



Tourism Matters

MAY 2014

Providing Compelling Experiences Crucial to Future Growth



Shaun Quinn
CEO
Fáilte Ireland

LAST YEAR WAS A GOOD YEAR for Irish tourism. It reinforced an emerging confidence in the industry after the very difficult years that followed the international economic crisis in 2007.

As we turned into 2014 the question at the back of everyone's mind was "can we sustain this early recovery and begin to plan for a period of business growth?" Happily the early indicators would answer "yes" to this question, and it looks as if the business environment for tourism should be a good deal more positive this year than in recent years. The first quarter CSO tourism figures report that total overseas trips to Ireland for the three month period January to March 2014 grew by 7% on the corresponding period last year. Equally encouraging, all our main markets – Britain, North America, and Mainland Europe - recorded growth.

So it looks as though we should be planning for growth this year and moving past the "just survive" behaviour which understandably characterised many tourism businesses in recent years. Certainly when I travel around the country meeting tourism business owners and their teams, it is encouraging to see a much more positive outlook and a very clear enthusiasm to get back and build for business growth.

Like most things though, it's easier to just talk about this than actually go and do it. However research carried out in the past year under a joint initiative involving Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland provides some interesting pointers. When asked about their motivations for travel and their expectations of a particular tourism destination, consumers reply that they travel to experience the unique features and attributes of the destination. This is their primary motivation. Consumers also say that "experiences are more important to me than possessions" and that "I want to be understood by reference to what I do rather than what I own." I don't



Ireland welcomed the Giro D'Italia this month and pictured at a recent photocall with the trophy were Lord Mayor of Dublin Oisín Quinn, Darach McQuaid Shadetree Sports, Minister Michael Ring, Ciara Sugrue Fáilte Ireland and Declan Murphy from Dublin Bus.

for a moment believe that this is true of all consumers across all markets and products. But it certainly appears to be increasingly true for the type of tourist who chooses to take a leisure break in a Northern European destination such as Ireland.

So what does this mean? My own sense is that it means as we set about building growth in our industry we need to be clear about how we should respond to this consumer feedback. We need in particular to be clear about how we can ensure that our visitors enjoy the types of experiences they envisaged as they were planning their holiday to Ireland, and what active role we can take to make this happen. We need to be clear also about our core tourism assets – those things that are uniquely Irish and that make us different from competing destinations. Interestingly there has been a growing focus recently on the importance of three tourism assets which in many ways define us as a nation. These are our Natural Heritage, our Built Heritage, and our Cultural Heritage - (or in other words our landscapes, our historic landmarks and our cultural traditions). These are unique to us, and they seem to represent the basis upon which we can build the kind of special

experiences that our visitors tell us they are looking for.

This all prompts one final thought. Hospitality (accommodation, restaurants, bars etc.) is the dominant sector in the Irish tourism industry. It's where most of the economic action takes place. It's where most of the jobs are, it's where most of the transactions actually happen, and it also serves as the essential transmission mechanism through which visitors spend their money when in Ireland. It's the engine that powers tourism. Nevertheless it's still only one sector within tourism. Another sector – tourism experiences – is the key that switches on that engine. If we care to listen to them, our visitors are providing us with some very important insights. Primarily, they are telling us that 'experiences' are what motivates them. Already, whether it's the Wild Atlantic Way in the West, our new Destination Dublin strategy, our work in the South and East of the country, we are developing tourism accordingly. My own belief is that 'experience' will become an increasingly important theme over the next year or two as we begin to build the business growth that we all want.



Michael Cawley appointed as Chairman-designate of Fáilte Ireland

IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED that former Ryanair Deputy CEO Michael Cawley is to be appointed as Chairman of Fáilte Ireland.

Michael Cawley worked with Ryanair for 17 years until his retirement last March, most recently as Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer.

Announcing the appointment, Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Leo Varadkar said: "If Michael Cawley can do for Irish tourism what he did for Ryanair, I will be a very happy Minister. I'm delighted to nominate a Chairman of the calibre of Michael Cawley and I think he is an ideal fit for Fáilte Ireland. Michael played a pivotal role in Ryanair over the last two decades and helped it to become one of the world's leading airlines".

Welcoming the appointment, Fáilte Ireland CEO Shaun Quinn said: "The nomination of a new Chairman is timely as tourism emerges from a period of contraction and begins to grow again. As Ireland's largest indigenous industry, tourism is capable of delivering significant additional revenue and jobs and make a strong contribution to this country's economic recovery. I look forward to working with Michael as, along with our partners throughout the industry, we work to sustain and build on the recent growth in the sector."

Michael Cawley served as Ryanair's Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer until his retirement. He previously served as Chief Financial Officer and Commercial Director. Prior to his time with Ryanair he served as Group Finance Director of Gowan Group Limited, one of Ireland's largest private companies and the main distributor for Peugeot and Citroen automobiles in Ireland.

Mr Cawley's appointment will take effect following an appearance at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Transport & Communications. He has been appointed for a five year term in accordance with the National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003.

New Home Holiday Campaign Launches

THE NEW DISCOVER IRELAND CAMPAIGN for 2014 launched this month and will once again aim to persuade Irish holiday-makers to holiday at home. The campaign called #ThisIsLiving will include TV, radio and print advertising as well as a new digital focus including a Facebook app to bring your holiday "wish list" to life.

Following extensive research into exactly what Irish people want from their home breaks, the 2014 campaign will, in particular, be targeting three newly identified segments of the Irish market which promise the greatest potential for growth in the market - "connected families", "footloose socialisers" and "indulgent romantics".

Connected Families - put their heart into finding out everything a destination has to offer and like to have a carefully planned itinerary before they leave home. Their aim is to create shared memories with all of their family.

Footloose socialisers - like getting away with their friends on short breaks as

much as they can. They are value-conscious, independent travellers, who attend cultural and sporting events or engage in pursuits such as hillwalking during their short breaks.

Indulgent romantics - consider the hotel to the most important factor in their choice of destination. They prioritise finding the perfect, romantic hub for their couples getaway, somewhere they can soak up luxury, reward themselves and be well looked after - and tell everyone on TripAdvisor about it if they're not.

Speaking about the new focus, Fáilte Ireland's John Concannon explained -

"These three groups make up 52% of the potential domestic market and we believe they are the most likely to take an additional holiday in Ireland this year. Our new campaign will be asking everyone to check out a break at home but will in particular be appealing to these groups."

