. Examine the future potential of the lighting and light projections on the city walls and quays to incorporate new placemaking opportunities to link to the theme of crystal and glass making heritage of the city.	2025	WCCC	

CATALYST PROJECT 5: Accommodation Development

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Waterford Accommodation Strategy	Develop the Waterford accommodation base to meet projected future demand across the county to include a projected minimum level of keys across a range of accommodation options. This will include;	2024-2026	WCCC, PS	LEADER
	Glamping: examine the opportunity to increase outdoor accommodation options in the rural and coastal regions of Co. Waterford through the extension of existing outdoor sites, the extension of on-farm accommodation and the development of a green field site.			
	Hostel: examine the potential to add a unique tourist hostel in Waterford City through the re-purposing of an old derelict vacant property or any other opportunity sites that may arise.			
	Support the development of additional hotel room stock supply in Waterford City, Tramore and Dungarvan.			
	Support the improvement of the quality of hotel accommodation by investment and re-positioning of some current hotels from 3 star to 4 star grading.			
	Other serviced accommodation (B&B's, guesthouses or historic houses) - examine the opportunity to enhance upgraded or three star graded B & B's or guesthouses through renovation or repositioning.			
Dunmore East Accommodation	Develop and sustainably manage the Waterford accommodation base to meet projected future demand across the county to include a projected minimum level of keys across a range of accommodation options.	2025	PS	

CATALYST PROJECT 6: Waterford Coastal Tourism

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Platforms for Growth Investment	Examine how the Platforms for Growth activity centre investment in Tramore and Ardmore can become activity hubs and visitor orientation points for Coastal Blueway activity and a centre of excellence for coastal tourism. Develop Tramore as the surf centre for Ireland's Ancient East.	2025-2026	FI	WCCC, PS
Coastal Excellence	Work to achieve and maintain Blue Flag status at as many Waterford beaches as possible to contribute to the Waterford coastal experience. In the absence of appropriate infrastructure for Blue Flag status, WCCC will work to achieve Green Coast Awards.	2025-2027	WCCC	LCG
Coastal Blueway	Undertake a feasibility assessment of the requirements to develop Waterford coastal tourism experience linking the Copper Coast and Dunmore East through a Coastal Blueway linking water based activity experiences with coastal paths and trails. This should include an assessment of the requirements to develop a Waterford Estuary Blueway with the capacity to link visitor experiences between the Estuary and Waterford City. The assessment will also include a review of the requirements to create a series of Coastal Blueway pilot sites to create a South East Coastal Blueway linking Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow.	2026	WCCC, WXCC, WKCC	FI
Waterford Estuary	Undertake an economic and tourism development assessment for Waterford Estuary that identifies opportunities for developing the destination while balancing community and economic needs.	2025	WCCC	WXCC, KKCC, FI
Outdoor Activity Destination Hubs	Identify the requirements to develop Dungarvan as a year round tourism hub aligned with an agreed tourism vision for the town including a focus on developing the town as a best in class outdoor activity hub supported by a vibrant evening economy.	2025	WCCC	FI

CATALYST PROJECT 6: Waterford Coastal Tourism

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Coastal Tramore – Outdoor Activity and Tourism Regeneration	Deliver the projects identified under the Town Regeneration Programme to deliver the best active recreational seaside destination in the country. Examine the tourism potential of the opportunity sites identified in Tramore by Waterford City & County Council including vacant sites and other sites with the capacity to be key economic stimuli.	2026	WCCC	
Copper Coast Destination Vision	Develop a tourism destination vision for the Copper Coast UNESCO Global Geopark to develop the destination as an exemplar for eco-tourism establishing a coherent sustainable tourism proposition for the destination.	2026	FI, WCCC	LCG, LEADER
	Undertake a Green Innovation Visitor Experience pilot programme in the Copper Coast to develop innovative approaches to sustainable visitor experiences leveraging the existing eco-tourism base.			
Dunmore East Activity Base Development	Develop the potential of Dunmore East as a quality outdoor activity base incorporating future use of the harbour area, visitor orientation, local trails development and the growth of saleable experiences for visitors to the area. Develop consistency in the visitor welcome and destination signage through future public realm investment.	2026	WCCC	
Lighthouse Tourism	Examine the opportunity for the Ballinacourty Lighthouse to develop as a niche visitor experience or activity spur from the Waterford Greenway.	2026	IL	WCCC

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 1: North Stars

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
St. Declan's Way Experience Development Plan	Develop an experience development plan to guide the development of St. Declan's Way to become an iconic pilgrim way supported by best in class community experiences. This will examine the requirements for communities on the route and develop the capacity of Ardmore to enhance the Trail Head experience for visitors reflecting its starting or finishing position on St. Declan's Way. It will examine the role of Local Link in supporting the transport linkages between St. Declan's Way and the community hubs on the route.	2025	LCG	WCCC, FI, MV
Mount Melleray Visitor Experience Development	Develop a visitor experience plan for Mount Melleray to explore its potential as an outdoor hub /trailhead. This will include an assessment of the experience development potential of Mount Melleray as an iconic visitor experience along the St. Declan's Way route and hub to access local experiences.	2025	LCG	MMC, FI, WCCC, LEADER
Comeragh Mountains Outdoor Recreation Strategy	Develop an integrated visitor management approach to support the development of the Comeraghs as a sustainable outdoor multi - activity destination to become a significant slow tourism attractor for Waterford.	2025-2026	WCCC	FI, LCG, MV, MI, COILLTE, NPWS, WSP, LEADER, Landowners
River Blackwater Blueway Feasibility Study	Examine the feasibility of developing a series of activity focal points on the River Blackwater to develop a Blackwater Blueway proposition integrating a series of local activities on and off the water along the River Blackwater to create a best in class approach to river based tourism, and link cultural and heritage experiences with outdoor pursuits e.g. Great Houses and River Experiences.	2026	LCG	FI, PS

