

Inishowen Peninsula

Destination Experience
Development Plan
DEDP

Progress Report
May 2024



WHERE IT BEGAN

The Inishowen Peninsula DEDP Implementation Team was established in 2022 following a recommendation in the Fáilte Ireland Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) for the Inishowen Peninsula. Fáilte Ireland facilitated the formation of an Implementation Group with representatives from key agencies and tourism groups with a direct role in the implementation of the action highlighted in the Inishowen Peninsula DEDP. The Implementation Group of 19 stakeholders meet on a quarterly basis to oversee the delivery of sustainable tourism projects, everything from marketing to product development.

HIGHLIGHTS TO DATE

We are now one year through the five-year plan. For us, the Co-Chairs of the Inishowen Peninsula DEDP Implementation Team, there have been three major highlights to date. Firstly, the value of cooperation and collaboration has been significant and cannot be underestimated. Having key stakeholders from state agencies to local groups and industry (activity providers, attractions, and accommodation providers) around the table, has enabled coordinated progress on the plan, in particular product development and marketing. Secondly, before COVID-19 it was very encouraging to see that the tourist season was extending on both sides with businesses staying open longer – we look forward to the return of this along our beautiful stretch of the Wild Atlantic Way. Thirdly, the substantial progress on Fort Dunree is already a success. It is hugely encouraging for all involved in tourism to see the on-going rollout of this major asset – for the benefit of visitors and communities alike.

The development of the Fort Dunree Visitor Experience was allocated €9.3million by Fáilte Ireland under the 2021 Platforms for Growth 1 – Heritage and Cultural Attractions capital investment scheme, with an additional €3.2million in match funding committed by Donegal County Council, providing a total project investment of €12.5 million.

WHERE TO NOW

Tourism is the lifeblood of so many communities in Ireland. When COVID-19 closed down tourism for the entire region and country, it demonstrated how valuable the sector is to our regional economy and that it cannot be taken for granted. At this, the second year of the Inishowen DEDP strategy, we hope all stakeholders will now put their collective shoulders to the wheel to bring the rest of this plan over the line. It's time for a reboot and this significant milestone allows us to reassess where we're at, what's left to complete, and plan how we will get there. There has been great energy shown by the Implementation Group in championing particular actions from the DEDP and we welcome more champions for more actions.

THANKS TO

Without mentioning specific people, businesses, or organisations we would like to offer a Míle Buíochas to all for the incredible meitheal that has gotten us to this point.

Le meas,

John Mc Carter & Hugh Farren

*John Hugh Farren
McCarter*

Inishowen Peninsula DEDP
Implementation Team Co-Chairs

INISHOWEN PENINSULA DEDP

The Inishowen Peninsula in Co. Donegal, Ireland's most northerly point, provides both a dramatic ending and an awe-inspiring beginning to the Wild Atlantic Way. Launched by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Charlie McConalogue in Fort Dunree on the 9th December 2022, the DEDP aims to increase visits, dwell-time, and spend on the Peninsula in a sustainable manner. The key objectives and aspirations of this DEDP is creating, maintaining, and enhancing sustainable tourism for the region and focuses on identifying strategic directions for the Inishowen Peninsula that will strengthen the visitor experience and elevate its story.

THE VISION

The Plan was designed to encourage all operators and organisations involved in delivering a tourism product to reinforce and add value to the experience through aligning with the stories and themes identified therein and target the Culturally Curious, Great Escapers, Social Energisers (secondary) and Educational and scientific market segments. The vision was to extend the season and attract visitors to engage with the true essence and story of the Inishowen Peninsula without compromising the environment or culture of the region. Visitation to the Inishowen Peninsula is growing, with pressure being felt strongly in some areas while other areas perceive themselves as being left behind. Although quantitative data for the destination is difficult to access, feedback from businesses suggest an overall growth in visitor numbers to Ireland and County Donegal. The way forward for the Inishowen Peninsula is through strong partnerships, the delivery of compelling experiences, and a focus on getting the story to the visitor – inspiring them to travel off-season, stay longer and enjoy the essence of this stretch of coastline.

