

NEW HORIZONS ON THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY 2018

A Grants Scheme to
**Develop and Improve Visitor Experiences
at New and Operating Visitor Attractions**
in Skellig Coast, Co. Kerry and
The Connemara Coast & Aran Islands, Co. Galway

For Capital Grants from
€30,000 up to €200,000

Inis Meáin, Aran Islands, Co. Galway



WILD ATLANTIC WAY

SLÍ AN ATLANTAIGH FHIÁIN



Fáilte Ireland

National Tourism Development Authority



CONTENTS

1	Introduction	3	8	Approval Process	21
	About Fáilte Ireland	3	9	Post Approval	21
	About the Wild Atlantic Way	3	10	Grant Claiming Process	23
	Aim of New Horizons on the Wild Atlantic Way 2018	5	11	Appeals Procedure	23
2	State Aid Basis	7	12	Appendices	25
3	Who can apply?	9		Appendix 1 – Geographical Extent of the Scheme	25
4	What financial support is available?	9		Appendix 2 – Eligible/Ineligible Expenditure	25
5	Is your project eligible to apply?	11		Appendix 3 – Post Approval Compliance Documents	27
6	The Application	15		Appendix 4 - Terms and Conditions	27
	6.1 How to Apply	15		Appendix 5 - Overview of Grant Process	29
	6.2 Filling out the Application Form	16			
7	Evaluation	21			

1

2

Kylemore Abbey, Co. Galway



1. Introduction

About Fáilte Ireland

Established under the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003, Fáilte Ireland's role is to guide and support sustainable growth in tourism earnings and employment. It provides consumer and competitor insights, mentoring, investment and trade supports across the business, event and leisure sectors to help secure sales growth from targeted overseas and domestic market segments.

Working in partnership with tourism businesses, Local Government, State Agencies and Government Departments, it also seeks to foster a competitive and innovative enterprise base, a sensitively managed natural and built environment within tourism communities and a

public policy environment to meet the needs of visitors.

This Grants Scheme is aligned to the Fáilte Ireland [Tourism Development & Innovation Strategy – A Strategy for Investment 2016 – 2022](#).

The Scheme provides funding between €30,000 and €200,000 for **new and operating visitor attractions along the Wild Atlantic Way** within the defined geographies of (a) Skellig Coast, Co. Kerry and (b) The Connemara Coast & Aran Islands, Co. Galway as outlined in the relevant Fáilte Ireland Visitor Experience Development Plans (VEDPs). The overall objective is to develop and improve the experiences offered to visitors in these areas.

About the Wild Atlantic Way

The Wild Atlantic Way has been developed by Fáilte Ireland to drive economic growth to the west coast of Ireland. The Wild Atlantic Way is a branded visitor experience which seeks to deliver on the brand promise outlined below. Fáilte Ireland's goal is to deliver on this promise at every point of interaction with the visitor.

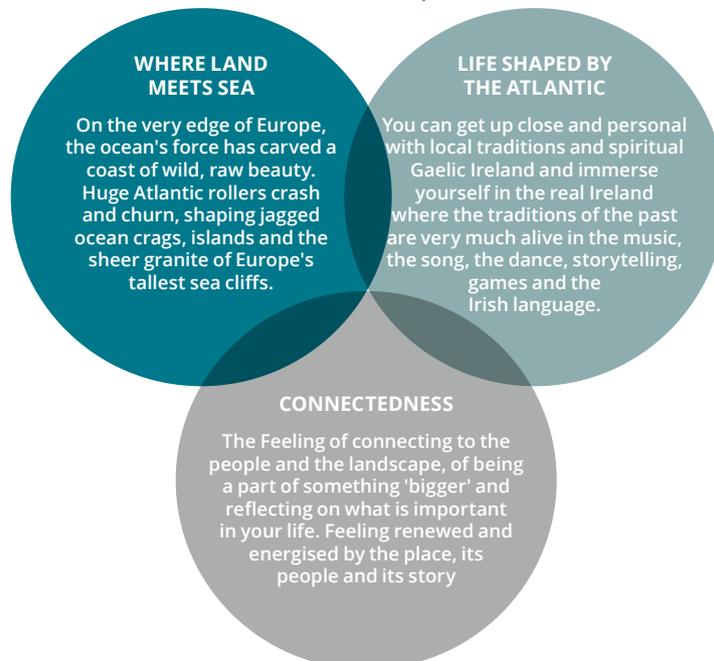
Brand Promise

The Wild Atlantic Way on Ireland's Western Coast off the Western edge of Europe, captivates you with its wild

landscape that continuously shapes its living history; and engages you with its creative and vibrant communities, whose stories and culture stimulate you, so you are freed up to relax, enjoy and leave feeling refreshed, renewed and uplifted.

The brand promise is delivered through three themes which highlight the unique features of the Wild Atlantic Way:

Wild Atlantic Way Themes



Fáilte Ireland believes that the development of brilliant visitor experiences is key to unlocking growth and motivating potential tourists to visit. We need to develop a strong regional spread of stand-out experiences that engage tourists through storytelling and innovative interpretation, which in turn, provides them with compelling reasons to stay and spend longer in the destination. This will help to support sustained economic growth and community wellbeing whilst valuing our heritage, history and environment.

The vision for the Wild Atlantic Way is to deliver sustainable growth to all areas of the West Coast which will deliver real benefits for local communities and businesses and provide

a focus for the protection of the environment. We have identified three key deliverables:

- 1 Drive an increase in tourist revenue and overnights to less visited areas;
- 2 Encourage improved tourist management in areas that are currently achieving greater tourism numbers;
- 3 Develop a world-class tourist experience that delivers fully on the brand promise.

For more information about the [Wild Atlantic Way Operational Programme 2015-2019](#), visit the Failte Ireland website.

Visitor Experience Development Plans

To maintain growth, our tourist destinations require a diverse range of world-class visitor experiences that will appeal to our main market segments. To this end, Fáilte Ireland has been working with communities, tourism groups and agencies in a number of areas along the Wild Atlantic Way to develop geographical Visitor Experience Development Plans (VEDPs). The objective of the plans is to enable the creation of sustainable, brilliant experiences that in turn will deliver economic benefits.