The new campaign seeks to build on recent growth in holidaying at home. Recent CSO



statistics showed a welcome return to growth for the domestic market following a number of challenging years. The number of domestic holidays taken in 2013 rose by 2%, with revenues climbing 7% and the number of bed-nights increasing 10%.

#this is LIVING

The new ads can be viewed on our Youtube channel, FáilteIrelandTV

Ireland Inspires over 1million viewers

A NEW VIDEO highlighting the qualities that makes Ireland such a special place became one of the most globally shared and viewed videos in March as Ireland, and the rest of the world, prepared for St Patrick's Day 2014.

Originally produced for the embassy events on St Patrick's Day, the video "St Patrick's Day 2014 #IrelandInspires", took the social media world by storm after it was posted online clocking up well over 1million views on the run up to Ireland's most infamous holidays.

The video was then used for its intended purpose as it was played for groups gathering at Irish embassies across the world to celebrate St Patrick's Day.

Welcoming the impact of the initiative, John Concannon, Director of Market Development for Fáilte Ireland explained -

"This video was always intended as our animated postcard to the world and was tailored to appeal to visitors, investors and all those attracted to the type of energy, creativity and potential which this nation can offer.

"Never in our wildest dreams did we envisage that it would become so popular or that it would provoke such an emotional response. We, in Fáilte Ireland, would like to send out a big thank you to all those at home and abroad who shared it and helped spread the word."

As well as being shared by news outlets from home and abroad the video was also shared by Irish Rugby star, Jamie Heaslip, Broadcaster Miriam O Callaghan as they shared how proud they are of being Irish.

"St Patrick's Day 2014 #IrelandInspires", was developed by Fáilte Ireland in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other state agencies as a means of promoting Ireland this St. Patrick's Day.



The video is still available to view on FailteIrelandTV (www.youtube.com/user/failteirelandtv) so if you're proud to be Irish make sure you share this video! #IrelandInspires



Exciting Brand for Kilkenny's Medieval Mile



At the launch in Kilkenny were Pat Tynan; Martin Gaffney and Rocky Grennel, Designworks; Amanda Horan, Fáilte Ireland; Joe Crockett, Kilkenny County Council; Gary Breen, Fáilte Ireland and Liam Anthony Griffin, Griffin Group Hotels.

KILKENNY has unveiled a new brand for its Medieval Mile in a bid to attract more 'culturally curious' visitors to the area.

Ireland's Medieval Mile stretches from Kilkenny Castle to St Canice's Cathedral and includes everything in between. Developed to "unlock the past" and position the historic city as a "must see" destination for domestic and overseas visitors, the Medieval Mile brings together many of Kilkenny's attractions.

With the new route in place Kilkenny now plans to use this brand, which is designed to influence visitor movement throughout the city, to further establish the South East as a major hub for international and domestic visitors.

It will be used on promotional literature, display stands, and websites and all tourism and business owners in the city are being encouraged to support the brand using a newly

developed brand toolkit.

Speaking about the brand, Gary Breen from Fáilte Ireland said,

"This new brand for the Medieval Mile is a major milestone in the future development of Kilkenny as a cultural tourism destination. The brand, which is supported by a substantial capital investment programme, is designed to position Kilkenny as an historic centre of international stature and in doing so attract to the south east a large slice of the international cultural tourism market. Our research has identified the "culturally curious" market segment as having high potential and Ireland's Medieval Mile will seize on the opportunities that have been identified in that segment."

The Medieval Mile brand is supported by Kilkenny Tourism, Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce, city retailers and Kilkenny festivals.

Minister Ring Launches New Community Tourism Initiative to Reach Out to Diaspora

A NEW COMMUNITY TOURISM initiative for the Diaspora which seeks to build on the legacy of The Gathering 2013 was announced recently by the Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring TD.

A direct response to one of the clear successes of last year's The Gathering, this new initiative will provide an annual fund of €1m over the next three years to support up to 700 local community-based events and festivals each year.

The initiative is jointly funded by Fáilte Ireland, IPB Insurance and the local authorities will be administered at county level where local authorities will seek applications for support from local community events. The objectives of the initiative are:

- To provide support in the form of small-scale funding incentives to community-based tourism events that have the capacity to carry through on the legacy of The Gathering in 2014 and beyond;
- To create a national network of local events with the capacity to deepen diaspora links and networks that have been developed or re-activated during The Gathering year;
- To foster the growth of strong county diaspora networks on the basis that diaspora relationships are rooted in people and places.

Commenting on the initiative's potential to build on the legacy of The Gathering, Fáilte Ireland Director Paul Keeley emphasised:

"There clearly is an appetite out there to continue many of the Gathering community events which sprang up last year. Indeed, our own research on The Gathering showed that more than half of the organisers involved were interested in running their local event again. The initiative launched today is a very tangible proof that we wish to build on the legacy of The Gathering and nurture those grass roots networks which sprang to life last year."

Local authorities throughout the country will now seek to clearly identify those local events with the best potential to be successfully repeated and to support them in their efforts to develop long-lasting diaspora connections. It is estimated that there are possibly 500-700 viable community events which could be supported in this way. A number of Gatherings held last year were recognised through the Excellence in Local Government Awards which highlighted those events that merit special attention.

The Local Authorities will implement the initiative at county/city level and will be responsible for funds administration including grant applications and awards in accordance with agreed national criteria. They will be calling on all interested local parties to make their applications shortly.



Welcome Home: (l-r) Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring, TD launches new community tourism initiative to reach out to diaspora with Paul Keeley, Director of Enterprise Development, Fáilte Ireland, Ronan Foley, CEO, IPB and Peter Hynes, County Manager, Mayo County Council.

Big investment in Dublin's tourism trail

Dublin Discovery Trails have been designed to deliver a unique Dublin experience by telling the story of Dublin and facilitate the visitor to explore the City's hidden treasures.

THE DUBLIN DISCOVERY TRAILS experience will motivate visitors to explore Dublin, understand the stories that make it unique, discover the city's historic sites and encounter the ever changing culture of today.

A new interactive and innovative way of telling the Dublin story, these trails in the centre of the city are linked by the Dublin, a route running from Kilmainham to College Green and Parnell Square. For the visitor with little time or knowledge of the city, this route is an orientation point, a means of ensuring that they can find some of the city's best attractions, discover the key stories, and a few hidden gems along the way.