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 2: Waterford Outdoors

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Waterford Greenways Masterplan	Develop a Waterford Greenways Masterplan to map out future Greenway development requirements in Waterford and associated opportunities to link to regional greenways to create international scale experiences through their connectivity, ability to support network/cluster development and potential for experience innovation. The Greenway masterplan will include the following;	2025-2027	WCCC / TII	
Regional Greenway	Develop the elements required within Waterford to support the creation of a signature Greenway experience linking Dublin with Cork.	2025-2027	WCCC / TII	
Waterford to New Ross Greenway	Develop the Waterford to New Ross Greenway supported by the continuous enhancement of visitor experiences and opportunities to engage with local communities.	2025-2027	WCCC / TII	
Waterford to Tramore Greenway	Develop the Waterford to Tramore Greenway and explore its future integration with coastal cycling trails integrating the Waterford Greenway and the Copper Coast route.	2025-2027	WCCC / TII	FI, RLA
Dungarvan to Mallow Greenway	Examine the requirements to develop a greenway between Dungarvan and Mallow.	2025-2027	WCCC / TII	FI, RLA
Dungarvan to Youghal Link	Assess the feasibility of linking Dungarvan with Youghal connecting the Waterford Greenway with the Midleton Youghal Greenway as a connecting segment of the proposed Dublin to Cork Greenway proposition.	2024-2026	WCCC / TII	FI, RLA
Spur to Helvick	Examine the inclusion of a spur to Helvick as part of the link to the Waterford Greenway.	2024-2026	WCCC / TII	FI, RLA

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 2: Waterford Outdoors

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Waterford Greenway to Suir Blueway	Linking to the Suir Blueway	2024-2026	WCCC / TII	MV
Waterford County Outdoor Recreation Plan	Linking to the Suir Blueway - Examine the feasibility of linking the Waterford Greenway and Suir Blueway Tipperary.			FI, RLA
Waterford to Rosslare Greenway	Support an appraisal of the requirements to connect Waterford to Rosslare through a sustainable transport method	2025-2027	WCCC / TII	FI, RLA, WEXCC
Local Loops	Assess the opportunities to create local loops off existing and proposed greenways to provide more exploration options of Greenway communities.	2025-2027	WCCC	LDA
Linking Anne Valley Walk with Greenway	Examine the requirements to link the Anne Valley Walk with the Waterford Greenway.	2026	WCCC	LCG
Mahon Falls Greenway Spur	Examine the requirements to link Mahon Falls with Bunmahon and the coastal route as a Waterford Greenway spur.	2026	WCCC	
Greenways – Visitor Interpretation	Undertake an investment programme in the Waterford Greenway to develop new visitor interpretation and enhance local exploration points.	2025-2026	WCCC	FI
Greenways – User Experience	Undertake an assessment of the trail head requirements across all greenways to deliver a consistent Waterford Greenway user experience.	2025	WCCC	FI

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 2: Waterford Outdoors

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Cycling Tourism Destination	Develop a cycling tourism strategy for Waterford to become Ireland's cycling destination supported by the mix of appropriate cycling infrastructure and access to a mix of cycling experiences.	2026	WCCC	FI, WSP, VW
	This will include an assessment of the development of Dungarvan as a national cycling tourism hub with ease of access to a variety of cycling experiences from the greenway, road, off road, BMX and pump track investment.			
Waterford Outdoors	Assess the current trail head offering and ensure consistency according to county outdoor recreation plan and Comeragh outdoor recreation strategy. Assess the requirements to develop a series of community trailheads into the Waterford Mountain amenities (Waterford Mountain Ways) to include the Vee, Nire Valley, Ballymacarbry, Mahon Falls, Coumshingaun in Kilcooley Wood and Rathgormack.	2025	WCCC	FI, LEADER, WSP, Coillte
International Routes and Trails – EuroVelo 1	Support the delivery of EuroVelo 1 experience in Waterford following the national development programme for the trail.	2026	WCCC	PS, LCG
Linking Cycling Infrastructure	Increase the cycling infrastructure capacity across the county by linking active travel investment to greenways to expand the mix and variety of cycling trails.	2026	WCCC	TII
Off Road Cycling Infrastructure	Undertake a feasibility assessment on the opportunity to develop a Waterford off road trail centre in a suitable location to add to the overall cycling product mix and undertake an audit of suitable sites to develop off road bike trails and mountain biking in the county to expand the cycling product base in partnership with relevant agencies and other stakeholders.	2026	WCCC	COILLTE
Signature Adventure	Explore the opportunity to develop an outdoor adventure centre of scale in the county on a stand-alone site or incorporate it into an existing attraction/amenity.	2026	PS	