In 2017, two such plans were completed for (a) Skellig Coast and (b) the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands, with

additional VEDPs planned along the Wild Atlantic Way route over the next few years.

These plans identify the key themes and stories for each of the above areas which are motivational to the international visitor, in particular to our key target segments – the Culturally Curious and the Great Escapers. Understanding these key themes and stories and bringing them to life, will help drive business to the area and increase dwell time. The table below outlines the vision, destination promise and key themes for each Visitor Experience Development Plan.

Visitor Experience Development Plans			
Skellig Coast		The Connemara Coast & Aran Islands	
VISION	Extend the season and attract visitors to engage with the true essence and story of Skellig Coast without compromising the environment or culture of the region	VISION	Extend the season and attract visitors to engage with the true essence and story of the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands without compromising the environment or culture of the region
TARGET MARKETS	1. Culturally Curious 2. Great Escapers	TARGET MARKETS	1. Culturally Curious 2. Great Escapers
DESTINATION PROMISE	Come for the beauty, leave with the spirit of the Skelligs	DESTINATION PROMISE	Feel the wind and sea mists, hear the call of the wild, explore the "savage beauty", experience the spontaneity of the Gaelic spirit - and be inspired
KEY THEMES	1. Journeys inspired by the Skellig Monks 2. The Cradle of Irish Nationhood 3. The History of Global Connections 4. Ocean Meets Sky at the Edge of the World	KEY THEMES	1. Wilderness, Tradition and Innovation 2. Inlets & Islands 3. Resilience & Rebellion 4. Inspired by Connemara & the Aran Islands

The Visitor Experience Development Plans are available to download from the Failte Ireland website here:

www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way/New-Horizons-Grants-Scheme

Aim of New Horizons on the Wild Atlantic Way 2018

The aim of the Scheme is to fund projects that will support the implementation of the Visitor Experience Development Plans for (a) Skellig Coast and (b) the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands. In essence, we are looking for projects in each of these areas which:

- Support the stated vision;
- Appeal to the target markets;
- Fulfil the destination promise;
- Align to the key **themes** and **stories**.

To bring to life the unique themes and stories of both Skellig Coast and the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands, the Scheme will focus on developing and enhancing interpretation and animation at **new and operating visitor attractions**, all of which must be underpinned by appropriate visitor management and quality visitor facilities.

Experiences that meet the goals and objectives of the relevant VEDP should encourage visitors to immerse themselves actively in the locale, without compromising the

environment or culture. By engaging the senses, interacting with people and learning the history, stories and characters of the place, we can facilitate the creation of authentic life-changing moments that inspire visitors to not only share their experiences with others but also make them want to return. To fully engage the visitor, such experiences should offer or intend to offer some elements of interpretation in the first language of the visitor.

Applicants must clearly demonstrate how the proposed project will support the development and delivery of one or more of the key **themes** or **stories** identified for the relevant VEDP area (see Appendix 1 for precise geography of each VEDP) and align with the guiding principles below as set out in each plan:

- Projects are self-sustainable, meaning they do not solely rely on funding to be maintained;
- Projects connect to the broader region as they deliver benefits to more than one village or town in the designated area;
- Projects are on-message with the relevant VEDP themes and aligned to the broader mission of the Wild Atlantic Way;
- Projects are innovative and set the region apart from its competitors;
- Projects add value to the region and provide a direct and demonstrable link to either extending visitor length of stay, extending the length of the tourist season or developing a new market.
- Projects have consideration for and are in compliance with relevant planning and environmental requirements as set out in the relevant VEDPs.





6

2

2. State Aid Basis

Grants provided under this Scheme are granted in accordance with the criteria set out in these Guidelines, subject to EU State aid law. This Scheme is operating under the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) rules and the De Minimis Regulation.

GBER

GBER¹ is an EU measure that exempts Member States from the obligation to notify and seek EU Commission approval before aid is granted, once all GBER criteria are satisfied. Fáilte Ireland has identified the exemptions that are relevant to project proposals under this Scheme. These are:

- Culture and Heritage Conservation and Consultancy Aid in the Context of Culture and Heritage Conservation
- Aid for Sport and Multi-Function Leisure Facilities
- Local Infrastructure Aid
- Consultancy Aid to SMEs
- Regional Investment Aid

To fall within the GBER, its provisions must be complied with in all cases and in all respects in so far as they apply to State aid for a particular project². While Fáilte Ireland has a primary responsibility to comply with those requirements and other State aid rules, compliance also depends on the co-operation of applicants, including their adherence to these guidelines, their candour in making applications to us and ultimately, their compliance with any subsequent grant agreement.

With regard to eligibility under GBER, this Scheme shall apply only to aid which has an incentive effect.

Aid shall be considered to have an incentive effect if the beneficiary has submitted a written application for the aid to the relevant development agency before work on the project or activity starts. The application for the aid shall contain at least the following information:

- undertaking's name and size;
- description of the project, including its start and end dates;
- location of the project;
- list of project costs;
- type of aid (i.e. grant) and amount of public funding needed for the project;

If work begins before the applicant has submitted a written application to Fáilte Ireland the whole project will be ineligible for aid.

The regulation will apply to transparent aid in accordance with Article 5 of the GBER. The Aid intensity and eligible costs (Article 7) and the cumulation rule (Article 8) also

apply and these requirements are set out in the Fáilte Ireland Handbook which should be read in conjunction with these guidelines and can be found here.

The following aid is not eligible:

- Aid to undertakings in difficulty, details of which are set out in the Fáilte Ireland State Aid Handbook;
- Aid in favour of an undertaking which is subject to an outstanding recovery order following a previous European Commission decision declaring an aid illegal and incompatible with the internal market.

De Minimis

Grants may also be provided under the De Minimis³ regulation. There is a ceiling of €200,000 for all De Minimis aid, regardless of the source, given to any one enterprise (including groups) over a 3 year period.

Please note that in order for Fáilte Ireland to maintain De Minimis records, all applicants must complete a De Minimis Declaration which is included in section 2.16 of the Application Form. Applicants are required to declare any other De Minimis aid received to which the De Minimis Regulation(s) apply during the previous two fiscal years and the current fiscal year. Applicants should declare all public support already received, anticipated or that which may possibly be received with respect to the project. Note that a group of linked enterprises is treated as a single undertaking for the purpose of the De Minimis Regulation. All entities which are controlled, on a legal or on a de facto basis, by the same entity should be considered as a single undertaking for the purpose of this Scheme.