Launching in 2014, four new Discovery Trails which link key locations in the War of Independence, will provide the visitor with a tangible means of unlocking the stories, characters and events that shaped Ireland's quest for independence.

Printed guidebooks and multimedia guide will be rolled out for each trail allowing visitors to immerse themselves in Dublin's vibrant culture and heritage and traverse less visited

parts of the city.

Five new projects, aimed at enhancing The Dublin route will receive significant support from Fáilte Ireland this year.

THE FIVE PROJECTS LOCATED ALONG THE LINE ARE:

St. Werburgh's Church's 900 years of history, its association with Dublin Castle, some of the city's major historical events and renowned names such as the Guinness family and Jonathan Swift will be further developed to enhance visitor experience. The redevelopment will include a number of areas: a new electrical and heating system, toilets, refurbishment and conservation of the original flagstones, and the development of a new visitor exhibition and display area.

Improved branding, signage, visitor access and comfort are planned for **Dublinia** as well as new enhanced visual displays en-route to St Michael's Viewing Tower and a new exhibition on the end of the Viking era to include the Battle of Clontarf.

Christ Church Cathedral will focus on improving the landscape around the Cathedral grounds, creating multiuse space in the heart of the city, designed to welcome more visitors.

Tailor's Hall, one of the oldest and only surviving Guild Halls in Dublin will seek to animate the building and surrounding area with a new garden, interpretation panels, film projection and night-time lighting on its exterior. A tour will also be introduced during the tourist season to showcase the story and architecture of the building.



Smock Alley will see the reinstatement of the lanterns outside the theatre, the repair of the bell (which was the first Catholic bell to ring in Dublin in nearly 300 years breaching the penal laws) and provide secure exhibition space for the artefacts found on the site which are currently housed in the National Museum. This will enhance the creation of animated tours by actors for visitors around the theatre and recreating the history and stories of Smock Alley.

Speaking about the investment, Ethna Murphy, Fáilte Ireland said,

"Increasingly, a successful tourism destination needs to be able to tell its story and to provide opportunities for visitors to engage with the narrative. We believe that the Dublin Discovery Trails Experience will allow us to do just that and will help us to raise our game in marketing Dublin as a world class destination."

This funding, which was allocated following an invitation for applications from tourism operators along the route last year, is just one of a number of initiatives in 2014.

Find out more visit
www.dublindiscoverytrails.com

Everyone's getting behind the Wild Atlantic Way

Wild Atlantic Way will promote stunning coastal environment

GOVERNMENT and local communities have both been showing their support for one of our flagship projects for 2014, The Wild Atlantic Way, recently as Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Michael Ring officially launched the new 2,500km route.

The Wild Atlantic Way stretches from Malin Head (at the tip of North Donegal) to Mizen Head (in the very south of the country) and hugs Ireland's Atlantic coastline all the way. At 2,500km in length, the route, which can be toured by car, bicycle or on foot opens up a huge number of towns and attractions for visitors to provide an unforgettable experience along Ireland's west coast.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Ring explained,

"The Wild Atlantic Way is a really exciting project which I'm delighted to launch today. It's the world's longest touring route through some of Ireland's most beautiful places, and is already proving a hit in our key overseas markets like Britain, the US, France and Germany.

"It has massive potential to bring more visitors and more jobs to rural communities' right along the western seaboard. That's why we will soon be promoting it even further afield in places like Spain, Italy and the Netherlands."

FUNDING

Significant capital funding of €10m is being invested to develop the route this year, much of which will be reflected in route signage and in establishing 159 discovery points along the way, each of which will bring the route and surrounding area to life.

€1.4 million of this funding has recently been allocated to the following three projects located along the route:

- **The Connemara Greenway:** €403,000 has been allocated towards the first phase of a Galway Greenway which will run through central Connemara, linking Oughterard to Clifden;
- **Downpatrick Head Discovery Point:** €640,000 has been allocated to develop a "must-see" Signature Discovery Point for visitors at Downpatrick Head in North Mayo. This discovery point will include an iconic "Spirit of Place" installation (complementing six others in North Mayo) built around a blowhole which will allow visitors to actually walk around its rim and experience it in a safe manner;
- **Signal Tower Restoration:** €364,000 has been allocated towards the restoration of the Signal Tower at the Old Head of Kinsale as another "must-see" Signature Discovery Point and viewing point.

Speaking about this investment, Fáilte Ireland CEO Shaun Quinn said,

"The Wild Atlantic Way is an evolving project which will build and develop over the years and will significantly benefit those counties it traverses. The investment announced today will ensure the new route delivers on its ability to drive extra visitor footfall and become one of the most significant developments in modern Irish tourism as well as a significant engine of regeneration for rural Ireland."

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Ensuring the local tourism sector, and even more importantly, the local communities situated along the route are behind the route, a series of local community meetings have taken place already this year giving local businesses a chance to hear about how they can capitalise on this project.

Speaking about the meetings, Head of the Wild Atlantic Way, Fiona Monaghan commented,

"We had a great turnout at these meetings with more than 1,300 interested parties attending and the feedback and enthusiasm was phenomenal. Indeed, in all my years in tourism, I have rarely seen such positivity and enthusiasm for a project and I think this bodes well for the venture.

"These community meetings which we held were open to all and gave us an invaluable opportunity to inform local people about the Wild Atlantic Way and what it will mean for their local areas. In turn, we have had great feedback and input from a range of attendees from all walks of the community - tourism businesses and stakeholders, sporting bodies, cultural and musical organisations, local authorities, local development companies and retail businesses - who are all keen to engage with overseas visitors to their area and grow their local economies via tourism."

What's along the Wild Atlantic Way?

- 500 Visitor Attractions
- More than 1,500 activities to pursue
- 580 festivals and events throughout the year
- 17 trails and 50 looped walks
- 53 Blue Flag beaches
- 120 Golf Courses including some of the best 'links' golf in the world

To contact the Wild Atlantic Way team email : waw@failteireland.ie



WILD ATLANTIC WAY

SLÍ FHIÁIN AN ATLANTAIGH



Launching the Wild Atlantic Way were Fáilte Ireland CEO Shaun Quinn; Head of the Wild Atlantic Way, Fiona Monaghan and Minister Michael Ring



Locals get behind the Wild Atlantic Way. (l-r) Sean de Buitléir, SKDP, Josephine O'Driscoll, Fáilte Ireland, Patrica Deane, SKDP, Annmarie Morrison, Cappanlea, Raymond Ross, Seafari, Kenmare.

