

Priorities for the Next 6 Months

1. Publish the **Shannon Tourism Masterplan** (being led by Waterways Ireland) and the **Beara Breifne Way Activation Plan** and begin implementation of both in association with Waterways Ireland and the Local Authorities.
2. Implement the **Website Improvement Programme** by funding website improvements for 44 key visitor attractions and activity providers throughout the region.
3. Prepare for **Meitheal 2020** by providing supports for participating businesses and by building out our range of **saleable experiences** in the region. Provide sales platforms in Ireland and overseas along with the required levels of training to set our industry up for success at B2B events.
4. Continue to deliver **Taste the Island** initiative across the Hidden Heartlands.
5. Install the **Hidden Heartlands county boundary signage** in association with the Local Authorities and Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
6. Create a series of new commercially focussed **Tourism Networks** across the Hidden Heartlands to encourage businesses to work together more effectively in association with key partners.
7. Deliver an ongoing programme of **National and International Publicity** for the region.



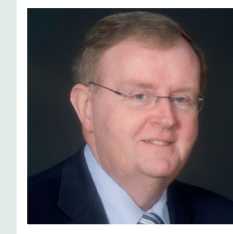
Meet the Team



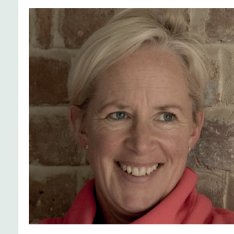
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Let us know about your business

To ensure that you will be part of the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands website, you should check that you are on Fáilte Ireland's Tourism Content System which is our industry database. The easiest way to do this is to log on to www.discoverireland.ie and search for your business. If you're not there and want to be, please send an email to fiona.henshaw@failteireland.ie. If you are there, you should check the accuracy of your entry, including contact details, description of your experience and photograph. If you require any changes, please email fiona.henshaw@failteireland.ie.

Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Brand Logo

We would encourage all our tourism partners to use the new logo on their websites and other marketing materials to help build brand awareness among our domestic and international visitors.

The purpose of the brand guidelines is to help you produce communications material that is consistent in look and feel and ensures we present Ireland's Hidden Heartlands collectively in an engaging and motivating way.

To request a copy of the Brand Guidelines and logos, please log onto the Fáilte Ireland website:

<http://www.failteireland.ie/IrelandsHiddenHeartlands>

Ireland's Regional Experience Brands



Ireland's Hidden Heartlands

A Review of 2019

As it is the first full year with a dedicated team in place for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, 2019 has been a very busy year ...

In April our launch of the brand to over 350 overseas tour operators at Meitheal was well received.

In June we launched our Website Improvement Programme which will see over 40 visitor attractions and activity providers receive training and investment to significantly improve the content and performance of their websites which will help them to grow their businesses.

In July we launched our second major Domestic Marketing Campaign which built on our 2018 campaign and further raised awareness among the domestic audience of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

In July and October, we announced two major capital investment projects totalling over €4.5m for the Hidden Heartlands for Knights and Conquests in Granard, Co. Longford, and for the National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park, Co. Roscommon.

And **in September** we saw Ireland's Hidden Heartlands take its place with the other three regional brands at the **Taste the Island** table. Throughout the year we continued to showcase the region to a host of international media and tour operators who visited the many great experiences that are on offer in the region.

However, the year has not been without its challenges and the biggest concern of our industry for the future is Brexit. To address this, we rolled out a series of Brexit Ready workshops to help our tourism businesses to 'prepare and diversify'. We're still at a very early stage in the development of the Hidden Heartlands as a compelling visitor destination, but we are going into 2020 with an air of confidence and a strong sense of opportunity that is shared by our industry and stakeholders alike.

We have a lot of work to do and we're looking forward to approaching it together.

Paddy Mathews
Head of Operations

Key Achievements in 2019

2019 was a year of great progress for the Ireland's Hidden Heartlands region which greatly benefited local businesses and communities. Our full team has been in place since October 2018 and we have spent the past year growing awareness of the brand, building relationships and identifying opportunities across the region.