The State aid basis (GBER or De Minimis) for awarding individual grants under this Scheme will be decided by Fáilte Ireland. These Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Fáilte Ireland State Aid Handbook, which provides more information on GBER and on the De Minimis funding conditions. Applicants should also be mindful of cumulation or 'double funding' rules, information on which is contained in Chapter 4 of the Handbook. The Handbook is available to download here:

<http://www.failteireland.ie/Supports/Identify-Available-Funding/Grants-Scheme-for-Large-Tourism-Projects.aspx>.

Separately, as a public body, Fáilte Ireland and Grantees are subject to the rules of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 13/2014. For more information visit www.circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/per/2014/13.pdf

¹ Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Article 107 and 108 of the Treaty. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1404295693570&uri=CELEX:32014R0651>

² The exception is where for one or more reasons (such as the recipient not being regarded as engaging in economic activity with respect to the project) the State aid rules do not apply

³ Commission Regulation (EU) No. 1407/2013



3



8



4

3. Who can apply?

This scheme is only open to new and operating visitor attractions located on the Wild Atlantic Way and specifically must be positioned within (a) Skellig Coast, Co. Kerry or (b) the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands, Co. Galway.

The rationale for this approach is that these two areas have completed a thorough process of evaluation and consultation in the development of Visitor Experience Development Plans. The objective of these plans is to ensure product developments deliver on the Wild Atlantic Way brand proposition and are compelling and motivating to international visitors. Generally they comprise a combination of experiences with a “hero/iconic” experience at the centre of the plan. Visitor experiences can be story-based, thematic or rooted in a geographic area. This process delivers potential experiences that are motivational to international visitors, of scale, are capable of increasing dwell-time and/or driving and spreading economic benefit

in their regions.

This makes these areas highly suitable for a co-ordinated investment programme. See Appendix 1 for precise geography of the relevant VEDP area.

The following sectors can apply under the scheme:

- Private Sector: companies and other legal entities and individuals
- Voluntary Organisations: not-for-profit bodies, including charities, trusts and companies limited by guarantee
- Public Sector bodies: semi-state organisations and local authorities

Note: Fáilte Ireland Strategic Partners including Coillte, Office of Public Works (OPW), National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Waterways Ireland are not eligible to apply under this scheme.

4. What financial support is available?

Grant Rates and Grant Amounts

- The maximum grant rate will not exceed 75% of eligible capital costs.
- The grant rate offered may be less than that requested by the applicant and is at the full discretion of Fáilte Ireland.
- Maximum grant amount available to each applicant is €200,000.
- Minimum grant amount available to each applicant is €30,000.

Note: Any offer of financial assistance by Fáilte Ireland is subject to re-prioritisation of objectives and/or budgeting limitations. The scheme is a discretionary scheme and will offer assistance only to those that will aid Fáilte Ireland in meeting its statutory objectives in line with Government policy. It is possible that those projects that are approved will receive less than their requested amounts or none at all in the event of re-prioritisation and/or budgetary objectives.

It is the intention of Fáilte Ireland to balance the available funding for this scheme between the two geographical areas. However, this is subject to the quality of applications received and the extent to which the project proposals meet the aims and objectives of the Scheme.

5



5. Is your project eligible to apply?

The following are the minimum eligibility criteria that will apply to this scheme:

- 1 Location of Project:** the project must be located within the defined geographies of Skellig Coast or the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands Visitor Experience Development Plans along the Wild Atlantic Way (see Appendix 1).
- 2 Opening Times:** The visitor attraction must plan to be open for a minimum of 5 days per week, including weekends, and for a minimum of 3 months of the year.
- 3 Minimum Visitor Numbers Threshold:** Applicants should provide visitor numbers projections that demonstrate sustainable growth in overseas visitor numbers. Attractions should demonstrate that they have the capacity to attract a minimum of 5,000 visitors by the end of year 3 with 20% of these being from overseas. Applicants should use a credible methodology that benchmarks against other relevant projects / visitor numbers to the wider destination. Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to seek verification of these visitor numbers at any stage in the application process.
- 4 State Aid Requirement:** The applicant must not be in breach of State Aid rules with regard to GBER or De Minimis funding as relevant. (See Section 2).
- 5 Requirement for Personal Tour Guide(s):** All projects must plan to have a tour guide(s), or to offer the visitor a personal tour after the project has been completed.
- 6 Multi-Lingual Requirement:** All projects must plan to have language provision for at least 2 languages (other than English and Irish) or intend to have this requirement after the project has been completed.
- 7 Site ownership:** Evidence must be provided of site ownership or lease to demonstrate a right to undertake and operate the project on the identified site until 2030, and which constitutes adequate security in the case of private sector applicants.
- 8 Match funding:** Evidence must be provided of match funding. Match funding must be in the form of a financial contribution for 25% of eligible capital costs which means the maximum grant rate allowable under this scheme is 75%. In-kind match funding, including overdraft facility, will not be accepted under the terms of this scheme. Evidence of match funding can be provided either by (i) a letter from your accountant/ auditor confirming that you have sufficient match funding from own resources or (ii) a Bank Facility Letter

i.e. evidence of the availability of borrowings if you are borrowing to provide match funding. Your application will not be processed if this is not clearly demonstrated.

- 9 Tax Clearance:** Please provide your Tax Clearance Number. This number will be checked by Fáilte Ireland before your application is processed. If your Tax Clearance Number is invalid, has expired or has been rescinded, Fáilte Ireland will not evaluate your project.
- 10 Security:** Private sector applicants seeking a grant in excess of €50,000 will be required to provide adequate security by means of a fixed charge on the project's assets and/or in another form(s) satisfactory to Fáilte Ireland.

Please note that Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to seek verification of any information provided.

This is a focussed, themed grant scheme to develop and enhance the experience at new and operating visitor attractions that support or enhance the key **themes** or **stories** of the Visitor Experience Development Plans for Skellig Coast or the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands. Applicants should note that the emphasis is on world-class interpretation/ storytelling and innovative visitor engagement.