New Direction for Dublin

Repositioning Dublin (city and surrounding areas) as a modern destination

EARLIER THIS YEAR Fáilte Ireland introduced a new Dublin team aimed at attracting more overseas growth from Britain, France, Germany and the US.

A key project for the team in 2014 is the Dublin Now Project which was introduced last year to reposition Dublin (city and surrounding areas) as a modern destination to two market segments offering the greatest potential for growth – social energisers and culturally curious.

Originally established as a pilot project the Dublin Now project has expanded in 2014 to focus on ensuring the right content to paint this new picture of Dublin is created and that Dublin features strongly in our international sales strategy.

Up to 140 Dublin businesses (including accommodation providers and other businesses primed and ready to target these markets) will now take part in the project and working with our Dublin team to reach potential visitors in Germany, France, the US and Great Britain.



Google employees get a taste of what Dublin has to offer at Dublin Now Showcase event.

Following a busy Dublin showcase at Meitheal 2014, Ireland's largest travel trade event (see pages 6 & 7), the Dublin Now group showcased their offering to 3,000 'Googlers' at Google HQ in Dublin.

Speaking about the project, Donnchadh Mac Cobb from Adventure Training Ireland and part of the Dublin Now Group explained how this project is helping their business and surrounding area.

"The Dublin Now Project has really helped to put City Kayaking on the map and driven our numbers of tourist customers right up. Working so closely with Fáilte Ireland and fellow businesses in the city has been a great help in developing new, exciting and great value packages for visitors to Dublin City. We're extremely excited to see what the Dublin Now Project will bring us in 2014!"

Focus on Hosting Major Events Continues in 2014

TAKING A MORE focused approach to attracting major international events to Ireland a new Major Events Unit has been established to work with stakeholders to identify and bid for new events.

This new team are actively meeting with key players operating in the major events arena in Ireland and have been attending a number of key events to develop Ireland's profile as an international host destination.

Most recently the team attended the Sportaccord International Convention in Turkey which is the world's largest annual gathering of Sports Industry Professionals and will attend the European Sport Tourism Summit in Thomand Park, Limerick in May.

Speaking about the new focus, Keith McCormack, Head of Business and Event Sales, Fáilte Ireland said,

"If 2012's success of hosting the Navy v Notre Dame game proved anything it is the overwhelming impact of hosting major international events. Not only do major events attract overseas visitors in large numbers generating incremental tourism expenditure, they also highlight Ireland on a world stage as an attractive destination to visit.

"Events such as Sportsaccord are attended by hundreds of international sports federations and international event owners from across the globe, providing the perfect platform from which we can promote Ireland as a desirable major events destination to a host of potential clients."

Taking full advantage of hosting the European Sport Tourism Summit in Thomand Park this



Pictured at SPORTACCORD 2014 are Letitia Wade and Edel Mitchell from Fáilte Ireland with Peter Hall, FINA International Swimming Federation

May, Fáilte Ireland will showcase Ireland's iconic sport/tourism venues to international federations attending the summit providing them with a unique experience of Ireland's excellent sporting infrastructure in both Limerick and Dublin.

If you're interested in bidding for an international event you can find further information at www.failteireland.ie/majorevents or you can contact our Major Events team at majorevents@failteireland.ie

The Gathering and Discover Ireland pick up awards

2014 has been a rewarding year for the Gathering and for our Discover Ireland team who both picked up awards at the recent Digital Media Awards.

The Gathering, which was Ireland's largest tourism initiative last year, scooped the top award, The Grand Prix, as well as first place in the Best Travel and Tourism category.

Discover Ireland followed suit winning silver in the Best Travel and Tourism category and bronze in the Best Design/Art Direction category.

Speaking about the awards, Orla Carroll, Head of Digital for Fáilte Ireland said,

"Digital marketing is playing an ever increasing role in tourism marketing with more and more overseas visitors using online platforms to research and book their holiday so it is important for tourism businesses to be active in this space.

Harnessing this shift in behaviour is and will continue to be crucial if we are to generate greater awareness and understanding of Ireland as a destination. It is for those reasons that digital is now playing a key part in how Fáilte Ireland plans to support Irish tourism businesses in the years ahead.

The Gathering itself helped to attract over 275,000 additional visitors to the country as well as generating €170 million for the Irish economy last year. This success ultimately meant success for the tourism industry so it is wonderful to have the team's hard work recognised even though the project has concluded."

MEITHEAL 2014 - Ireland's Global Travel Fair

Meitheal, Ireland's Global Travel Trade Fair 2014 took place on Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th April in the RDS, Dublin.

ORGANISED BY FÁILTE IRELAND in association with Tourism Ireland, Meitheal is the largest travel trade workshop that takes place for the Irish tourism industry, providing Irish tourism product providers with the opportunity to meet with overseas tour operators and group organisers and negotiate business for the future.

Meitheal, a central date in the tourism industry calendar, is now in its thirty-ninth year and has gone from strength to

strength with countries from all around the world represented at this year's event – including Ireland's top four markets the US, UK, Germany and France.

200 key international buyers were in attendance, meeting with almost 500 Irish businesses through

approximately 13,000 scheduled one-to-one pitching and business opportunities.

Commenting on the potential of Meitheal, Paul Keeley, Fáilte Ireland said:

"Meitheal provides a valuable opportunity to forge even stronger commercial

relations between local tourism providers and the international travel trade. With interest in visiting Ireland growing, our appeal remains strong and we now offer better value than for many years, hopefully, through events such as Meitheal, we can tap into this and win our fair share of overseas business for Ireland."



Biddy Hughes from Westport House selling to overseas buyers



Margaret O'Shaughnessy, Foynes Flying Boat Museum, Ruth Andrews, ITOA, Margaret Jeffares, Good Food Ireland attended Meitheal



Meitheal in full swing at the RDS



Pictured at Meitheal were Louise Magee, B&B Ireland John McLaughlin, North & West Coast Links Suzanne Rowe, Broadhaven Bay Hotel



Pictured at the opening of Meitheal were Shaun Quinn, CEO Fáilte Ireland; Minister Michael Ring and John Concannon, Director Fáilte Ireland

Fáilte Ireland organised a number of fact-finding tours around Ireland for overseas operators taking part in Meitheal, providing them with a unique opportunity to sample the sights and sounds that Ireland has to offer their customers.