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 2: Waterford Outdoors

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Water Activity Centre	Examine the potential of developing a water activity centre of scale for Co. Waterford accessible from existing networks/clusters of outdoor activity such as Greenway destinations in the county.	2027	PS	
River Suir Experiences Cluster	Examine the opportunities to grow accessible water activity infrastructure along the River Suir e.g. canoeing and kayaking.	2027	WCCC	

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 3: Waterford Attractions

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Gaeltacht Cultural Facility	Examine the potential for a new Gaeltacht multi-purpose cultural facility with the capacity to include visitor accommodation, performance space and a focal point for Gaeltacht cultural activities.	2025	UnG	LCG
Community Heritage Centres	Undertake an operational assessment of the commercial and sales approach of existing community heritage centres to also include an assessment of the experience development requirements to appeal to domestic and international visitors.	2025-2026	FI	WCCC
Waterford Visitor Attractions	Undertake a review of the experience delivered across Waterford city visitor attractions to identify new ways of linking the stories and enhancing the visitor experience relevant to future visitor strategies.	2025	FI, WT	WCCC, WAN
	Undertake a review of the commercial experience / demand generation capabilities and examination of future collaboration across attractions in Waterford.			
Cultural Visitor Experience	Examine the potential of a cultural visitor experience in the 25-26 O'Connell Street building aligned with the vision for the Cultural Quarter and creating a permanent home for Waterford cultural and creative experiences.	2025	FI	
Dungarvan Castle	Assess the opportunity to develop the visitor experience at Dungarvan Castle and how it can add to the mix of things to do and see in the day and evening time.	2026	OPW	FI

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 3: Waterford Attractions

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Dungarvan Cultural Centre	Undertake an analysis on the viability of developing a cultural and heritage year-round proposition in Dungarvan.	2026	WCCC	FI
Mount Congreve	Examine the opportunity to further enhance the visitor experience at Mount Congreve to link the site with the city such as river transport, cycling and access from other trails such as the Anne Valley.	2026	MC	WCCC, FI

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 4: Taste Waterford

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Food Tourism – Taste Waterford	Develop Taste Waterford as a county wide food experience introducing visitors to the food of the coast, mountains, river valley and rural communities and support the development of Taste Waterford experience development creating best in class immersive food experiences linked together by a Waterford Food and Drink Trail showcasing Waterford artisan producers. Support food producers in the commercial development of sustainable food tourism experiences to grow the range of Waterford food trails and saleable experiences. Examine the expansion of major destination food events and festivals to include satellite events in locations such as Lismore, Ardmore and the Comeraghs.	2025-2028	TW, PS	FI, LEADER, WCCC
Food Tourism – Distillers & Brewers	Develop increased access to the county's drinks production heritage through the development of a Waterford taste experience trail linking distillers and brewers in the county and city to create saleable visitor experiences.	2025	PS	TW, FI, LEADER

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 5: Family Destination

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Family Market Focus	Develop the capacity of the Waterford tourism industry to become recognised for family experience innovation through a blend of outdoor activities, coastal, rural and cultural experiences.	2025	VW	PS

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 6: Festivals & Events

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
New Festival Development	Examine the potential for a new Samhain/ Halloween destination festival to contribute to the establishment of Ireland as the home of Halloween and the development of new off peak season event opportunities.	2024-2026	WCCC	FI
Festivals and Events	Develop a city/county festival and events plan to align future investment with destination development objectives and to develop the ambition to host nationally recognised events within the destination. It will assess the development of a hallmark destination festival linked to the Waterford outdoors and the development of Waterford as an international outdoors activity / lifestyle destination.	2025	WCCC	FI

DESTINATION ENABLING PROJECT 7: Climate Action / Sustainable Tourism

	PROJECT	Time	Lead	Partners
Sustainable Tourism Destination – Networks/ Clusters Pilot Programme	Create a series of hallmark sustainable tourism experiences and projects among the rural tourism networks/clusters to develop Waterford's profile as a sustainable tourism destination. This will include enhancing the industry approach to sustainable tourism, packaging the outdoors and associated opportunities through land and water based activities.	2024-2025	LCG	WCCC, SETU, LEO, FI
Smart Tourism	Continue development of digital interpretation programme in Waterford City to assess effectiveness and possible expansion to other urban hubs in the county.	2025	WCCC, SETU	
Sustainable Tourist Transport Strategy	Develop a sustainable tourist transport strategy/ plan to aid visitors to plan their trips using sustainable modes of transport.	2025	FI, TI/ NTA, WCCC	

APPENDIX

Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan

ENVIRONMENTAL

This Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that all existing and future tourism projects and initiatives within the Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan area are planned, developed and managed in a sustainable and integrated manner. The V.I.C.E (Visitor, Industry, Community and Environment) Model for Sustainable Tourism is the approach the WDEDP is developed from and strives to implement.

Fáilte Ireland recognises the need to integrate environmental considerations into this Plan in a way that responds to the sensitivities and requirements of the wider natural environment. Environmental considerations including inland and coastal water quality and amenity, climate change, traffic, biodiversity, built and cultural heritage, landscape, critical infrastructure and communities, all play a vital part in our tourism sector.