The following project types are ineligible under this scheme:

- Any projects that have received a Stage One Pass under the Grants Scheme for Large Tourism Projects 2016-2020
- Accommodation and related facilities
- Driving routes
- Events
- Food and beverage facilities, e.g. cafés / tearooms / restaurants / public houses
- Motorised and non-motorised transport vehicles (including bikes, buses, boats, etc.)
- Projects located outside of the geographical extent of the Scheme (see Appendix 1)

List of ineligible project types continued

- Public realm
- Public service blocks, amenity areas and related facilities or signage
- Retail facilities
- Theatres
- Visitor information provision (i.e. projects whose main focus is providing orientation information for visitors, tourism information points, etc.)
- Walks / Trails development including greenways, outdoor heritage trails, trail heads, trail furniture, orientation signage and interpretation signage
- Websites and Mobile Apps (Exceptions may be made where the digital media is part of the overall interpretation scheme. General information apps are ineligible).

Please see Appendix 2 for a list of ineligible expenditure.



6

14



6. The Application

6.1 How to apply

There are two main steps to be taken in making an application for funding under this scheme:

Step 1: Getting the Application Form

In order to receive an application form, you will need to register interest in the Scheme by filling out a short questionnaire via the Fáilte Ireland website. www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way/New-Horizons-Grants-Scheme This questionnaire invites you to submit a 150 word description of your project which will then be reviewed by the Wild Atlantic Way team.

Any applicant or project that is clearly ineligible for funding will be informed of this and will not receive an application form. Otherwise a link to the application form will be emailed to you. Please note that the receipt of an application form does not in itself confer eligibility on the project or applicant. Depending on the information provided in the application form, the project or applicant may still be deemed to be ineligible for funding.

The closing date for registration of interest is 7 days before the scheme closing date. Please refer to the Fáilte Ireland website for deadlines.

Step 2: Completing the Application Form

All applications to this grants scheme must be completed online through the Fáilte Ireland Trade Portal. Only application forms submitted online to Fáilte Ireland will be accepted and evaluated.

The final deadline for receipt of applications will be published on the Fáilte Ireland website.

Before you submit your application, please ensure that:

- All sections of the form have been fully completed
- You have uploaded the correct supporting documents required. At this stage in the application process, the following documents are required: (i) Evidence of match-funding for the project (financial contribution only) (ii) Evidence of the right to undertake the project at site identified.

Incomplete applications and applications received after the closing date will not be considered for evaluation.

The online application form consists of 6 sections:

Section 1	• Project & Applicant Details
Section 2	• Project Details & Scheme Eligibility
Section 3	• Description of the Visitor Experience • Gap Analysis of the Visitor Experience • Proposed solution to address the gaps/ deficiencies identified • Cross Selling and Cross Promotion • Existing and Projected Increase in Visitor Numbers
Section 4	• Project Budget • Indicative Project Costs • Sources of match funding (financial contribution only)
Section 5	• Mandatory supporting documents
Section 6	• Declarations

In Section 3 of the application form, you are required to conduct a gap analysis of the current / proposed provision of the visitor experience at your attraction. How to conduct this gap analysis is outlined in more detail in section 6.2 below. An outline solution will then be required to address the gaps that have been identified in the experience. This is not required to be a fully detailed and designed proposal, but rather an outline of how you propose to address these gaps. Sufficient detail will be required, however, to enable you to provide indicative costs for the proposed solution.

The proposed solution for both new and operating visitor attractions must support or enhance the stories and themes identified in the relevant Visitor Experience Development Plan and adhere to the Guiding Principles set out in each plan.

Information is required on how the proposed solution will cross-sell and cross-promote the Wild Atlantic Way brand and other visitor experiences within the Wild Atlantic Way. The solution must result in an increase in visitor numbers to the attraction and area. These projected visitor numbers are required when completing the application form.

The information provided in Section 3 must underpin the rationale for the project and the impact it will have on the visitor experience at your site, and more broadly, the impact on the destination, be it Skellig Coast and/or the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands.

Timelines Please refer to www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way/New-Horizons-Grants-Scheme for details on the closing date for submitting an application under New Horizons on the Wild Atlantic Way 2018.

6.2 Filling out the Application Form

This section provides information to guide you in completing Section 3 of the application form.

As part of the application process, it is not a requirement at this point to engage with professional consultants to assist with the completion of the application form as we are only seeking a broad outline of your project. However, professional consultants/experts in areas such as interpretation and animation will be required to design the detail of your project if a grant is approved.

As this scheme is open to both operating visitor attractions and new project proposals, the information below sets out how both types of applicants should approach the Application Form.

The primary requirement in the application form (section 3) is to conduct a gap analysis to identify gaps in how your visitor attraction currently tells its story to visitors, or in the case of new attractions, how it proposes to do so, and then outline a solution which will address the identified gaps and deficiencies.

Note that the approach to completing the form will vary depending on whether the application is for a new visitor attraction or whether it is for an enhancement to an operating visitor attraction. Please read the instructions carefully.

Describe the current/proposed visitor experience

Begin this process by articulating your central interpretive theme. It should answer in a few short sentences the question, "what is my experience about?", from the perspective of the visitor.

Next, put yourself in the shoes of your visitors and map out their journey at your site. The visitor journey actually begins when they decide to visit your site and ends at the "post-visit" stage. The stages of the visitor journey to consider when identifying the gaps and deficiencies are:

- 1 Pre-Arrival and Approach
- 2 Welcome and Orientation
- 3 Experience and Interpretation
- 4 Post-Visit

Proposals for new visitor attractions should map out the anticipated visitor journey at the site.

Below are some key areas and questions to consider when conducting this analysis of your current (or proposed) offering:

1. Pre-arrival and Approach

- Visitor Orientation - at what point is the visitor oriented and how? Is there attractive and functional en-route and local signage directing visitors to your site and area?
- How well do you know and understand your target audiences? Do you use appropriate media channels to communicate with them?
- Does your experience engage the senses of the visitor from when they first come into contact with your attraction, i.e. pre-visit?
- Is it easy for visitors to find up to date, informative, motivational information about your experience when they are planning their trip?
- Do you provide a quality online ticketing solution?
- Can the visitor access relevant information from other providers in advance of visiting your site? In turn, do you promote visits to other sites in the area and within the wider Wild Atlantic Way?

