

# A national action plan for putting the environment central to the development of sustainable tourism - IE

## 1. Policy Objective & Theme

- ADAPTATION TO RISK: Integrating coherent strategies covering the risk-dimension (prevention to response) into planning and investment
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Preserving coastal environment (its functioning and integrity) to share space
- SUSTAINABLE USE OF RESOURCES: Sound use of resources and promotion of less resource intensive processes/products
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Balancing economic, social, cultural development whilst enhancing environment
- SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH: Improving competitiveness

## 2. Key Approaches

- Integration
- Ecosystems based approach

## 3. Experiences that can be exchanged

Countries which have a strong tourism market with a strong environmental base can see the way that Ireland has nationally adopted the Environment into a central, core position of its tourism product at policy level.

## 4. Overview of the case

In order to move towards sustainable tourism, Ireland has taken the step of incorporating the Environment centrally into its tourism policy.

## 5. Context and Objectives

### a) Context

In 2006, overseas tourist visits to Ireland increased to an estimated 7.4 million; tourism total foreign exchange earnings were €4.7 billion; and the tourism and hospitality sector supported 12% of jobs in Ireland. Annual visitor surveys have repeatedly confirmed that Ireland is prized by overseas visitors for its clean, green image. In 2006, 80% of visitors rated Ireland's scenery as an important reason for visiting Ireland; 74% said they were attracted by the natural unspoilt environment; and 58% mentioned Ireland's attractive cities and towns. The future of tourism is inextricably linked to the quality of the environment. The scenic landscapes, coastline, rivers & lakes, and cultural heritage are the bedrock upon which tourism has been built. The economic viability and competitiveness of the tourism industry can only be sustained if the quality of these resources is maintained. Now, more than ever, Ireland's tourism industry relies on strong and appropriate environmental policies.

### b) Objectives

The goal of tourism policy under successive National Development Plans is to facilitate the continued development of an economic, environmentally sustainable and spatially balanced tourism sector. The overall objective is to develop the industry in a way that widens the spatial spread of tourism, diverts pressure from highly developed areas and increases under-performing

regions' share of overseas tourism revenues.

## 6. Implementation of the ICZM Approach (i.e. management, tools, resources)

### a) Management

Tourism falls under the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, was established under the National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003 to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy. The organisation provides strategic and practical support to develop and sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourist destination.

### b) ICZM tools

In a major review of Irish tourism, a policy review group, set up in 2002, concluded, one year later, that Irish tourism is arguably, the most important and successful sector of Irish-owned enterprise since the foundation of the State. It set out a comprehensive tourism development strategy covering a 10 year period with a challenging target to double overseas visitor spend to €6 billion over the 10 year period to 2012, with an associated increase in visitor numbers from just under 6 million to 10 million. A National Tourism Development Authority (Fáilte Ireland) was established in 2003 and, in 2005, it set up an Environment Unit which is now part of its Policy and Planning Unit. The purpose of the Unit is to advocate a high quality physical environment for tourism and to promote good environmental practice throughout the tourism sector. As part of its role as a prescribed body in the planning process, Fáilte Ireland also aims to strengthen its partnerships with Local Authorities. Five principles of sustainable tourism development are incorporated into each Local Authority Development Plan as part of a sustainable tourism policy framework. These are:-

- Tourism should be a positive activity which has potential to benefit the host community, the place itself and the visitor alike. Sustainable tourism planning requires a balance between these three.
- Landscape, environment and cultural & linguistic heritage all have an intrinsic value above their value simply as a tourism asset. They must not be prejudiced by short term considerations.
- Development associated with tourism should be appropriate to the character of the place. This applies to scale, nature & design, particular land use and economic & social requirements.
- Strategic tourism assets e.g. special landscapes, views, historic buildings & monuments, areas of cultural significance and access points to the open countryside, should be safeguarded from encroachment by inappropriate development.
- Accommodation, visitor centres, and commercial/retail facilities serving tourism should be located within established settlements to foster strong links to the host communities.

Furthermore, 7 key actions have been addressed to take into account the issues of climate change. These include: assessing the impact of climate change on the tourism industry; assessing the impact on tourism of any measures proposed to tackle climate change; measuring and reducing the carbon footprint of the tourism industry; communicating the challenges to the industry and raising awareness; and offering visitors a low emissions choice.

In 2007, the Environment Unit published a three year action plan which provides an overview of the environmental challenges facing the tourism industry and outlines what the Environment Unit will do to help the industry face them. The Action Plan takes account of national policy on sustainable development and also the Environmental Protection Agency's state of the environment report. It seeks, inter alia, to place environmental issues at the core of sustainable tourism policy at national, regional and local levels. It also advocates the protection of key environmental and tourism assets. The Plan promotes good environmental practice within the tourism sector and gives advice on the development of ecotourism.

In cases of conflict between the maintenance of the integrity and amenity value of the built or natural environment and the provision of a new tourist facility, priority is given to the maintenance of the quality, character and distinctiveness of the environmental resource and the mitigation of any negative impact of a tourism facility will be sought through alternative location, siting or design.

## 7. Cost and resources

€800 million will be invested on tourism marketing, product development and training programmes between 2007-13. Another, unspecified, amount will be allocated for agri-tourism from a €461 rural economy sub-programme. These are laid out in the National Development Plan 2007-2013.

## 8. Effectiveness (i.e. were the foreseen goals/objectives of the work reached?)

Sustainable tourism facilities, when properly located and managed, especially if accessible by a range of transport modes, encourage longer visitor stays, help to extend the tourism season and add to the vitality of settlements throughout the year.

## 9. Success and Fail factors

Effective marketing of the tourism product to overseas and domestic customers is fundamental to the success of Irish tourism. The professionalism, friendliness and quality of services provided by people are essential success factors. The continuing success of the Tidy Towns competition and the 'Blue Flag' initiative demonstrates an awareness and commitment to environmental standards at public level.

## 10. Unforeseen outcomes

The ability of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the State Tourism Agencies and the tourism industry to more effectively shape and influence Government policy in the wider issues that impact on tourism, will be a key influence in determining the future success of the sector.

## 11. Prepared by

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## 12. Verified by

It has not been possible to verify this case.

## 13. Sources

- Facing The Challenges Of Climate Change (2008) Fáilte Ireland
- New Horizons for Irish Tourism: An Agenda for Action (2003) Report of the Tourism Policy Review Group
- Review of Good Environmental Policy and Practice in the Tourism Sector (undated) Fáilte Ireland (National Tourism Development Authority)
- Third and Final Progress Report (2006) Tourism Action Plan Implementation Group
- Tourism And The Environment Fáilte Ireland's Environmental Action Plan 2007-2009 (2007) Fáilte Ireland (National Tourism Development Authority)
- Transforming Ireland A Better Quality of Life for All (2007) Government of Ireland
- [www.failteireland.ie/](http://www.failteireland.ie/)

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	Facing the Challenges of climate change (506.97 KB)	
	Final Report TAPIG March2006 (550.66 KB)	
	National Development Plan 2007-13 (2.79 MB)	
	Review of Good Environmental Policy and Practice (1.81 MB)	
	Tourism Review Report 03 (1.46 MB)	



tourism and the Environment. An Action Plan (1.37 MB) 