

Submission to Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 by Fáilte Ireland



National Tourism
Development
Authority



IRELAND'S
ANCIENT EAST

Introduction

This submission has been prepared by Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, in response to the invitation for submissions on the Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 ('the Draft Plan') by Cork City Council ('the Council').

Fáilte Ireland welcomes the opportunity to engage with Cork City Council on the emerging Plan for the City and to build on the well-established relationship between Fáilte Ireland and the Council working together.

The preparation of this submission comes at a time when Fáilte Ireland is emphasising the need for land-use plans to manage all land uses and economic drivers – of which tourism is but one, in a more holistic, strategic and spatial manner to maximise the efficient use of resources and the achievement of greater outcomes for society at large.

Overall the Draft Plan includes references to tourism relating to some areas. However, the following may allow the Council to complete the Plan. We hope that this submission can represent another step in a collaborative process that culminates in the adoption of the new Development Plan.

For ease of reading, we have structured this submission as follows:

- 1. The Objective of the Submission**
- 2. Commentary on the Draft Plan;**
- 3. Proposals for the Cork City Development Plan**
 - 3.1 Dedicated Tourism Chapter/Section
 - 3.2 Additional Tourism Considerations
 - 3.3 Additional Suggested Text Insertions
- 4. Conclusion**

1. The Objective of this Submission

Fáilte Ireland has prepared this submission to support and assist Cork City Council in the formulation of planning policies and frameworks for the period 2022-2028. Fáilte Ireland is seeking to enhance the partnership approach between the Council and Fáilte Ireland and ensure that the expertise of both organisations is shared.

The submission seeks to enhance the policy coverage in the Draft Development Plan to ensure a meaningful framework is established for the enhancement of tourism in the City, and the engagement with the wider Cork region, during the Plan period. It has been prepared with inputs from professional planners as well as various strands within Fáilte Ireland. It provides the Council with a concise single submission from Fáilte Ireland dealing with all aspects of tourism – from strategic planning, to visitor experience and destination management.

The submission has been prepared having regard to the tourism profile of the City; the existing policy context in the Draft Plan; and an established template for sustainable tourism policies being used by Fáilte Ireland to guide Planning Authorities.

2. Commentary on the Draft Plan

Fáilte Ireland is generally supportive of the Draft Plan and notes that some of the suggestions or references included in our Issue Paper submission have been included in the Draft Plan. We again welcome the opportunity to assist the Council in the important area of policy preparation. Fáilte Ireland is acutely aware of the complex range of issues that a Development Plan must tackle. It is also mindful of both the responsibilities and limitations of the prevailing legislation and the role that the Development Plan plays in a statutory context. Our submission has been fully informed by these considerations.

It is considered in terms of tourism that the draft Plan does not full set out the value of tourism as a key economic driver, the potential development and the role tourism will play in the future of Cork City.

Tourism needs to be included in the vision, tourism strategic objectives stated for the City and how to achieve this through product development and the regional brands 'Ireland's Ancient East' and 'Wild Atlantic Way', and as set out in our submission in response to the Issues Paper in 2020.

While the draft Plan does include a short Tourism section within Chapter 7, as well as identification of many tourism issues, projects etc. spread throughout the plan however it is

considered given the relative value and importance of tourism to the City economically, socially and culturally, it is considered that a more robust and dedicated tourism strategy/chapter should be provided for in the Draft City Development Plan. This could be linked and reference more detailed sections through the plan which are relevant tourism objectives however the lack of connectivity between these sections in the Plan in a robust tourism section results in a lack of clarity or focus for the sector.

It is considered that tourism could be more strongly referenced throughout the Draft Development Plan and in particular the inclusion of a dedicated Tourism Chapter, or a more detailed and robust Tourism Section, would ensure that all aspects of tourism policy are captured in a clear and robust manner within the Development Plan.

3. Proposals for the Draft Cork City Development Plan

We have prepared this part of the submission drawing on existing strategies for the enhancement and management of tourism in the City.