2. Welcome and Orientation

- Appearance of exterior buildings, grounds, gardens, etc should be appealing and well maintained.
- Are there quality on-site visitor facilities with sufficient capacity – reception, parking, toilets, etc?
- Do your retail, food & beverage facilities enhance the visitor experience through layout, visitor flow, quality and presentation of food, merchandise, etc?
- Is your site accessible in terms of the infrastructure provided? Consider visitors with limited mobility, families, etc.
- Is the visitor warmly welcomed and easily orientated upon arrival? Good service is key and requires investment in staff training and development across all areas of the business to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge
- Keep transactions simple with only one pay point.

3. Experience and Interpretation

Well-planned, entertaining and authentic interpretation, based on an understanding of the visitor, their motivations and interests, can deliver a great visitor experience. Stories and characters bring content to life. Great stories and engaging characters reveal what may not be apparent, relate to the visitor on a personal level and provoke an emotional response.

- Layout and Visitor Flow of the experience - make it easy for visitors to understand your story through clear signage and layouts, both internally and externally.
- Have compelling and authentic stories and characters been developed and communicated? Are the visitor's senses engaged?
- Are the themes brought to life through interaction and animation? Are there opportunities for the visitor to get involved and learn something new?
- Are local artists, musicians, artisan producers, etc. integrated where possible into the experience?
- Are there knowledgeable and engaging tour guides?
- How does your interpretive media inform and motivate your target audience? Consider language barriers for non-English speakers.
- Is the infrastructure (both physical and digital) and equipment of a high standard? Does your media need to be enhanced/updated/replaced?
- Does your site link to the stories and themes of the relevant VEDP?

4. Post-visit

- Are people encouraged and facilitated to share their story through social media and other mediums during and post visit?
- Is there a mechanism in place to gather visitor data and feedback post-visit?

Conduct a Gap Analysis: Operating Visitor Attractions

Having put yourself in the shoes of the visitor, you should now be able to identify the main gaps and deficiencies in your offering.

A complete and exhaustive list of all gaps and deficiencies is not required, however, applicants should identify the most important ones – those that if addressed would have the biggest impact on the quality of the visitor experience.

Consider all relevant objects, touch points and experiences along the visitor journey and how the combination of these will deliver a memorable experience for visitors, keeping in mind that different audiences have different requirements.

Categorise the main gaps in terms of the following four areas:

- Your visitors
- Your story
- The experience
- The interpretation media (e.g. panels, audio-visual, technology etc)

In Step 5, describe the **impact** that these gaps and deficiencies have on your experience, on your business and on the Wild Atlantic Way brand.

In Step 6, you are requested to detail what visitor insights helped you research these conclusions in your deficit and gap analysis. Please provide as much information as possible. (E.g. If you undertook a visitor survey, then provide details on when it was carried out, how many responses, what the main findings were, etc.)

Conduct a Gap Analysis: New Visitor Attractions

New projects should set out the gaps and deficiencies in the VEDP area which will be addressed by the establishment of a new visitor attraction. The three steps are:

- 1 Detail the market research that you have conducted that underpins the need for a new attraction.
- 2 With reference to the VEDP, set out the relevant gaps and deficiencies that you have identified in the area's current tourism offering.
- 3 Describe the impact of these gaps on the visitor experience in the area, on business growth and on the Wild Atlantic Way brand.

Propose a Solution

Having outlined the gaps and deficiencies in your attraction's storytelling offering, you are then required to set out how those gaps/deficiencies will be addressed. It is this solution that will be considered for funding. Again, there are four key areas to consider:

- The Visitor
- Story
- Experience
- Interpretation media

This is a sequential process. The type of interpretation media selected to bring the experience to life should be the last part of the process. Before thinking about all the exciting media that can be used to tell your story, take some time to reflect on what you really want people to take away from the experience.

Your solution may also include improvements to visitor facilities at your site which would improve the overall experience.

New projects should provide details on how the new attraction will address the gaps/deficiencies identified in the previous section.

All respondents should provide details on how their project will impact the growth of your business, economic growth in the area, and how it will support the Wild Atlantic Way brand.

Additional Resources:

The following resources may also be of benefit at this point, all of which can be found on www.failteireland.ie:

- [Growing International Sales](#): When developing the solution, you need to think about your target customer, understand their needs and motivations, ensure that your story delivers what they want to hear and that it is aligned to the Wild Atlantic Way brand.
- [A Toolkit for Storytelling Interpretation](#). How to help visitors experience your story. This guide demonstrates the principles of best-in-class interpretation in a clear user-friendly way.
- [Experiences Explained – A Guide to Understanding and Developing Memorable Tourism Experiences](#): This guide provides an introduction to experiential tourism. The sections of the guide relating to Story and Narration are particularly relevant.
- [Sharing our Stories: Using interpretation to improve the visitors' experience at heritage sites](#): Sections 4-8 of this manual are directly applicable.
- [Skellig Coast Operator Workbook](#). This guide provides the right tools, support and know-how to assist operators to create and deliver memorable Skellig Coast experiences.

Cross-promotion and Cross-selling

Cross-selling and cross-promotion are core to the strategic development of Wild Atlantic Way. The benefits of these are clear – improved dwell time, economic growth and increased visitor spend in the area. The stories and themes of the VEDP's can serve to link places and support cross-promotion to develop a unified and coherent destination. Clustering with nearby tourism businesses and supporting each other, sometimes through packaging and bundling, is another approach to cross-selling.

In this section of the form you are required to

- Identify other places/experiences in your area, or along the Wild Atlantic Way that you will cross promote after the project is completed.
- Specify how you will cross-sell/cross-promote these

linked experiences in the application form. What tangible actions will you undertake?

Projected Visitor Numbers

Projected visitor numbers for the next 5 years will be required in the table provided in the application form. Projections should include the estimated growth figures for both domestic and overseas visitors.

A credible methodology for the projections, in the view of Fáilte Ireland, will also be required. This may include benchmarking against other relevant sites and the number of visitors to your destination.

Current visitor numbers, including the percentage of overseas visitors, for a minimum of one calendar year (up to 3 calendar years) will be required from operating visitor attractions. These numbers can be from 2015 – 2017.