Paul Keeley continued -

"This year Fáilte Ireland was delighted to invite this prestigious gathering of overseas buyers to experience our key tourism projects: the Wild Atlantic Way; Ireland's Culture and Heritage and Dublin for social energisers and the culturally curious. Ireland already benefits hugely from International tour business and generating market awareness for these exciting new projects is the first step in establishing new international business ties."

WILD ATLANTIC WAY

Ireland's first long distance tourism route is already garnering significant interest overseas and over 20 visiting tour operators experienced Ireland's newest tourism product. The Wild Atlantic Way was showcased in two familiarisation visits taking in the West, North West and South West of the country.

'Wild Atlantic' highlights included paddleboarding at the Strandhill Surf School; cycling along the Mayo Greenway with 'Electric Escapes'; ferrying to Garnish Island; climbing the Geokaun Mountain & Fogher Cliffs. The groups also experienced the tastiest Atlantic cuisine and visited some of the finest hotels along the Wild Atlantic Way.



Enjoying the Wild Atlantic Way at Valentia Island.

IRELAND'S CULTURE AND HERITAGE

24 buyers from Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, GB, Italy, China, US, Spain and Sweden explored Ireland's culture and heritage in the South and East. The group tried their hand at hurling, cider making and even geese herding in Kilkenny before heading to Waterford for a visit to Waterford Crystal and the city's medieval treasures. The final leg of the trip allowed the group to enjoy the spectacular views from Hook Head Lighthouse before avoiding the ghosts at Loftus Hall and boarding the Dunbrody Famine Ship in New Ross.

International tour operators learn how to make cider at the High Bank Orchard Farm in Kilkenny



DUBLIN OLD AND NEW

While in Dublin, the travelling groups had the opportunity to discover both Dublin's cool and traditional side, partaking in wakeboarding in Grand Canal Dock as well as enjoying visits to Windmill Lane and the Book of Kells.

Over 150 overseas operators and 150 Irish trade attended Fáilte Ireland's 'Dublin Farewell' event as Meitheal concluded. The event which took place throughout Powerscourt Townhouse in the heart of Dublin city showcased Dublin in a new, fresh and vibrant way.



Wakeboarding in Grand Canal Dock, Dublin



Dublin Showcase at Powerscourt Townhouse

Being a Conference Ambassador

THE ETOURISM CONFERENCE ENTER 2014, hosted and organised by the School of Hospitality Management & Tourism in the Dublin Institute of Technology, took place in Dublin last January.

Welcoming more than 270 delegates from over the world, the ENTER 2014 Conference came to Ireland with the help of Conference Ambassador, Patrick Horan, who spearheaded the bid with the support of Fáilte Ireland's Business Tourism Unit and who chaired the eTourism Day which took place as part of the conference.

Tourism Matters spoke to Patrick recently to find out more about his experience as a Conference Ambassador.



Patrick Horan

PATRICK IS A LECTURER in Hospitality Information Technology at the School of Hospitality Management & Tourism, Dublin Institute of Technology and contributes to the teaching of Digital Marketing, Web Development, Hospitality Information Technology and acts as liaison with the Hospitality / Tourism industry. He also acts as a visiting Professeur at Institut de Management Hotelier International (IMHI) and plays an active role in international Hospitality / Tourism IT research. He is keenly interested in areas such as e-distribution, virtual reality, ecommerce, digital marketing and their impact on the hospitality/tourism Industry.

Which conference did you bid for?

I bid for the ENTER 2014 (Including the Irish eTourism Day) – www.enter2014.org

When was the conference held?

January 21st -24th 2014

Number of Delegates

276 Delegates

What motivated you to bid for this international conference?

We felt that it would be really good for the School and DIT and that Dublin was a perfect location for the ENTER conference.

How far in advance of the event did you begin the preparatory work to bring it to Ireland?

16 Months – we started work on the conference in September 2012.

Was there an official bidding process to win the conferences? Who made the final decision in the bidding process?

No, there was no official process and the board of the International Federation for Information Technologies in Travel and Tourism (IFITT, the body behind the ENTER conference)

What in your opinion was the reason Ireland was successful in securing these conferences?

IFITT have been trying to bring the ENTER conference to Dublin for a long time.

Can you describe what support you received from Fáilte Ireland/Dublin Convention Bureau?

We received a lot of support from Fáilte Ireland's Business Tourism Unit, including their Dublin Convention Bureau without which the conference simply would not have been viable. We received strong financial backing from both the Fáilte Ireland Conference Ambassador Programme and through the Fáilte Ireland – Business Development Section.

The Convention Bureau were really helpful throughout the whole process right from its inception through to its conclusion as we always knew that we would get complete impartiality with any questions that we had to ask.

Was the conference deemed a success?

The conference has been a huge success both in terms of numbers, output and from a social perspective. It could not have gone any better.

What advice would you give to someone thinking of hosting an international conference?

If you are not committed to the process don't do it. Another piece of advice would be to go through the contracts with a fine tooth comb.

Find out more about our business tourism supports at www.meetinireland.com/conferenceambassador

Making the Most of Your Online Travel Agents



Andrew Sykes

As online travel agents continue to expand we asked Andrew Sykes of Trivago how Irish accommodation providers can improve their online sales.

Having high quality content on all the websites where your hotel is visible is extremely important.

1 GOOD QUALITY IMAGES

The standard of the pictures and descriptions used to portray your hotel online will have a large impact on whether a potential customer chooses to book or not. According to a study by Tripadvisor, travellers are 150% more engaged on listings with more than 20 photos. A second study carried out by Expedia demonstrated that simple things like doubling the number of pictures can result in 4.5% take-up and €2.50 higher Annual Daily Rate, while providing a full property description can result in a 5% take-up and just over €2 higher than your average daily rate.

2 CHECK ALL WEBSITES REPRESENTING YOUR PROPERTY

Once the images and description on your own website are captivating and up to date, it is important to start looking at the other websites where your hotel is being represented.

Having quality content on your own website is not enough if other travel sites have poor or old images. It is critical that your photos and information are kept up to date and monitored

across all online channels.

Roughly 65% of travellers will perform multiple searches using OTAs, search engines and metasearch websites such as Tripadvisor, Trivago and Google hotel search, before making an online booking. This compares with just 10% who choose to book on a hotel's own website without performing any previous searches at all.

3 KEEP YOUR INFORMATION UP TO DATE

For many websites, content quality will play a key role in a property's visibility. On Trivago, for example, three factors determine where in the search results a hotel will appear: popularity, rating score and the quality of the content. Simply updating your images and descriptions is the quickest way to improve this.