The protection, enhancement and promotion of our most important tourism asset – the natural environment has been an integral part of the formation of this Plan as is evidenced in the following:

- The environmental assessments (SEA and AA) undertaken to inform the development of the plan and resulting mitigation measures,
- The monitoring of significant environmental effects as a result of implementing this plan (refer to Environmental Monitoring Programme Table A1 of this Plan),
- A firm commitment to ensuring sustainable and responsible tourism principles are practiced,
- Compliance with statutory decision making and consent granting at Plan implementation stage, and
- Integrating requirements for environmental protection and management.

Identification and mapping of the key environmental sensitivities of relevance to the Plan are detailed in the SEA Environmental Report and in the AA Natura Impact Statement.

Environmental Assessment

Consideration has been given to the requirement to undertake environmental assessment of this Plan in order to ensure full legal compliance and to further integrate sustainability, protection, enhancement and promotion of the

environment in developing and implementing the Plan. The environmental assessments undertaken to inform the development of this Plan include:

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The Plan was screened for the need to undertake SEA. The process established the need to undertake full SEA which was completed having regard to SEA Directive 2001/42/EU and to Statutory Instrument No. 435/2004 as amended. The outcome of this process can be reviewed in the SEA Environmental Report (ER) and the once the plan is finalised the SEA Statement that accompany this Plan.

Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The Plan was examined for the need to undertake Appropriate Assessment (AA). On initial examination of the Plan and in completing screening for AA, it was determined that Stage 2 AA would be required as the possibility of significant effects on European sites could not be excluded. The assessment process was undertaken having regard to the Council Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and the Birds Directive. . The outcome of this process is the AA Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) that accompany this Plan.

Key findings of the SEA and AA Process for the Plan

Having completed full SEA and AA on the Waterford Destination and Experience Development Plan it is evident that these processes have had a positive influence on the evolution of the Plan and integrating environmental protection as part of the plan making process. The SEA process will also continue to have a positive environmental influence as the plan enters its implementation phase. The outcome of completing the above environmental assessments has resulted in the following:

- Identifying and mitigating where relevant potential environmental effects resulting from the Plan itself through making changes to the plan itself embedding the principles of sustainability into the plan text and projects;
- Identifying and promoting potential positive environmental effects arising from the Plan and promoting environmental protection, enhancement and restoration of the natural and built environment through sustainable tourism development. For example, through the development of visitor management plans, project

level environmental assessments and sustainable tourism education and training; and

- Developing mitigation measures to ensure that any potential negative environmental impacts are avoided, reduced or mitigated at plan implementation stage.

These mitigation measures include:

- The requirement to comply with all relevant planning and environmental legislation and policy as part of the statutory decision-making process and/ or consent process. Particular emphasis is placed on the following:
- Requirements for undertaking environmental assessments at project level including but not limited to: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) or Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA).
- Compliance with the policies and objectives of the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028;
- The Climate Action Plan 2024 and subsequent updates;
- Preparation of Visitor Management Plans, as appropriate;
- Consideration for critical infrastructural capacity at tourism sites; and
- Promotion of blue and green infrastructure including integration of nature-based solutions that can also provide eco system services.
- Development and execution of an Environmental Monitoring Programme for the Plan during implementation and operation

The SEA Directive requires that the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes are monitored. The table below details the measures that have been selected in order to monitor the likely significant effects of implementing this Plan.

Monitoring can demonstrate the positive effects facilitated by the Plan and can enable, at an early stage, the identification of unforeseen adverse effects and the undertaking of appropriate remedial action. The occurrence of persistent significant adverse environmental effects which are directly attributable to this plan would necessitate consideration of the effects in the context of the Plan and a possible review of part(s) of the Plan.

The environmental monitoring programme targets and indicators that allow for a quantitative measurement of trends and progress over time relating to the Strategic Environmental Objectives (SEOs) developed during the SEA process. A variety of sources of information will be used to undertake the Environmental Monitoring. The responsibility for monitoring is with Fáilte Ireland. Monitoring will be undertaken at key stages as part of the implementation phase of the Plan. It will be reported on to the Plan's implementation group and where relevant information sources allow, and the findings of the monitoring will influence the actions of the plan as it progresses. Separately, monitoring of the Plan KPI's, including monitoring of visitor numbers where relevant will also be undertaken.

Table A1 sets out the proposed SEA Monitoring Programme for this Plan. Reference to Chapter 10 of the accompanying SEA Environmental Report should also be consulted further.



Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

This Plan conforms and commits to sustainable growth of tourism in Waterford and, in completing the above-mentioned assessments, demonstrates the strong commitment to the V.I.C.E Model for Sustainable Tourism Development. The implementation of guiding principles is key to the success of the Plan.

Guiding Principles for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices

are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

Thus, sustainable tourism should:

1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation (*UNWTO.org*).

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

Sustainable tourism is also required to maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

Promoters/businesses shall adopt a responsible and sustainable tourism approach with ongoing monitoring of environmental impacts as appropriate. Through the implementation of best practice and/or tourism guidelines: e.g.