Note: It is likely that this process will result in a solution which will require both capital and non-capital expenditure. However, only capital costs can be grant-aided under this scheme. More details on what types of expenditure are deemed eligible and ineligible is provided in Appendix 2.

Remember at this point a consultant is not required to develop your solution.



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7. Evaluation

Eligible completed applications will be evaluated on a competitive basis, taking into account the aims and requirements of the New Horizons Grants Scheme, and Fáilte Ireland's overall strategic priorities.

The purpose of this scheme is to develop or enhance the experience at visitor attractions in the relevant VEDP areas. Because facilities (e.g. toilets, parking, signage etc) are a driver of overall customer satisfaction and have potential

to increase the capacity of the attraction, they are eligible under this Scheme. However applicants should note that **the emphasis is on world-class interpretation/ storytelling, innovative visitor engagement and excellent visitor management**. Applications will be evaluated on this basis.

8. Approval Process

There is no guarantee of funding for applications which achieve the minimum eligibility requirements.

In accordance with Section 25 of the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003, the National Tourism Development Authority ("Fáilte Ireland") has discretion to provide grants to such projects as it considers appropriate.

At all times during this process, Fáilte Ireland has complete discretion not to award grants.

Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to restrict a funding offer to certain elements of a project proposal only.

The potential impact of the project on existing tourism businesses in the locality will be assessed. Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to exercise its discretion not to award a grant or to withdraw a grant at any stage in the process if, in the opinion of Fáilte Ireland, the project could significantly displace existing tourism businesses or operators.

Fáilte Ireland will notify applicants on the outcome of their

submission as soon as possible but this will depend on the volume of submissions received. Please visit the Fáilte Ireland website for notifications on timelines.

If your project is approved in principle for funding, Fáilte Ireland will issue a Letter of Intent confirming the proposed grant amount. Successful applicants will then have to submit additional documents to be reviewed to the satisfaction of Fáilte Ireland (see Appendix 3 for list of documents) within three working weeks of being approved in principle, otherwise a Letter of Offer will not be issued.

Upon receipt of this information, successful applicants will receive a Letter of Offer. This letter will form the basis of the contract between Fáilte Ireland and the applicant. The letter of offer will contain all terms and conditions related to the offer of funding. In any case where security is required for the grant, separate security documentation must be provided before any part of the grant is paid.

All projects not approved for funding will receive a letter advising them of this.

9. Post Approval

Step 1

If your project is approved for grant funding, you will be offered a grant amount based on the indicative costs presented in the application form.

Following receipt of your Letter of Offer, you will be required to commission a detailed design of your proposed solution. This will most likely involve engaging professional consultants (such costs are eligible under the scheme). These may be tendered for just design or for both design and build. You will be required to consult with Fáilte Ireland when you are drafting this 'request for tender' documentation. All consultation with Fáilte Ireland will either be with a member of the Wild Atlantic Way team, or with an appropriate expert operating on behalf of Fáilte Ireland.

Step 2

You will also be required to consult closely with Fáilte Ireland during the design of your solution to ensure that it is in line with the objectives of the relevant Visitor

Experience Development Plans. This may be directly through a Fáilte Ireland representative. Once the solution is fully designed and costed, it should be presented to Fáilte Ireland for approval.

Step 3

When your solution is developed and agreed with Fáilte Ireland, your design team should be procured under the Public Procurement Guidelines - Competitive Process", available at www.etenders.gov.ie

Step 4

Fáilte Ireland will monitor the implementation of the project in accordance with the finalised design.

If you already have a visitor experience development plan developed for your project, Fáilte Ireland will need to review this plan before you commence the public procurement process. This will be done as part of the evaluation process.

Kylemore Abbey, Co. Galway

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10. Grant Claiming Process

Grant payments will only be made retrospectively to the body specified as the grantee and will be based on eligible expenditure incurred and paid by the grantee. Expenditure paid by a third party, unless reimbursed by the Grantee, will not be grant-aided. Grantees must have current tax clearance from Revenue at the time of any claim and payment. Fáilte Ireland will carry out verification checks on the claim and on the project delivery before passing the claim for payment. All payments will be made at the grant rate specified in the letter of offer.

Grantees will be required, at the time of grant claim, to certify that the project has not become eligible for additional grant-aid from any other source, or for accelerated capital allowances under any tax scheme (other than as previously notified to Fáilte Ireland).

The timing of grant payments is subject to Fáilte Ireland being in receipt of sufficient Exchequer funding to meet the payments. In the event of any delays in such funds, there will be no liability on the part of Fáilte Ireland or the Exchequer to make good any shortfall experienced.

11. Appeals Procedure

In accordance with Section 25 of the National Tourism Development Authority Act 2003 the National Tourism Development Authority (“NTDA”) has discretion to provide grants to such persons as it considers appropriate.

Submitting an Appeal

If having discussed the outcome of an unsuccessful application with a member of Fáilte Ireland staff an applicant still wishes to appeal the decision, the applicant must write to the Appeals Officer at Fáilte Ireland within 20 working days from the date of the letter from Fáilte Ireland notifying the applicant that the application was unsuccessful. The letter of appeal must state:

- The grounds on which the applicant believes the application was not properly dealt with or assessed;
- Specific reasons or evidence the applicant may have to support the appeal.

Letters of appeal must be sent to the Appeals Officer, National Tourism Development Authority, Aras Fáilte, 88-95 Amiens Street, Dublin 1, D01WR86.

Validity of Appeal

On receipt, the appeal will be checked to ensure it falls within the scope of this appeals process and that sufficient grounds for the appeal have been provided. The applicant will receive an acknowledgement from the Appeals Officer or from a person delegated to represent him/her in his/her absence noting the outcome of the validity check within 10 working days. Invalid appeals will be rejected at this stage of the process.

Appeal Review Process

Within 20 working days of receiving a valid letter of appeal, the appeal will be considered by the Appeals Officer at Fáilte Ireland. His/her decision will be binding and will not be subject to any further appeals. His/her conclusions and recommendations will be communicated to the applicant within 7 working days of their decision. Where any delay is anticipated the applicant will be informed in writing of the extended timescale.

Note: there is no facility for successful applicants to appeal the grant amount awarded by Fáilte Ireland.