Proposed information and statements are based on identified gaps in policy coverage and recommended good practice in the area of sustainable tourism. We have set out explanatory text for discussion among the plan-writing team and in some instances then included suggested text or policies intended for consideration as a direct insert to the Plan itself.

3.1 Dedicated Tourism Chapter/Section

It is considered that Tourism should be called out as both a key economic driver and as a catalyst for improved amenities for communities. Notwithstanding its economic value, tourism also has other qualities which are difficult to measure but contribute greatly to the social benefit of communities. Tourism amenities within localities make them better places to live for local residents, whether by providing attractions and activities or offering good quality hospitality and events. Investment in Tourism and tourism assets has proven to be an ‘enabler and multiplier’ for many other sectors.

It is considered that given the relative value of tourism to the City economically, socially and culturally, a dedicated tourism strategy/chapter should be provided for in the Draft City Development Plan. The brief Tourism Section provide at Section 7.68 and the small number of objectives along with references to tourism and tourism projects throughout the Plan, does not set up the Plan robustly enough to ensure the integration of tourism policy and land use plans. Such a chapter could include the following sections, some of which may align and cross reference against existing sections of the draft Plan:

- Accessible Tourism
- Ireland's Ancient East
- Wild Atlantic Way
- Food Tourism
- Business Tourism
- Festivals and Events
- Heritage and Cultural Tourism
- Major Attractions
- Fáilte Ireland Initiatives
- Urban Tourism
- Night Time Economy
- Waterfront and Animation
- City Accessibility
- Visitor Accommodation
- Tourism Amenities & Asset Maps

While it is acknowledged that many of the above issues are considered in the Draft Plan, for example Section 10.13 *Quality Attractions and Night Time Economy*, a dedicated Tourism chapter/section outlining the key challenges and objectives for Tourism in the City, referencing the already incorporated more detailed sections and objectives through the Plan would provide a clear framework for the future development of tourism in the city. This could be achieved by including text in respect of the relevant framework i.e. alignment with National Tourism Policy, National Planning Framework and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Tourism development priorities applicable to Cork and alignment with Fáilte Ireland's plans and programmes.

Key areas of focus for Cork in respect of the formation of a Tourism Chapter/Section, many of which were set out in our Issues Paper Submission, are considered in the next section. Additionally, cross reference between sections in the Draft Plan relating to projects such as the Cork Docklands, Night-time Economy, Visitor Orientation, Access to the Airport etc. should be strongly referenced in a Tourism Chapter/Section given their importance to delivering an improved tourism offering for Cork.

3.2 Additional Tourism Considerations

Fáilte Ireland Initiatives

Regional Tourism Plan (RTPs)

Fáilte Ireland is in the process of preparing Regional Tourism Plans for each of the four Regional Experience Brands (Dublin, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands). The purpose of the Regional Tourism Plans is to identify the sustainable tourism development priorities that will help to unlock the commercial potential of the region bringing benefits to all stakeholders and industry. Each plan will be prepared based on the VICE model

which is a methodology for working towards sustainable tourism that seeks to strike an appropriate balance between the needs of the Visitor, the Industry and Community and the Environment. The plans will be for the period to 2025 and will be grounded in Fáilte Ireland's new Corporate Strategy. There will be a strong spatial element to the plans which will seek to identify where development should take place in order to unlock the tourism potential of the region.

The Regional Tourism Plans will also provide a strategic framework for a suite of Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDPs) which will sit underneath them. They will set out the overall goals of each of the proposed DEDPs as well as the timing and sequence for the preparation of these plans. A number of DEDPs are already in progress. Once the RTPs are in place, they will become primary reference documents to inform Fáilte Ireland's submissions on County and City Development Plans. This will ensure that our submissions on County and City Development Plans are informed by a strong regional context in addition to the agreed tourism needs of each county or city. The Local Authorities will be consulted on the preparation of the RTPs which will also be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment.