Key relevant Fáilte Ireland guidance include:

- Climate Action Programme – empowering your business to become more sustainable
- Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns
- Visitor Management Guidelines for the Wild Atlantic Way June 2020
- Wild Atlantic Way Site Maintenance Guidelines
- Tourist Accommodation Quality Assured – code of ethics
- Sustainable Festival Guidelines 2023, developed by Fáilte Ireland
- And other guidance and any subsequent updates.

Implementation and Consent

This WDEDP is a non-statutory tourism plan, it does not provide consent, and/ or establish a framework for granting consent.

Fáilte Ireland provides funding for sustainable tourism projects that emerge as part of specific, competitive, themed and time-bound grant schemes or as part of wider strategic partnerships.

This Plan has been informed by and is situated alongside a hierarchy of statutory documents setting out public policy for land use development, tourism, infrastructure, sustainable development, environmental protection and environmental management .These include (but is not limited to) the National Planning Framework (NPF), Climate Action Plan (CAP), the Southern Region Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (SRRSEs), and the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028 and local area plan in the county.

Implementing the WDEDP will involve Fáilte Ireland working collaboratively to facilitate, promote, support and coordinate stakeholders (including local authorities, other government agencies, tourism operators, communities and visitors) in their activities in a way that is consistent with existing and emerging plans.

In order to be realised, projects included in this Plan will have to comply, as relevant, with the various provisions of legislation, policies, plans and programmes. (including requirements for project level Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment and other licencing requirements as appropriate) that form part of the statutory decision-making and consent-granting framework, of which this Plan is not part and does not contribute towards.

Such legislation, policies, plans and programmes include:

- Compliance with statutory higher-level plans and policies including the NPF, RSES, Climate Action Plan, etc.
- Compliance with statutory land use plans that form part of the statutory decision making and consent granting framework (e.g. Development Plans, such as the Waterford City and County Development Plan and Local Area Plans) as appropriate,
- Requirements for project level environmental assessment, including EIA, AA & SSFRA, as required.

Integrating Requirements for Environmental Protection and Management into the Plan

The SEA and AA team worked with the Plan preparation team at Fáilte Ireland to integrate requirements for environmental protection and management into the Plan. This process included changes to text in the plan and inclusion of new actions/projects in order to embed sustainability into the plan itself. Projects are varied and relating to land use, infrastructural development and land use activities and attractions. Reference made to such projects included in the Plan does not guarantee funding. While funding is provided to certain projects, Fáilte Ireland is not the developer.

The SEA and AA identified the potential significant effects as a result of implementing the Plan. Key considerations for the sustainable development of the tourism sector include ensuring there is sufficient infrastructure capacity; visitor management plans are developed for sites experiencing high demand; and that developers/promoters protect and provide opportunities for the sustainable development of green and blue infrastructure while also delivering ecosystem services. These areas of focus are discussed in the sections below.

Infrastructure Capacity

With respect to infrastructural capacity (including drinking water, wastewater, waste and transport) the potential environmental impacts associated with increase visitor numbers and increase pressure on capacities of existing infrastructure (including accommodation) will require careful planning and assessment. The potential environmental effects of the likely increase in tourism volumes resulting from the relevant projects in this plan will need to be considered at project level and mitigated as appropriate. This aspect should be linked to the development of visitor management plans as appropriate.

The promotion of developing visitor friendly supporting infrastructure where it is required will also be encouraged.

Visitor Management

Partners tasked with progressing actions and projects shall seek to sustainably manage existing and any increase in visitor numbers and/or any change in visitor behaviour to avoid significant effects on the environment including loss of habitat and/or disturbance to sensitive species (including human beings and biodiversity) where relevant. This shall include for example, ensuring that new projects are a suitable distance from ecological sensitivities. Visitor management plans will be required for proposed plans, programmes and projects that are to receive funding as relevant and appropriate.

Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services

Blue and Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services Those receiving funding shall contribute towards the maintenance and enhancement of existing blue and green infrastructure and its ecosystem services. Proposals for the development of any blue and green infrastructure or activities in these areas should demonstrate the synergies that can be achieved with regard to the: provision of open space amenities; sustainable management of water; protection and management of biodiversity; protection of cultural heritage; and protected landscape sensitivities.