Appendix 1

Geographical Extent of the Scheme

The project must be located within the Wild Atlantic Way brand area, specifically within Skellig Coast and/or the Connemara Coast & Aran Islands. Details of the geographical boundaries for these areas are identified in the relevant Visitor Experience Development Plans.

Please refer to the website for further information and for maps of the eligible geographic areas:

www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way/New-Horizons-Grants-Scheme

Appendix 2

Capital Expenditure

Only eligible capital expenditure elements of projects can be grant-aided under this programme. Eligible costs associated with the development and/or upgrade of the visitor experience at an attraction may include provision of interpretation media (e.g. panels, audio guides, interactive technology, installation and associated building costs). Note that although costs associated with improving visitor facilities/services (e.g. toilets, parking, visitor management improvements etc) are eligible under this Scheme, the emphasis is on world-class interpretation/ storytelling and innovative visitor engagement.

A list of ineligible project types is provided in Section 5.

Eligible / Ineligible Expenditure

Expenditure, to be eligible for grant assistance, must have the following general characteristics:

- It must be relevant and appropriate to the project being grant-aided;
- It must be additional, i.e. it would not have been incurred without the existence of the grant-aided project;
- It must be actually incurred and paid, and be evidenced by invoices, payment records, bank statements and other appropriate documentation.

Ineligible Expenditure

The following expenditure is ineligible in all cases:

- Accommodation facilities
- Depreciation
- Expenditure derived from estimates or valuations and not supported by actual payment documentation
- Expenditure incurred after the completion date as stated in the letter of offer
- Expenditure incurred and / or paid before date of approval by Fáilte Ireland of the project
- Expenditure on food and beverage facilities e.g. cafés/ tearooms
- Financing costs (including bank interest and charges)
- Fines, penalty payments, legal costs, audit fees, insurances
- Loose fittings, furniture, etc
- Marketing, including start-up marketing
- Motorised and non-motorised transport vehicles (including bikes, buses, boats etc.)
- Operational costs
- Purchase of land and buildings
- Recoverable Value Added Tax (VAT)
- Repairs, maintenance and replacement expenses
- Retail facilities
- Salaries & wages, training costs, etc
- Trails costs (maintenance, furniture, etc)
- Unpaid expenditure
- Visitor information provision e.g. leaflet stands, tourism information points, as well as print or distribution of visitor information such as calendars, pocket-guides, leaflets, maps etc
- Websites and Mobile Apps (Exceptions may be made where the digital media in question is part of the overall interpretation scheme. General information apps are ineligible)



Appendix 3

Post Approval Compliance Documents

If your project is approved in principle for funding, you will receive a Letter of Intent. You will then need to submit the following documents within three weeks of receiving approval confirmation before a letter of offer can be issued.

Required:

- Copy of business plan to include:
 - 1 Marketing plan
 - 2 Relevant research undertaken
 - 3 Projected cashflow and profit and loss accounts for the next five years
- Tax Number
- Adequate security to the satisfaction of Fáilte Ireland
- Site location map
- Site layout map
- Confirmation as to whether planning permission and relevant environmental assessments are required or not
- Company Constitution
- Company accounts for the last two years

Once the detailed project plans have been prepared, the following are required to be submitted to Fáilte Ireland:

- Detailed drawings and plans
- Visitor Experience Plan
- Interpretation Plan if applicable
- Evidence that all applicable legislation and any other requirements relevant to the business of the project have been complied with
- Evidence of intention to complete relevant environmental assessment, if applicable
- Any other additional documents that may be requested by Fáilte Ireland

Appendix 4

Terms and Conditions

Terms and Conditions attaching to a Grant Offer

This section outlines the terms and conditions that a successful applicant will have to adhere to. Successful applicants will receive a letter of offer which will form the basis of the contract between Fáilte Ireland and the grantee. The letter of offer will outline the terms and conditions of the grant and will cover various elements including but not limited to the following requirements:

- Budgets
- Commencement of work
- Drawdown of grant
- Freedom of Information
- Marketing
- Monitoring
- Public Procurement
- Publicity
- Purpose
- Repayment / Disposal
- Retention of records
- Security
- Visitor use

If the project is not already measuring visitor numbers, the project must incorporate a new method for recording visitor numbers and include a methodology for recording the country of origin of overseas visitors.

Completion of work

The date by which work must be completed, the particular conditions in relation to industry standards and meeting with statutory and local authority requirements, will be specified in the letter of offer.

Security

For projects in receipt of grant funding of €50,000 and in private ownership the grantee will be required to provide adequate security, to the satisfaction of Fáilte Ireland to secure the grant for the duration of the operative period of the grant being ten years from the final grant payment.

This security will be in the form of a fixed charge over an asset(s) to the value of the grant and the applicant must outline the security they propose to offer. This will be

requested as one of the compliance documents in the application form. In the event that a fixed charge is not adequate security by itself, the grantee must provide additional security in a form satisfactory to Fáilte Ireland.

In the case of trusts or voluntary organisations, Fáilte Ireland may require a deed of covenant to be set up between Fáilte Ireland and the Grantee.

Displacement

The potential impact of the project on existing tourism businesses in the locality will be assessed. Fáilte Ireland reserves the right to exercise its discretion not to award a grant or to withdraw a grant at any stage in the process if, in the opinion of Fáilte Ireland, the project could significantly displace existing tourism businesses or operators.

Operative Period

The Operative Period of the grant-aided Project is defined as operating as a visitor attraction until at least 2030. The Operative Period commences from the date of the last Grant instalment paid by Fáilte Ireland to the grantee.

Monitoring & Updates

The Grantee must provide monthly update reports on the progress of the project during the course of the Construction Period. The grantee must file annual financial statements with Fáilte Ireland and also, if requested, more frequent management accounts, visitor and facility usage details etc. The grantee must also co-operate with monitoring checks and reviews during the Grant Period. The grantee must comply with on-going requirements of Fáilte Ireland during the development of the project and during the Grant Period.