Our best-performing hotels currently have profiles including at least 20 photos with a width of 800 pixels. Many hotels from all across Europe have increased their visibility on Trivago by an average of 29% after uploading these high-quality images. Simply put, increased visibility means a greater number of bookings.

Many OTA websites, Trivago included, have created free and easy-to-use platforms for you to control the profile yourself. Make sure you update content on key external websites and ensure potential customers have a good impression of your hotel.

Remember that the images and descriptions displayed online represent your first contact with the customer and so the information should be captivating and set the venue apart from others. Having a selection of good images and a well written description will catch the attention of potential customers and leave a lasting impression. Without them you could be losing out on valuable revenue. Now is the time to begin making changes - it will be worth the investment.

Hoteliers can control their hotel profile on Trivago for free by visiting www.trivago.ie/hotelgateway

New Webinar Series: International Sales Tips

A NEW WEBINAR SERIES offering international sales tips from tourism experts is up and running with the first instalment, 'Building relationships with International Tour Operators in North America' now available on FailteIrelandTV (the Fáilte Ireland You Tube channel).

The North American market is an important market for Irish business, not only do visitors spend more but the market itself has demonstrated strong growth last year and early this year.

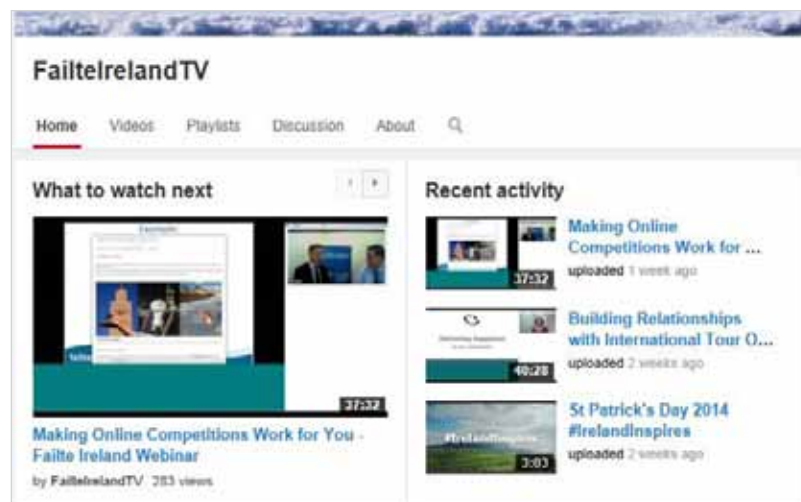
The first webinar in the series sees Billy Condon, Tourism Ireland Vice President Marketing, USA and Chris Accomando, President Sceptre Tours, the second largest tour operator in the North American market give their top tips for businesses seeking to gain a larger slice of this market and work with tour operators to grow their international sales.

This is the first of a number of sales focused webinars on channel management. The next scheduled webinars will include:

- How to use online travel agents to attract more US customers (May)
- Selling to the German market (September)

If you are interested in hearing about these webinars please let us know by emailing leisuresales@failteireland.ie

Alternatively, you can catch up with them after they happen on FailteIrelandTV (our YouTube channel). www.failteireland.ie



FáilteIrelandTV - FI Webinar

Should Tour and Activity Providers get Online?



Danielle Mallen

Danielle Mallen, Co-Founder and Head of Sales & Marketing at Acteavo (a booking and management system, built for tour and activity companies) talks to Tourism Matters about why tour and activity providers need to get serious about selling online.

The tours and activity sector plays a big part in the overall travel market, with a value of \$80 billion in the US and Europe alone. It has however been left in the cold, somewhat, when it comes to selling online.

There are a number of reasons for this but the main reason was that getting access to the technology needed was expensive for the small and medium businesses, which make up the majority of the sector. This is now changing; with advances in cloud computing, getting access to this technology is now much more affordable. This allows businesses to easily integrate online bookings with their regular offline booking flow, so they don't have to worry about being double booked.

INCREASE YOUR BOOKINGS

Using these types of systems is not just about managing your existing bookings better; it

helps you increase your bookings. By not having an online booking function your chances of converting potential customers to your website is lowered. If a customer has to fill out a contact form, ring or email you versus going elsewhere, where they can book and pay online, they are going to take that easier option. This means having an up to date availability calendar, not just a payment option. The modern customer wants to find and book their tour or activity with the minimum of fuss. Placing obstacles in their way, will only lower conversion.

MANAGE BETTER

Giving businesses more control and oversight of their bookings is another big advantage of using a reservation and management system. Businesses can sell online, over the phone and in their store all through the one system. Business owners can login remotely, check to see how

their business is performing, who is selling what, how many places they have left, and confidently sell 24/7 without the fear of being double booked. This in turn reduces your lost bookings. How? Well, when you take upfront payment, even a deposit, no-shows reduce dramatically.

REDUCE COST

One of the big draws for businesses looking to start using a reservation and management system is the fact that it helps reduce costs. If you operate in the tours and activity space you will know how much time is taken up with admin. Getting back to customer's voice-mails, emails, calls, questions, keeping track of who has paid, who hasn't, cancellations, no shows, who's working when? Sound familiar?

Using a reservation and management system can help reduce costs because it can increase your efficiency by over 50%. The administration of bookings does not earn you revenue, you may think it's free as it's you doing it, but between running trips and answering calls – could you not be spending more time selling?

Marketing and distribution is also becoming an increasingly complex area with a plethora of systems and channels from social media, daily deal sites, international tour operators and online travel agents. A booking and management system can help you sell through these channels without increasing your workload.

Choosing the right solution that meets your needs as a business is very important. Using a solution that is built from the ground up specifically for a tour and activity business is a great start.



Irish Appeal Remains Strong as Tourism Continues to Recover

Top line trends from the annual Visitor Attitudes Survey, conducted by Millward Brown on behalf of Fáilte Ireland, show overseas holidaymakers continue to rate Ireland as value for money and that our people, scenery and culture remain our strongest assets.

DID IRELAND MEET THEIR EXPECTATIONS?

The survey, conducted with 1,514 overseas visitors to Ireland in 2013 states that almost four out of ten (39%) overseas visitors reported that their experience in Ireland exceeded their expectations while a further six out of ten (60%) said that Ireland met their expectations. When surveyed, those whose holiday exceeded their expectations cited a number of reasons for this, including:

WILL THEY BE COMING BACK?