Table A1 - Environmental Monitoring Programme

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna (BFF) Protect, actively conserve, prevent damage and, where possible, restore biodiversity, particularly European designated sites, other nature conservation sites, protected and threatened habitats and species (including transboundary priority habitats and species), and support ecological corridors (including riparian zones and coastal areas), green and blue infrastructure.	BFF1: Compliance with the Habitats and Birds Directives with regard to the protection of Natura 2000 sites and Annex I habitats and species and no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, with regard to its qualifying interests, associated conservation status, structure and function.	BFF1: Maintenance of favourable conservation status for all habitats and species protected under National and International legislation to be unaffected by implementation of the Plan.	- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage () report of the implementation of the measures contained in the Habitats Directive - as required by Article 17 of the Directive (every six years). - DHLGH National Monitoring Report for the Birds Directive under Article 12 (every three years). - Local authority/ An Bord Pleanála planning application project decisions relating to projects under the Plan. - Data from any relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programme relevant to the project/area.	- Review internal systems or the Plan and make changes as necessary. - Where adverse effects are identified undertake investigation as per the Fáilte Ireland Tourism Related Environmental Damage Resolution Procedure and act on recommendations based on the profiling of the environmental damage. - Review or update the visitor management plan to address any ecological loss or degradation caused by tourism activities.
	BFF2: Decline in habitat (quantity or quality) and/ or loss of functional connectivity without remediation resulting from projects arising from the Plan.	BFF2: No habitats or ecological networks, or parts thereof to be impacted/ lost without remediation resulting from projects arising from the Plan.	- Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Mitigation Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing - project specific). - CORINE mapping resurvey (every five years). - Local authority (LA) or An Bord Pleanála (ABP) planning application project environmental assessments & decisions. - Data from any relevant Fáilte Ireland monitoring programme relevant to the project/area. - Visitor Management Plan relating to project(s). - National Biodiversity Data Centre, The Irish Wetland Bird Survey (I-WeBS)	
Population and Human Health (PHH) Protect, support and sustainably manage resources and tourism development, for the benefit of the society and the environment, and contribute towards the economic development of the population supporting positive health outcomes.	PHH1(a): Percentage increase in visitor number to the site/ area over time. PHH1(b): Development and implementation of Visitor Management Plan from projects arising from the Plan. PHH1(c): Reduction in safety incidences at sites under the Plan. PHH2: Improved accessibility to recreational areas and public health amenities (e.g., parks, coastal areas, greenways, blueways, other trails).	PHH1: Sustainably manage visitors to the area. PHH2: Ensure that visitors have appropriate access to recreational areas and public health amenities.	- Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing). - Visitor management plan relating to projects. - Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, monitoring programmes, tourism research & reports. - Central Statistics Office. - Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing). - Visitor Management Plan relating to project(s). - Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan. - Local Authority reports (annual review).	- Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan. - Promote sustainable tourism practices, at the site through the preparation of site-specific campaigns to assist in remedial action, if necessary.

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
Water (W) Protect, maintain and, where possible, improve water quality including surface water, groundwater, transitional and coastal waters and any wetlands, while preventing deterioration, supporting the achievement of good water quality status of all water bodies as required by the EU and national legislation, and increasing the resilience and adaptation of tourism sites/ activities to the effects of climate change including flood risk and coastal erosion.	W1: The change in water quality status of surface water, groundwater, transitional, and coastal waters (i.e. Water Framework Directive (WFD) water quality status).	W1: Objectives of WFD are met for all waterbodies in accordance with the latest River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures (POM).	- WFD monitoring data on ecological and chemical status of water bodies (RBMP) (every six years). - Irish Water (annual review): Drinking Water Quality reports. - Local Authority (annual review): Monitoring of local water bodies. - EPA Remedial Action List (regarding drinking water quality).	- Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan. - Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.
	W2: Overall trend in the mandatory and guide values as set by the EU Bathing Water Directive and transposing Bathing Water Quality Regulations (SI No. 79 of 2008).	W2: No deterioration in the value of bathing waters or adverse effect upon the ability of any bathing water to achieve mandatory values and, where possible, guide values as a result of the Plan.	- EPA through Local Authority (annual review): Monitoring of local water bodies. - EPA Water Quality in Ireland report (annual).	
	W3: Compliance with regards to Flood Risk Management Guidelines.	W3: Compliance with statutory plans and decision-making process relating to developments in flood risk zones.	Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.	
Air Quality (AQ) Contribute to the reduction of air pollution and improvement in air quality resulting from the effective operation and management of sustainable tourism activities.	AQ: Trends in emissions from ambient air quality monitoring (NOx, SOx, PM10 and PM2.5).	AQ: Maintain air quality.	EPA air quality monitoring.	Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
Climate (C) Support and promote the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from tourism activities and the development of a climate resilient and adaptive tourism sector.	C1(a): Demonstrate compliance with provisions relating to climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation have been integrated into the Plan/ project, as appropriate. C1(b): Evidence that beneficiaries of funding are working to reduce emissions e.g. promoting energy efficiency, water conservation, sustainable travel options to customers through marketing/ promotional material.	C1: Monitor and reduce emissions associated with tourism activities.	- Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing - project specific). - EPA - GHG emissions data and projections. - Government Climate Action Plan (annual review). - Met Éireann (annual statistics). - Transport for Ireland - Local Link network statistics. - Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.	- Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan. - Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.
	C2: Number of projects participating in Fáilte Ireland Climate Action Programme (FI CAP) or similar under the Plan.	C2: All tourism activities/ promoters to have a link to FI CAP (or similar) to demonstrate climate change resilience and adaptation.	- FI CAP accreditation (annual review). - Waterford City and Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. - FI Sustainable tourism programmes (annual reviews).	Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.
	C3: Improve provision of public transport links in the region and 'last mile' transport links in partnership with National Transport Authority together with improved e-car charging infrastructure. ¹	C3: Reduction in transport emissions emanating from the tourism sector.	- Fáilte Ireland – Ireland's Ancient East KPI five. (Data from National Transport Authority & Local Link a strategic part of visitor orientation). - Waterford City and Council Climate Action Plan 2024-2029. - National Transport Authority.	- Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan. - Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.
Land and Soils (S) Safeguard existing land and soil resources, protect and improve soil quality, conserve soil, and prevent soil contamination and erosion.	S1: The area of soil that is sealed or artificialised in square km. ²	S1: Contribute to NPF target to limit the rate of increase of land that is sealed or artificialised and promote the reversal of this in suitable areas e.g. flood zones, high density areas.	- CORINE land cover mapping (CORINE every 6 years (due 2024). - Land use national land cover map (Fáilte Éireann - every five years).	Review of the site selection process/ assessment of alternatives (if undertaken) where projects occur in greenfield sites in favour of infill/ brownfield sites.
	S2: Soil erosion/ degradation, landslides without remediation resulting from projects developed under the Plan.	S2: No projects contributing to soil erosion, degradation or landslides.	Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing - project specific).	Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan.

