



A NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY FOR IRELAND – DRAFT

Shannon Chamber Response

Introduction

Shannon Chamber welcomes the publication of the draft National Tourism Policy for Ireland report, which has taken account of submissions by interested parties to the Issues Paper published in September 2013.

Shannon Chamber is pleased to note that some of its recommendations have been taken on board, most notably the references to the development of regional tourism, the involvement of local authorities, the recognition of tourism's value to the wider economic and social fabric of the State, the convergence of tourism and other areas of enterprise, the coalition between Fáilte Ireland and SOLAS in training and skills development, and the development of a Tourism Satellite Account for Ireland.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate some specific points included in our submission which we feel need to be taken into account when formulating the final Strategy and Action Plan, most notably:

1. Regional Packaging/Business Tourism

- As mentioned in 1.3.2 in Section 9 (Appendices): *'The design of future supports for capital investment in tourism will recognise the need for investment in both physical assets and in other areas that provide a lasting improvement in the overall quality of the visitor experience.'* In this regard, Shannon Chamber considers that efforts should be given to delivering a new Conference/Convention Centre in the West of Ireland funded through a Public/Private partnership. The lack of such a centre has been cited by our members as a major deficit in the tourism and business infrastructure of the region. A large-capacity Convention Centre would encourage convention conferences and conventions currently being drawn to other visitor destinations across Europe to look towards the West of Ireland.

- Marketing spend by national tourism agencies should be aligned to destinations, current and planned, served by the airports. Emphasis must therefore be placed on promoting air routes that deliver tourists and business travellers beyond the east coast: regional access/balanced regional development remains a critical component of Ireland's economic development.
- The growing imbalance between the Greater Dublin Area and the West of Ireland will continue unless more emphasis is placed on creating packages that promote regions other than Dublin for short breaks.
- As highlighted in Section 1.2 of the Draft Policy report the most frequently cited attractors to Ireland are *'its friendly hospitable people, the quality of the environment, the range of activities to see and do and our history and culture'*. The current popularity of Dublin as a short-stay destination for the younger visitor is obvious; however, Shannon Chamber would suggest that rural destinations could be packaged as short-break alternatives for the more active holiday maker, who thrives on outdoor activity pursuits, and to lovers of history and culture enthusiasts ... activities that abound on Ireland's west coast.
- Shannon Chamber would like to see greater recognition being given to the importance of the business tourism sector to the West of Ireland and selling the 'real Ireland' experience. This sector, and its enabling infrastructure, should not be confined to Dublin.
- Regional targets could be devised as a mechanism for ensuring a fair dispersal of tourism throughout Ireland.

2. Tourism Satellite Account

- Shannon Chamber welcomes the fact that consideration is being given to the development of a Tourism Satellite Account (Section 2.2.4) given that Tourism is not currently recognised as a key economic activity and, as mentioned in our submission (response to Q17), the establishment of a national innovation centre for tourism should also be established to garner a significant knowledge base of tourism.

3. Funding Providers

- Shannon Chamber would recommend that the funding of providers by national agencies needs re-examination. As mentioned in our submission (response to Q4), at present, if airlines are to avail of any funding from the tourism body, they have to match this funding.

Our request is that the structure of this funding be re-considered – 50% is very extreme. We would reiterate the point that to truly partner, the significant investment being made by the airlines needs to be recognised. Agencies focusing on marketing efforts will lead to airlines making commitment; promotion will back airline investment. The existing model is prohibitive and the rules are compromising implementation of investment.

On behalf of its members, Shannon Chambers thanks the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport for the work undertaken thus far on the formulation of the National Tourism Policy for Ireland. We are grateful for this opportunity to, once again, make additional comments on aspects which concern us/our members.

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