GEOGRAPHY

Named the fourth-best region in the world to visit in 2024 by Lonely Planet, County Donegal, located in the North West coast of Ireland boasts Malin Head, Ireland's most northerly point on the Inishowen Peninsula which is surrounded by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean to the north, Lough Foyle to the east, and Lough Swilly to the west, and with its geological and cultural story shaped by the endless tides of time. The oldest rocks in Ireland lie to the north-east of Malin Head on Inishtrahull. The striking and windswept landscapes are dominated by the solitary loveliness and bewitching grandeur of Malin Head with its spectacular natural features and deep chasms, and by the fortified coastal promontories that capture stories of defence down through the centuries. The estuarine waterways, tidal islands and sandy bays, the gentle lowlands and the raised beaches that mark progressive changes in sea level as glaciers retreated add to the contrast of the rocky headlands and the mountainous interior. The stories of past eras have left their mark across the intricate landscape. Defensive fortifications that date from prehistoric times through to the World Wars of last century offer a captivating experience for today's visitor. The interplay of the maritime and military themes comes to life at Fort Dunree, a site now undergoing a multi-million euro transformation to create a world-class visitor attraction. The stories unfold elsewhere with Grianán of Aileach and Malin Head offering compelling experiences in spectacular settings of ancient and modern defence systems,

DESTINATION PROMISE

Where ripple marks from tides of time tell our stories of land and sea... where the call of the wild unleashes our energy, stirs our passion and calms our soul... where the giants of the deep leave us mesmerised and reconnected with life around us.

A message from Fáilte Ireland,

The Inishowen Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) was launched on December 9th, 2022. It was a success right from its launch, as it brought together the public and private sector in a collaborative and progressive framework, with the aim of spreading visitors right across all parts of the region, encouraging visitation in the off peak, and increasing dwell time and revenue.

Incredible work has been delivered to date as part of the DEDP Implementation Team, under the leadership of John McCarter and Hugh Farren. The focus of the plan is built on a number of destination development projects that will bring local experiences to life, including Fort Dunree, Malin Head, along with cycling trails along the Northwest Greenway, which will encourage visitors to discover the Inishowen Peninsula.

As we use this moment here to take stock of all the fantastic work that has been delivered on the Inishowen Peninsula throughout 2023, and on all we have achieved together as a tourism destination in the five months of 2024, I welcome the opportunity to refocus our efforts on our future priorities as we move into summer 2024 and beyond. I would like to commend the membership of Inishowen DEDP Implementation Team for the way in which they captured the essence of the DEDP strategy and its shared objectives, and for driving forward its actions on behalf of their individual sectors and local areas. We are very proud of the strong partnership that has emerged in recent years with the Implementation Team members, our industry partners, and the Wild Atlantic Way team in Fáilte Ireland.

We will continue to work closely with you over the term of this plan as we strive to achieve sustainable growth in the years ahead which will positively impact the industry here. I look forward to continuing our shared journey in developing the Inishowen Peninsula as a world class holiday destination.



Miriam Kennedy
Head of Wild Atlantic Way
Fáilte Ireland

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Recognising that Experience Development is the art and science of delivering a consistent message that inspires consumers throughout their travel experience, Fáilte Ireland has provided significant funding to develop the tourism product on the Inishowen Peninsula since the publication of the DEDP, including the below catalyst projects:

Large Capital Grants & Strategic Partnership Grant Schemes

1. The development of the Fort Dunree Visitor Experience was allocated €9.3million by Fáilte Ireland under the 2021 Platforms for Growth 1 – Heritage and Cultural Attractions Capital Investment scheme, with an additional €3.2million in match funding committed by Donegal County Council, providing a total project investment of €12.5 million. The new transformation project aims to make Fort Dunree Military Museum a must-see location for visitors to Donegal and the Inishowen Peninsula.

2. Shared Island (2023-2025) - Cross Border Collaboration (Partners Tourism Northern Ireland, Fáilte Ireland & Tourism Ireland) - €7.6m - The Vision is to connect the Causeway Coast & Wild Atlantic Way so the visitor is motivated to stay longer and spend more bringing greater economic benefit to the region.

3. Malin Head Visitor Facilities - €396,600

4. Malin Head Signature Discovery Point Masterplan - €185,000

Regional Festivals & Events Funding

From 2019 to 2023 Fáilte Ireland allocated funding of €219,105 to festivals in Donegal through the Regional Festivals & Events programme administered by the local authority.