Launch at Meitheal 2019

The Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand was launched to over 350 overseas buyers at Meitheal in City West in April of this year. It received a very warm welcome which was reflected in the one-to-one business meetings that were conducted between many of these buyers and our 28 industry representatives from the Hidden Heartlands region representing all nine counties (up from just nine businesses from the same geography last year). A lot of new business was contracted as a result of these meetings and we're looking forward to an even greater attendance



at Meitheal in 2020. Ireland's Hidden Heartlands was also featured in the 2019 Buyers guide with 24 new saleable experiences. This is product that is ready to contract for Tour Operators and OTAs.

Domestic Marketing Campaign

A major domestic campaign was launched in May and ran until the end of July to drive awareness of the Hidden Heartlands during the peak summer months. It resulted in over 3 million media impressions being generated and an even spread of coverage across our nine counties. Our domestic campaign included TV, Radio, Print and Online.

One of the key activations was the Ray D'Arcy Show, which was broadcast live on RTÉ Radio from 8th - 12th July in five locations across Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. Live broadcasts took place in Killaloe / Ballina in Clare & Tipperary, Cloondara in Longford, Acres Lake in Leitrim, Banagher in Offaly and in Cavan Town. This show has a Daily listenership of 230k. Ray also talked about his many experiences on air after visiting attractions and taking part in activities on land and water throughout the week. This also included a written feature on the RTÉ website.



(far left) Banagher broadcast, (left) Clondra broadcast and (below) Killaloe broadcast



Industry Engagement

A series of industry engagement workshops and programmes were hosted throughout the region in 2019. Tourism, Heritage and Rural Recreation Officers from across all nine counties in the Hidden Heartlands completed our Regional Tourism Management Programme. This was an eight-day programme that developed skills in many areas including marketing, strategy development, forecasting for capital projects and developing visitor experiences.

Other workshops completed in 2019 were accredited service excellence workshops for front of house staff, sales training for those attending Meitheal and other B2B events, a Sustainable Tourism Event in Roscommon and three Taste the Island workshops.

Another key milestone was the launch of Fáilte Ireland's new Website Improvement Programme in June which aims to improve the shop window for visitors researching a visit to Ireland's Hidden Heartlands online. The 44 participating tourism businesses (all either visitor attractions or activity providers) will develop a Website Improvement Plan which will identify the changes and improvements they each need to make to their websites to help their businesses grow. The programme will help these businesses improve website content and the user experience, ensure websites are fully responsive, improve conversion rates and that they are optimised for SEO. Fáilte Ireland has invested €1 million into the programme which will pay for the necessary website improvements to be made before the start of the 2020 tourist season.



Accredited Service Excellence Workshop (green frames): (top) Carrick on Shannon, (above middle) Athlone and (above) Killaloe

Commercial Development

In addition to the launch of the brand at Meitheal, over 50 tour operators from 15 overseas markets have visited the Hidden Heartlands on familiarisation trips over the past six months alone.

Sales missions were also carried out for the Hidden Heartlands across the key markets of France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands.



International Media

Aside from our domestic marketing campaign, almost 40 international media have visited Ireland's Hidden Heartlands since March of this year. Overseas media came from a number of key markets including UK, France, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium and Australia. In September 13 media spent four full days in the region which included stays in 4 different hotels across the region along with visiting many of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands visitor experiences.

Product Development Announcements

In late October Minister of State for Tourism Brendan Griffin announced funding of €3.9m for a new state of the art National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park House in Co Roscommon. This major investment is expected to increase visitors by 50,000, generating an additional 13 million euro in revenue to the region over the next five years. Strokestown is home to the largest collection of material relating to the Great Famine.

The new National Famine Museum will use cutting-edge technology including projections and soundscapes to immerse visitors in the culture and day-to-day life of Ireland in the years before, during and after the Great Famine.

In Longford, a new Norman village will be built on the Motte in Granard, which follows on from the recent opening of the Knights & Conquests visitor centre. This investment of nearly €4 million will include €640K of funding from Fáilte Ireland with plans to open in 2021. In separate funding for Longford, Fáilte Ireland provided €67K funding for the Maria Edgeworth Centre in Edgeworthstown.