We request the inclusion of an objective supporting the preparation and implementation of Regional Tourism Plans in the City Development Plan, to support the continued collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and tourism stakeholders to ensure successful implementation and delivery of these tourism plans.

Failte Ireland has initiated the development of a Destination & Experience Development Plan (DEDP) for Cork City & East Cork. This will represent a five-year sustainable tourism development plan. It will capture all proposed tourism development projects within one plan to maximise their potential over the next five years. These projects and destination development activities are organised into an experience development framework to be adopted as a five-year action plan by all stakeholders as a joint vision.

Cork City Council are currently working with Fáilte Ireland and the relevant stakeholders on development of this DEDP. The Plan will provide a framework for delivery of key industry projects for Cork City in the next five years. Industry, stakeholders, visitors, community and local and state agencies will be engaged in the development of, and will be drivers of the plan's implementation. As such this comprehensive plan should form the basis of the City's tourism priorities over the duration of the City Development Plan and should be referenced as such in the plan.

Ireland's Ancient East & Wild Atlantic Way

Cork's geographical location within Ireland's Ancient East and proximate to the Wild Atlantic Way and provides opportunity to promote the City and wider County as a compelling tourism destination. The City Council should foster links with other towns such as Cobh, Blarney and Ballincollig.

We note limited reference to these Brands in the Development Plan and we therefore request that the 'Ireland's Ancient East' and 'Wild Atlantic Way' identification and branding is more fully integrated into the Development Plan and that a specific objective aligning with, supporting and promoting this initiative is also included.

Proposed new objective, to be inserted into new Tourism Chapter/Section:

Continue to actively engage, invest, encourage and promote the development of the Ireland's Ancient East and Wild Atlantic Way brand through sustainable tourism, which will enable visitors to have enjoyable experiences while having regard for the social, cultural heritage and environmental impacts, including the protection of designated sites.

Destination Towns

As part of the €15.5million 'Destination Towns' initiative launched in 2019 by Fáilte Ireland funding was allocated for Cork City. The purpose of which was to prepare a plan to address visitor flow and orientation. This Visitor Orientation Strategy and Action Plan for Cork City has been prepared and we request reference to this in the Development Plan to support its implementation.

Platforms For Growth Investment Programme

A capital investment programme worth €150 million and will run from 2019 to 2022. Major new visitor attractions of scale will be developed and existing attractions greatly enhanced under the programme which falls under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy. It is considered that a robust tourism strategy and policies in the Development Plan will better position Cork in respect of future tourism funding.

Accessible Tourism

In order to improve the experience of those who live and visit Cork City, the Council should promote accessible tourism in the city. This entails ensuring that facilities are accessible to

Proposed new policies, to be inserted into new Tourism Chapter:

It is an objective of the Council to support the provision of accessible tourism.

people with mobility issues, people with learning disabilities, visual or hearing impairment, young children and elderly people. Achieving a high level of accessibility is both socially and economically important. It is considered that the Development Plan would benefit from the insertion of a section on Accessible Tourism and the incorporation of the following Policy Objective.

Digitalization/Tourism Industry

The fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the need for both attractions and activity providers to dramatically improve their online booking capability. Digitalisation presents opportunities for businesses to expand their market reach, increase growth and improve operational efficiencies as well as enhancing the visitor experience and improving destination management. Websites, booking facilities and digital distribution technologies must be adopted to target those in the planning phase of their trip and those that are already in-destination researching things to see and do.

We consider that the CDP should support the tourism sector to invest in digital technology, with a particular focus on sectors with low digital presence such as visitor attractions and activities.

Proposed new objective, to be inserted in new Tourism Chapter.

Encourage and support investment in digital technology in the tourism sector, with a particular focus on sectors such as visitor attractions and activities with low digital presence and/or integration.

3.3 Additional Suggested Text Insertions

Section 2.16 Strategic Objectives for Growth

We welcome the strategic aims set out in the Core Strategy and believe there are robust and sound objectives upon which to frame the development of the City however given the importance of tourism to the city's future growth we request a specific reference to tourism as follows.