When it comes to returning to Ireland over half of the respondents (56%) said they would definitely return in the next few years while a further four out of ten hoped to return at some time in the future.

While most visitors expressed some level of intent to recommend Ireland to family and friends, an impressive two thirds (66%) of visitors expressed the strongest level of endorsement and said they would definitely be encouraging friends and family to come here.

Encouragingly in the long haul market, eight out of ten (79%) of North Americans said they would definitely be endorsing Ireland.

VALUE FOR MONEY

The survey also indicates that Ireland is maintaining the good value it has offered over the last few years as over half of overseas visitors (51%) of overseas visitors found Ireland to be good or very good value while a further four in ten (39%) found the value for money levels here to be fair.

Food and drink costs, once a bugbear during the Celtic Tiger years, were mentioned as competitive disadvantages by only 9% of visitors (down further on last year where drink costs had been cited by 16% and food costs by 13%).

WHAT DID OUR VISITORS DO WHEN IN IRELAND?

When surveyed, popular experiences for our overseas holidaymakers included enjoying live music in a pub, visiting a coastal town and tasting a Guinness:

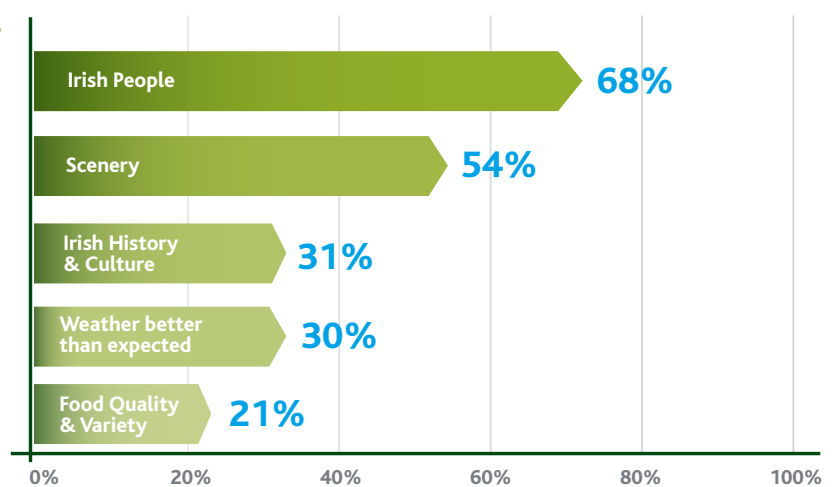
WORD OF MOUTH DRIVES MORE VISITORS

Finally, there was an interesting spike in the proportion of overseas holidaymakers who mentioned word of mouth as an influence to choose Ireland to visit last year (from 28% in 2012 to 36% in 2013).

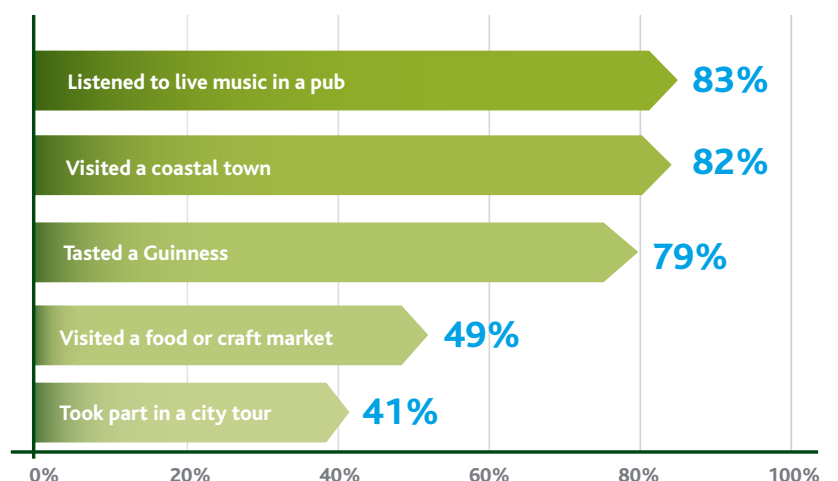
This, and a noticeably higher proportion of respondents travelling with family than in previous years reflects a strong "Gathering" influence on the complexion of the overseas visitors who visited us last year.

Over half of the respondents (56%) said they would definitely return to Ireland in the next few years

DID IRELAND MEET THEIR EXPECTATIONS?



POPULAR EXPERIENCES FOR OVERSEAS HOLIDAYMAKERS



Meet the Chinese Travellers

Chinese travellers are on their way to Europe - Are **YOU** ready to take your share?

Interesting Facts on China...



- China is the fastest growing tourism source market in the world
- It is also the biggest tourism source market volume wise
- Number one tourism spenders in the world
- Most of their tourism spend is on shopping and entertainment
- A Chinese trip to Europe averages 8-15 days. Chinese tend to spend only 1 to 3 nights in each European country.
- Most Chinese travellers to Europe are aged 35-60.
- Most Chinese travellers to Europe have a university or college education.
- The majority of Chinese visitors to Europe belong to the upper and upper-middle class, they are used to high-quality services.
- Today, most Chinese travellers still prefer sightseeing over relaxation. However in the near future, relaxation will become the dominant travel motivation.



TOP 8 TIPS TO WIN THE CHINESE...

1

MAKE YOUR SERVICES CHINA FRIENDLY

Make sure that your services meet their new expectations, don't expect them to like what you offer.

2

STORIFY YOUR SERVICES

What stories do Chinese know about your destinations?

3

PROVIDE CHINESE WITH WiFi !

...and smartly encourage to spread the voice about your service on Chinese social networks.

4

SET THE STAGE FOR INTERACTION!

Lead Chinese from observation to participation - engage them in conversations or suggest them ways to interact with locals or other Chinese tourists.

5

LET THEM SHOP!

Do you have Chinese Union pay points? Also, suggest shops opened late hours ?

6

EMPHASIZE THE VALUE OF YOUR SERVICES

Find out what phrases attract the Chinese!

7

ACCEPT CHINESE TRAVELLERS WITH OPEN ARMS!

Give service with a smile!

8

LEARN A FEW USEFUL MANDARIN CHINESE PHRASES...RIGHT NOW!

TM Interview

with Sue Uda, New ITOA President

SUE UDA CV

HOMETOWN: Cork

EDUCATION: Studied languages in UCD

CURRENT ROLE:

» Newly appointed President of the Incoming Tour Operators Association and MD of Destination Management Company, A Touch of Ireland which has been operating for 25 years.