Retention of Records

Grantees must comply with all conditions in relation to the retention of records, which extends also to Contractors and Sub-Contractors engaged in the development. All relevant records must be made available upon request for examination by authorised officials of Fáilte Ireland, the Department of Transport, Tourism And Sport, other relevant Government Departments and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Visitor Use

During the Grant Period, the Project must be open or plan to be open for a minimum of five days per week, including weekends, and for a minimum of three months annually. Fáilte Ireland staff and/or its consultants must have access to the Project at all reasonable times, for the purposes of inspection, during the Grant Period.

Repayment / Disposal

The grant is repayable if the project ceases to be operated as agreed during the Grant Period. Fáilte Ireland will require the immediate repayment of the grant if any of the conditions of the grant offer are not complied with.

Marketing

It is essential that the capital development be supported by marketing activity for the project. The "Wild Atlantic Way" logo, message and branding must be included on all marketing collateral including any promotional media and literature, any websites that the Grantee operates and on any external signage. Brand guidelines will be issued to approved projects prior to completion.

Public Procurement

The Grantee shall comply with EU and National public procurement law and associated procedures, the core principles of which are that procurement policy and practice should be accountable, competitive, fair and transparent, non-discriminatory, provide for equality of treatment and be conducted with probity and integrity. In particular, the Grantee must comply with the "Public Procurement Guidelines - Competitive Process", available at www.etenders.gov.ie and all other applicable regulations, statutory instruments and EU Directives.

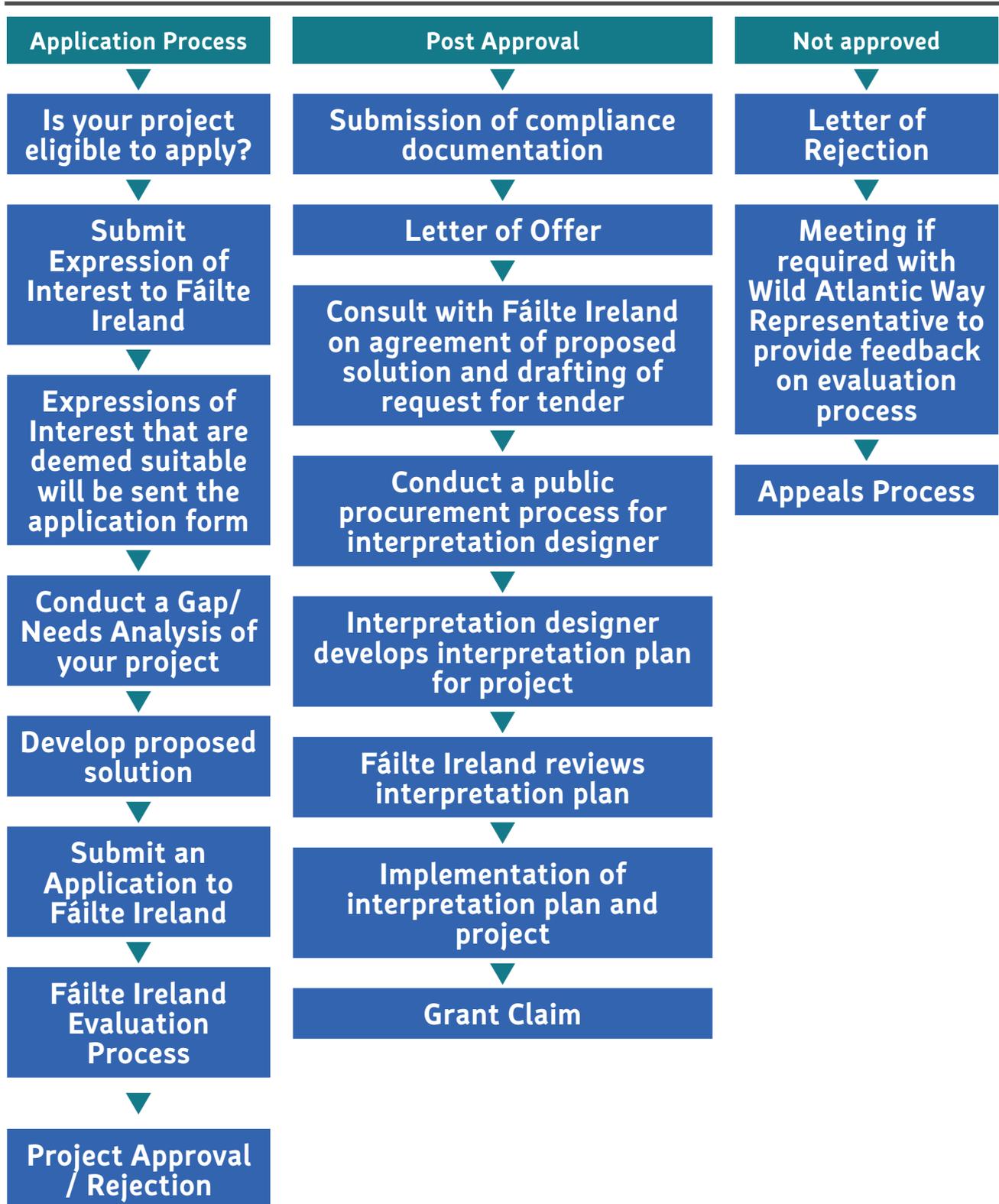
Freedom of Information

Applicants should note that under the Freedom of Information Act, 2014, information provided by them in their application may be liable to be disclosed. Applicants are asked to consider if any of the information supplied by them in their application should not be disclosed because of its confidentiality or commercial sensitivity. If applicants consider that certain information should not be disclosed due to confidentiality or commercial sensitivity, they must clearly identify such information and specify the reasons why it is confidential or commercially sensitive. Any information not identified as confidential or commercially sensitive is liable to be released in response to a Freedom of Information request without further notice to the applicant. Fáilte Ireland will, where possible, consult with applicants about information identified as confidential or commercially sensitive information, before making a decision on a request received under the Freedom of Information Act.

Information provided to Fáilte Ireland will be handled in accordance with Data Protection Legislation. As part of the application process, applicants will be informed of Fáilte Ireland's privacy policy which gives Fáilte Ireland the right to communicate with applicants and retain appropriate data.

Appendix 5

Overview of Grant Process



Contact: new.horizons@failteireland.ie
For further information or visit our website
www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way/New-Horizons-Grants-Scheme

Kerry Cliffs



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority



WILD ATLANTIC WAY
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