Proposed amended objective, SO 6

Be a national and regional economic driver delivering strong, resilient, diverse and innovative economic growth. Focus new employment in strategic areas across the city. Enhance Cork's role as a city of learning, using knowledge and talent as a key enabler for city and economic growth. Acknowledging the vital importance of the tourism sector to economic development, continue to encourage and promote the sustainable development of a range of quality tourism facilities, attractions and accommodation types across Cork City.

Chapter 4 – Transport & Mobility

We welcome reference to the Lee to Sea Greenway, in Table 4.3, in the Plan, however we note that its reference is primarily as a walking and cycling improvement for the purposes of transport and consider that equally it should be identified as a tourism and recreation asset. Fáilte Ireland supports the continued investment and funding of Greenways under the variety of government funding streams. It is critical we continue to invest in the future of walking and cycling for the economic and social wellbeing of our communities and **visitors** and that we have a network of greenways of varying distances that can be iconic and motivating to the visitor. As

the level of investment in Greenway development continues to build in the coming years, Greenways must continue to meet the needs of visitors:

- Scenic
- Sustainable
- Substantially Segregated & Shared Use
- Strategic
- Offer lots to See and Do.

It is considered the Lee to Sea Greenway would deliver on the above criteria. Greenways are key tourism infrastructure and play an important role in Irish tourism. The project has the potential to boost the appeal of Ireland in the travel market, add value to the existing high tourism offering and support the development of communities and job creation in the economy, as well as the protection and promotion of natural assets and biodiversity.

More widely, we welcomed the Cork Metropolitan Area Draft Transport Strategy 2040. From a tourism perspective Fáilte Ireland believe that the strategic priorities for transport for the Cork include;

- Public transport has an essential part to play in growing tourism sustainably. Therefore, continuing to shift our visitors onto sustainable modes of transport is a priority which will also result in a significantly improved visitor experience.
- Investment in walking and cycling infrastructure should be prioritised in the immediate short-term which would greatly improve the visitor experience of the city and metropolitan area.
- The delivery of Bus Connects should be prioritised given the existing limited network of 14km of dedicated bus lanes in the metropolitan area.
- The needs of visitors should be considered in the development and delivery of services particularly in relation to information, integrated ticketing and orientation.

Proposed amended text in Table 4.3:

*Amongst the benefits accruing include improvements physical and mental health reductions in air borne pollution and carbon emissions whilst boosting businesses and tourism. During the lifetime of this plan Cork City Council will collaborate closely with key stakeholders including the NTA, TII, Cork County Council and other stakeholders to deliver on this project which will be a significant catalyst towards sustainable travel **and tourism and recreation infrastructure for both residents and visitors** in the Cork Metropolitan Area.*

Chapter 6 – Green and Blue Infrastructure, Open Space and Biodiversity

It is considered that the city centre currently turns its back on the river and that given there is a significant amount of underutilised river frontage that, with investment and support, could

act as a catalyst to further stimulate development along the waterfront and help open up access to the water and quayside for further tourism and leisure opportunities.

Access to the water and water activities on the River Lee in the city with activity/access points along the river out towards the harbour including areas such as Tivoli, North Docklands and Horgan Quay are prime examples of spaces with significant tourism potential. Making this provision will support entrepreneurship and facilitate business development through outdoor activity providers and other on water activity.

As such we welcome Objectives 6.3 and 6.6 and consider this should be identified as key tourism objectives.

Chapter 7 – Economy and Employment

Section 7.31 Enhance Tourism

We welcome the commitment to implement a wayfinding strategy and believe that this section could be strengthened by including a reference to the Visitor Orientation Strategy and Action Plan for Cork City carried out by Fáilte Ireland and an objective prioritising its implementation. Fáilte Ireland research has shown that while Cork City has a wide range of fascinating and engaging experiences on offer they are not clearly communicated or well connected. The result is an experience that is less than satisfactory with visitors getting disconcertingly lost, disorientated and both visitors and residents being unaware of all that the City has to offer. The Strategy is intended to address this and should be supported in the Development Plan.