TOURISM EXPERIENCE:

Sue has over 30 years' experience in the industry, based in London and Dublin. Her roles have been varied and she has worked for The Grand Metropolitan Hotel, London, a large London based Tour Operator and Country Homes and Castles before returning to Ireland to establish her own destination management company, A Touch of Ireland.



Tourism Matters: Having taken on the Presidency of ITOA in February what are your priorities for the organisation and its members in 2014/2015?

Sue: The ITOA already captures 95% of major tour operators in Ireland; however growing the membership remains a goal. We also intend to focus on the issues that could potentially threaten the sector such as the restructuring of the VAT rate and the EU Package Directive.

The aim of the association is to provide the tour operating sector with a voice so that it can express what does and doesn't work for the sector. In doing this we always work closely with our sister organisations abroad, in particular in the UK and Europe to get a sense of how these markets are responding to certain issues, as our positions and sentiment often follow similar lines.

These are all things that individual companies would not have the time or resource to address. As an association we can address them and that's one of the key benefits of being part of the ITOA.

Tourism Matters: You launched the ITOA Members 2013 Business Performance Report at your recent workshops can you give us some of the key highlights?

Sue: Our business performance report has produced some promising data. Among the highlights is that collectively ITOA members spend just over €7 million on sales and marketing in the overseas markets, which when you think about it is a substantial amount of additional marketing expenditure to Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland's spend. We also spend about 2000 man days in the markets selling Ireland abroad, which is pretty phenomenal when you put a figure on it.

However, probably the most positive result is that the revenue grew by 8%. Visitor numbers grew by 11% with members delivering 467,000 promotable visitors who spend €393 million in the economy in addition to the 170 million ITOA members spend with Irish suppliers. So we have moved from recovery to growth in 2013 and we are back to 2007 figures which is a real achievement. We are very happy with the outcome of 2013 and are confident that we will certainly equal, if not better it for next year.

Tourism Matters: Having just completed the ITOA Workshops in Limerick and Dublin what was the general feedback from the industry

and your members and how is 2014 shaping up at this stage? Is there anything that is selling particularly well for Irish operators at the moment?

Sue: Feedback has been extremely positive. The hotels around the country appear to already be heavily booked for the main season so hopefully this will continue into the rest of 2014. Rates sadly are slowly edging upwards which may be expected as confidence returns however, in some cases the pace at which rates are moving upwards, particularly in Dublin, is concerning and it does impact on tour operators business.

The Wild Atlantic Way on the other hand has created quite a stir as a brand and has become a talking point across the different markets and I think there will be groups that seek out experiences along the route.

It's wonderful to see the towns along the route working together and marketing themselves as a unit. The Wild Atlantic Way has provided the West coast with a single image which will amplify this part of Ireland across the world.

Tourism Matters: Where do the ITOA members see scope for growth?

Sue: New markets are certainly emerging. Here in A Touch of Ireland we are experiencing a huge interest from Eastern Europeans. We have had customers from the Czech Republic, Poland, Serbia, and Macedonia all arriving in Ireland with significant money to spend.

Interestingly, they are coming to Ireland seeking traditional Celtic Ireland – they love the myths, the concept of freedom and fresh air, and of course the Irish pub.

Italy and Spain, Russia and Brazil I think are also markets to watch in the immediate future. But the traditional markets of USA, France, Germany and the UK are still producing the majority of our business and there are still lots of opportunities in these key markets.

We are also keeping our eye on the prize and targeting much of the low hanging fruit that exists at the moment. We are targeting the German and French markets which are showing great promise for Ireland and we are working hard to reposition ourselves as a compelling and attractive destination to the Great British market through projects such as Dublin Now. All of this work offers great promise and I am confident that it will bring on further growth for

Irish tourism.

Tourism Matters: What do you see as the major challenges facing the Tour Operator sector at the moment?

Sue: Competitiveness is one that we need to continue to watch. Our pricing has begun to resonate with our visitors however; we are slowly edging up to being perceived as being as expensive as Paris and London. The rising price of Dublin hotels is certainly pushing this perception.

In an effort to combat this we can now see operators have begun to get really creative. They are trying to cut the expense of Dublin by starting tours outside of Dublin. They are sending visitors straight from Dublin Airport to Drogheda and Athlone in an attempt to cut the expense of staying in Dublin.

However, you cannot completely cut Dublin out as it is a destination that customers do expect to have included in their itineraries. The challenge we perceive is in the long-term. If prices continue to rise in the capital it will begin to impact on business as the cost for customers will be forced to rise. Finding a way to balance the overall price for customers, who will insist on including Dublin in their itineraries, has become crucial for the sector.

Tourism Matters: Have there been any developments in the markets recently that have surprised you?

Sue: The advent of good roads and day trips has certainly changed business. The Cliffs of Moher and Northern Ireland can now be included as day-trips. These routes, which would never have been considered before, have become extremely popular. This is obviously a direct result of the improved transport infrastructure, however it does put further pressure on Dublin accommodation and indeed makes things more difficult for accommodation providers outside

of the capital. Propositions like the Wild Atlantic Way will hopefully encourage visitors to Ireland to break away from the four day trip to Dublin and drive visitors beyond the capital and out to other areas of Ireland.

Tourism Matters: As a tour operator you also have first-hand experience of how business has changed over the last 5 years – what would you say have been the most substantial or radical changes you have witnessed?

Sue: The business mix has certainly changed in the last five years and the way business is done has changed hugely but the ITOA members have adjusted and tourism continues to provide additional jobs and revenue.

Tourism Matters: If you could outline one trend for the future what would it be?

Sue: Tour operators need to create a greater presence online. I'm not saying that all business should happen online, but there is a need for the sector to adapt and become more visible online because that is where our customers are looking for information.

I also think Ireland would benefit from increased promotion in Italy and Spain as there is new business to be won in these markets. Additionally, markets such as Russia and Brazil are also emerging as markets to watch.

Tourism Matters: What's next on your agenda as ITOA President?

Sue: Having worked in the tourism sector for over 40 years I would love to see Ireland take a longer-term view in how we strategically grow the tourism sector in Ireland. I therefore very much welcomed the development of the Tourism Policy Review that Minister Varadkar announced last year and look forward to seeing this form the basis of a long-term tourism strategy so that the entire sector can take a more collaborative approach to growing the industry.