¹ Note: C3 monitoring indicator is taken from (KPI 5 from Ireland's Ancient East RDS 2023-2027).

² Note: S1 indicator and target stems from the Revised & updated National Planning Framework SEA ER Monitoring.

Environmental Factor and SEO	Indicator	Target	Source and Frequency	Remedial Measures
Material Assets (M) Sustainably manage, maintain and develop the necessary tourism supporting infrastructure (including water, wastewater, energy supplies, transportation, internet connectivity and associated capacities) and support the development of the circular economy.	M1: Locations where additional tourists are directed by beneficiaries of funding towards areas where critical infrastructure is adequate to sustainably provide for visitors (e.g. water, wastewater capacity, electricity, transport, carparking, etc.) resulting from projects developed under the Plan.	M1: Locations have adequate critical infrastructure available to sustainably provide for tourists.	- Data from beneficiaries provided in funding applications as required under Section 9 of the SEA ER. (Frequency: ongoing - project specific). - Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan. - Visitor Management Plan relating to projects. - Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, any relevant monitoring programme.	- Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan. - Consult with Irish Water or the local authority regarding water and WWtF. - Consult with TII local authority or transport providers regarding sustainable transport infrastructure. - Consult utility and energy providers as appropriate.
	M2: Incidences of significant negative effects on the use of, or access to, public assets and infrastructure from projects developed under the Plan.	M2: No significant negative effects on the use of or access to public assets and infrastructure from projects developed under the plan.	- Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, any relevant monitoring programme. - Local authority reports (annual review).	
Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage (AACH) Avoid, protect and/ or minimise impacts to designated archaeological, architectural, and cultural heritage resources, including their setting and enhance and conserve heritage assets.	AACH: Changes to Record of Protected Structures (RPS), and Record of Monuments and Places (RMPs) being protected and/ or negatively impacted resulting from projects developed under the Plan.	AACH: No negative or unauthorised effects on any entities listed on the RPS and RMPs from any projects developed under the Plan.	- Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan. - Visitor Management Plan relating to projects. - Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, any relevant monitoring programme. - Local Authority Development Plans record of protected structures (RPS) (updated every six years). - Record of Monuments and Places.	- Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan. - Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary. - Project promoter to consult with the Conservation Officer or Heritage Officer for Waterford City and County, if required.
Landscape (L) Avoid conflicts with the protection of designated and sensitive features of note in landscapes and sensitively manage landscape change through sustainable planning.	L: Number of negative landscape or visual impacts resulting from projects developed under the Plan.	L: Avoid negative landscape and visual impacts on the environment, particularly protected landscapes or protected views.	- Visitor Management Plan relating to projects. - Fáilte Ireland (annual review): Tourism performance reports, visitor surveys, any relevant monitoring programme. - Local authority/ ABP planning application decisions relating to projects developed under the Plan.	- Review internal systems and, if necessary, the Plan. - Promote environmentally responsible tourism practices, and have campaigns prepared to assist remedial action, if necessary.

APPENDIX 2

**Waterford Destination
and Experience
Development Plan**

SUPPORTING CURRENT POLICY AND PLANNING

In order to support the ambition for sustainable destination growth, the Waterford DEDP is designed to guide the destination and its stakeholders through a five year development focus through continuous destination improvement and experience innovation. The WDEDP is aligned with a number of existing strategies, policy and industry reports. They include;

- Fáilte Ireland Strategic Plan
- Ireland's Ancient East Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023–2027
- People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025 Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport
- Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021–2025
- Tourism Action Plan 2019–2021
- Actions to Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices 2021–2023
- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways
- National Physical Activity Plan 2013–2025
- Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022–2028
- Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Plan 2017–2022, Waterford City and County Council

FÁILTE IRELAND CORPORATE PLAN & REGIONAL TOURISM STRATEGIES (2022–2027)

Fáilte Ireland's Corporate Plan as the basis for national tourism development supported by Regional Tourism Strategies (2022–2027) for each of the four regional brands.

IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST REGIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023–2027

The Regional Tourism Development Strategy presents a 10-year vision for the sustainable development of tourism in Ireland's Ancient East, together with a five-year strategy towards the achievement of that vision. It identifies what needs to be done at a strategic level to unlock the commercial potential of the

region while exceeding the expectations of visitors, protecting the environment and enhancing the lives of local communities. The strategy provides a guiding strategic framework for other more detailed tourism development plans. Central to the strategy is a new approach to destination-led development which is based on a maturity model which recognizes that the issues and challenges facing a destination are directly linked to its level of maturity.