Proposed new objective:

Cork City Council will work with Fáilte Ireland and other relevant stakeholders to improve visitor orientation and wayfinding as identified in the Visitor Orientation Strategy and Action Plan for Cork City.

Section 7.16 & 7.71 - Cork City and East Cork Destination Experience Development Plan

We welcome reference to the Cork City and East Cork Destination Experience Development Plan in Sections 7.16 and 7.71 in the Draft Plan. It is suggested that these two sections could be strengthened with the following proposed amendments.

Proposed text amendments:

Section 7.16

*Fáilte Ireland, **in partnership with Cork City Council**, is currently leading the preparation of a ~~Tourism~~ Destination **Experience Development** Plan for Cork City and East Cork....*

Section 7.16

*As previously stated, at the time of preparation of the Draft Development Plan, Cork City Council is working with Fáilte Ireland and other stakeholders to prepare a ~~Tourism~~ Destination **Experience Development** Plan for Cork City and East Cork.*

Section 7.73 – Public Realm Improvements

We welcome the commitment to introducing public realm improvements in the City and consider that reference should be made here to the recently announced Fáilte Ireland’s Urban Animation Investment Scheme¹ and the previously announced Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme both of which have committed funding to enhancements in Cork².

Urban animation will play an increasingly important role in transforming and re-imaging our public spaces as safe, welcoming and vibrant places to visit.

Chapter 8 – Heritage, Arts and Culture

Throughout Chapter 8, the language focuses primarily on the protection of heritage rather than also on interpretation and engagement. Positioning the Heritage in Cork City as unique and appealing might help bring Tourism further into this Chapter.

It can sometimes be perceived that heritage and tourism interests are not aligned and that there are competing interests and objectives. Heritage and tourism are however not mutually exclusive and have potential to thrive side by side. Tourism can act as a platform to raise awareness of Ireland’s heritage and encourage an appreciation of it amongst domestic and overseas visitors alike.

Tourism is the vehicle through which visitors can be educated about the fragility and importance of key heritage assets (be they built or natural). This in turn can increase the

¹ Urban Animation Investment Scheme

² Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme

importance of such assets, encourage respect towards them and leverage investment for their protection.

The city has a wealth of cultural and heritage assets that need to be made more accessible to visitors and presented in a way that provides them with memorable, immersive experiences and maximises visitor satisfaction. The Grand Parade Quarter Project which includes the City Library development and regeneration of Bishop Lucey Park should be prioritised for delivery. There is a significant opportunity to capitalise on this investment along with the redevelopment of the Crawford Art Gallery.

Chapter 10- Key Growth Areas & Neighbourhood Development Sites

Section 1 City Centre

We welcome Objective 10.8 relating to City Centre Tourism and believe the following amendment would strengthen the objective.

However, it is as important to enhance the experience of these areas as well as the physical improvements. Facilitating Engagement and Interpretation is important and the reimagining the use of sites such as Elizabeth Fort.

Proposed amended objective 10.8:

*To support the City Centre as a destination for national and international tourism and to expand the draw and offer of the City Centre. This will include targeted measures to enhance these historic areas such as investing in Shandon and Elizabeth Fort and promoting the historic spine linking these areas along Shandon Street, North and South Main Street and Barrack Street. **Enhancement of both the experience and the interpretation of these spaces, along with improved wayfinding will expand the city's attractiveness to visitors.***

Section 2 City Docks

Cork's Docklands have significant potential for future tourism growth and could act as a focal point for the City's tourism strategy. It is considered that the city centre currently turns its back on the river and that given there is a significant amount of underutilised river frontage that, with investment and support, could act as a catalyst to further stimulate development along the waterfront and help open up access to the water and quayside for further tourism and leisure opportunities. Areas such as Tivoli, North Docklands and Horgan Quay are prime examples of spaces with significant tourism potential. Some of these areas need of regeneration and tourism can play a significant role in this. The development of mixed use, leisure and retail in the Docks will feed into a vibrant city centre. The connecting of the city centre and the water is critical to the continued success of Cork for stakeholders

Notwithstanding the primary focus of delivering residential and commercial development, it is of equal importance to ensure that there is a strong focus and investment in place-making to create quality places for all including visitors and this should be a priority in City Docks.

The planning and delivery of City Docks must be multi-faceted and facilitate tourism infrastructure and projects in equal measure. Quality urban design and architecture should facilitate vibrancy and animation throughout the day and night, and this can be achieved through creative design and multi-functional use within buildings and public spaces including green and blue which encourage a broader mix of uses. This will increase a destination's ability to maximise the economic benefits of across multiple sectors including tourism. Ultimately, places that are pleasant to work and live in tend to be vibrant and interesting and therefore attractive to visitors as well which furthers the case for the consideration of tourism in urban regeneration schemes.

It is considered that this important facet of the City Docks Regeneration could be more strongly brought through in this section.

Section 4 Cork International Airport

It is considered that the importance of Cork Airport in respect of international tourism should be set out in this section. Cork has the potential to be the starting point or final destination, given its proximity to Cork Airport, for visitors to both Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way, ensuring greater tourist nights in the City. We welcome reference to the improvements in public transport and accessibility from the airport into the City Centre and considered this should be a key objective of the Development Plan.

Section 10.13-10.16 Quality Attractions and Night-Time Economy

The night-time economy is specifically referenced in Section 10.13 – 10.16 the Draft Development Plan. Developing the night-time economy is an important aspect of ensuring a vibrant town and village centres and means more than just developing a bar and restaurant culture. It entails encouraging different activities, in particular cultural experiences, through longer opening hours that appeal to a broader range of people. There is an opportunity to develop a night-time economy that appeals to both visitor and resident, to the greater benefit of the city as a whole.

The night-time economy needs to be carefully managed to ensure a balance which does not negatively impact the public. However, there are many ways in which vibrancy can be added to cities and towns throughout the evening and night-time including facilitating rooftop/outdoor dining, extended hours of opening for retail, greater utilisation of our waterside spaces and allowing for more music and cultural venues. A diverse range of indoor attractions can add to

the night-time economy in Cork City. We believe that the current section of the Development Plan could be complemented by the inclusion of the following objective:

Proposed new objective, to be inserted in Chapter 10

Support proposals for development involving evening and late-night commercial, retail, cultural, food and beverage or entertainment uses within the City where it can be demonstrated that the development will enhance the character and function of the area; this may include extended opening hours, proposals for outdoor dining and event space, and proposals for the greater utilisation of existing heritage assets.

We welcome reference to the National Night-time Economy Taskforce which was established by Minister Catherine Martin in July 2020. It affords an opportunity for relevant stakeholders from across the night-time culture sector to develop an innovative approach to supporting and developing a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable night-time economy. It has been identified that for Cork, a key driver for the Night-Time Economy is around Food & Beverage and Food Tourism.

While there is some reference to the food scene in Section 10.15. It is considered that this needs to be more robustly addressed and specific policies and objectives contained in the Development Plan in order to ensure land use policies support future planning applications. The Development Plan should acknowledge and support local food producers, enterprises and restaurants developing Cork as a food tourism destination. Food can act as a driver and a key attractor for visitors and especially in the city centre. In addition, we request that the recent Fáilte Ireland Outdoor Dining Scheme be acknowledged and supported in the Development Plan.

4. Conclusion

We wish to take this final opportunity to commend the Council on the Draft Development Plan and reiterate the commitment of Fáilte Ireland to working with the Council on achieving the Plan objectives over the coming years.

In relation to any follow up to this submission please contact:

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