PEOPLE, PLACE AND POLICY: GROWING TOURISM TO 2025

People, Place and Policy: Growing Tourism to 2025 includes a focus on growing visitor numbers, overseas revenue and employment. In achieving these, the Plan also addresses the challenges of seasonality, regional dispersion of visitors and sustainability. This policy statement is centred on Ireland achieving its full potential as a destination for overseas tourism. However, it is recognised that the domestic tourism market underpins the range of visitor accommodation and services that provide competitive advantage to Ireland in the international market and many of the measures contained in this statement will similarly benefit the domestic tourism sector.

OUR RURAL FUTURE: RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2021–2025

The policy provides a framework for the development of rural Ireland over a five-year period. The role of tourism in local and regional economies is recognised as being of an importance that cannot be understated. The aim of growing the tourism offering and developing outdoor activity tourism are highlighted in the policy. Particular relevant policy measures include:

- Maximising resources and strengths in the Green Economy to support employment opportunities for rural communities across a range of areas including sustainable tourism (Policy Measure 26)
- Further development of the Fáilte Ireland Experience Brands including Ireland's Ancient East by strengthening Ireland's image as an outdoor activity holiday destination for both domestic and international markets (Policy Measure 32)
- Investment in greenways, blueways, walking trails and other outdoor recreation infrastructure to support the growth in outdoor recreation tourism (Policy Measure 36)

- Expansion of the Walks Scheme to achieve a target of at least 80 trails (Policy Measure 38)
- Explore the potential for the development of further tourist trails, including cross-border trails and initiatives (Policy Measure 39).

TOURISM ACTION PLAN 2019–2021

The action plan developed by the Irish government's Sustainable Tourism Working Group sets out the ambition that 'Ireland will seek to be amongst the world-leaders in sustainable tourism practices', setting out eight guiding principles for sustainable tourism development in Ireland.

1. All of government will work together with industry towards achieving a sustainable tourism sector.
2. Sustainable tourism growth will be achieved in a manner that focuses on overall economic benefit ahead of the number of tourists.
3. Tourism will support economic growth in communities throughout the country and with a greater spread of demand across the year.
4. In delivering high quality tourism experiences that exceed our visitors' expectations, we will do so in a manner that minimises any negative environmental or community impacts.
5. As custodians of our natural landscape and of our historic and cultural assets, we will protect them for the next generation.
6. Responsible behaviour by our visitors will be encouraged to maximise the mutual benefit of tourism to Ireland's people and place.
7. The tourism sector will support and promote efforts to move to more sustainable forms of transport to, and around Ireland.
8. The tourism sector must play its part to help deliver Ireland's commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

ACTIONS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES 2021–2023

The objectives of this plan are to identify actions which promote sustainable tourism practices, establish new research methods and form a clear narrative for

communication about the sustainability agenda. Actions are grouped under the seven themes of policy, evidence base, environmental impact, awareness and education, business planning, destination management, and sales and marketing.

As per **Action 23** of the plan, the guiding principles for sustainable development are embedded in this DEDP. It is also a further action of this DEDP that local stakeholders are aware of opportunities to maximise the potential of nature based solutions identified by **Action 27** of the plan.

STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF GREENWAYS

The objective of the greenway strategy is to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard in order to deliver a quality experience for all greenway users. It also aims to increase the number and geographical spread of greenways of scale and quality around the country over a 10 year period with a consequent significant increase in the number of people using greenways as a visitor experience and as a recreational amenity.

NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN (2013–2025)

The NPAP (Get Ireland Active Plan) aims to increase physical activity levels across the population thereby improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the country.

The Plan sets targets for annual increases in the level of daily physical activity across a range of ages and abilities to achieve the National Guidelines on Physical Activity for the country supported by eight action areas developed to encourage greater participation in physical activity.

Key relevant actions in the Plan include:

- **Action 32:** Develop and promote walking and cycling strategies in each Local Authority area.
- **Action 36:** Prioritise the planning and development of walking and cycling and general recreational/physical activity infrastructure.
- **Action 37:** Explore opportunities to maximise physical activity and recreation amenities in the natural environment.

WATERFORD CITY AND COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2022–2028

The Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022–2028 sets out how the city and county will grow and develop over the six year period of the plan. The Plan sets out the strategic vision to be the best city and county in which to live, learn, visit and do business.

Tourism plays an important role in the Waterford economy, with the strategic objective to develop, deliver and promote Waterford as a year-round, world-class tourism destination. A number of economic policy objectives to support development of tourism in the city and county including:

ECON13 – with regards to supporting rural resource related enterprises and diversification including rural tourism initiatives.

ECON15 – regarding facilitating cultural tourism and associated facilities accessible to tourists and the local community in An Gaeltacht.

ECON22 – relating to the facilitation and encouragement for sustainable tourism products, activities and transport.

ECON23 – development of a number of identified tourism projects distributed across the city and county. The projects have been addressed within this WDEDP.

ECON24 – relating to the development of tourism accommodation throughout the city and county.

WATERFORD CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL TOURISM STATEMENT OF STRATEGY AND WORK PLAN 2017–2022

The Plan set out the strategic vision to support accelerating the growth of the tourism economy as recognized as one of six economic goals in the Waterford Local Economic & Community Plan (2015–2020). The Plan calls out a series of actions across the themes of product development, festivals and events, and marketing and promotion to support the delivery of objectives identified in the LECP.