The Buncrana Music Festival, A Taste of Inishowen Food Festival, Ballyliffin International Coastal Challenge, The Inishowen International Folk Song & Ballad Seminar, The Clonmany Show, and the Inishowen Walking Festival benefited from this funding.

Networking Event:

The Inishowen Peninsula Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) recognised the need for enhanced collaboration and cross-promotion among industry partners to boost the local tourism sector.

In response to this call, Fáilte Ireland, in collaboration with the DEDP Implementation Team, organised a highly successful networking event on Wednesday, May 10th, 2023, at the Inishowen Gateway Hotel in Buncrana. This event aimed to provide a platform for the Implementation Team and DEDP lead partners to showcase their progress and future plans to stakeholders while fostering networking opportunities within the local tourism community.

The event garnered overwhelming positive feedback from participants. A post-event survey revealed that 95% of respondents found the event to be extremely good. Additionally, 35% of participants reported making more than 10 valuable business connections on the day, illustrating the effectiveness of the networking opportunities provided.

An encouraging 100% of respondents expressed a strong willingness to attend similar networking events in the future.

Messages of gratitude were directed towards the organising agencies for facilitating such a valuable platform.

The survey results demonstrated that 94% of participants expressed their intention to cross-sell or promote more experiences as a direct result of attending the event. This commitment was immediately visible, with businesses cross-promoting one another across various social media platforms in the aftermath of the networking event.

The success of the May 2023 networking event has paved the way for future endeavours. The next networking event is scheduled for April 2024, promising another opportunity for local businesses to collaborate, share experiences, and contribute to the growth of the Inishowen Peninsula's tourism industry.

The collaboration between the DEDP Implementation Team and Fáilte Ireland has proven to be instrumental in fostering unity and cooperation within the Inishowen Peninsula's tourism sector. By providing a platform for networking and collaboration, this initiative has not only strengthened existing partnerships but has also laid the foundation for sustained growth and success in the region's tourism industry.

Over a hundred Donegal tourism businesses attended the Fáilte Ireland networking event in Harvey's Point Hotel, Co. Donegal in April 2024.

Face-to-face networking sessions with 420 appointments were facilitated among accommodation providers, visitor attractions, visitor activities and golf providers to provide them with the opportunity to forge new connections and renew old ones. Fáilte Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way team provided the attendees with an update on future initiatives while Nicholas Hall, Tourism Digital Think Tank was the guest speaker and outlined the key digital tourism trends for 2024.





Local Experts Programme is a free, open invitation to local experts to share their knowledge and expertise with visitors to Ireland. The programme is a key part of Fáilte Ireland's commitment to providing a world-class visitor experience. For more information, visit www.fair.ie. Fáilte Ireland, the official visitor attraction, is not responsible for any loss or damage to property or personal belongings. The programme is subject to availability and is not available in certain areas. The programme is subject to change without notice. The programme is subject to the terms and conditions of the programme. The programme is subject to the terms and conditions of the programme. The programme is subject to the terms and conditions of the programme.



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LOCAL EXPERTS PROGRAMME



Local Experts Programme 2023

Fáilte Ireland's Local Experts Programme is a training initiative aimed at providing individuals with in-depth knowledge about specific local areas and attractions. Workshops were delivered to front line staff in the Inishowen Gateway Hotel on Tuesday, March 28th. The workshops were fun, free, informative and an ideal opportunity to network with others across the region sharing stories and knowledge of hidden gems that in turn could be shared with visitors took place in the Inishowen Gateway Hotel on Tuesday, March 28th. Workshops involved training individuals, such as tourism providers, volunteers, and locals interested in promoting tourism in their area, to become knowledgeable ambassadors for their region. Participants in the program learned about the local history, culture, attractions, and amenities, enabling them to provide accurate and engaging information to visitors and encouraged cross-selling across the county.

Trail Development

As part of the Inishowen Destination Experience Development Plan, a crucial action focused on the audit of all trails and walking sites which has been successfully executed. The initiative kicked off with an inaugural meeting at the Letterkenny Tourist Office on July 26th, bringing together key stakeholders, Inga Bock and Darrly Connor.

The primary objective of this meeting was to gain insights into the broader panorama of walks and trails within the county that were not yet registered with Sport Ireland. This undertaking aimed to elevate the tourism experience by ensuring the inclusion of these trails in the official registry, thus enhancing their visibility and accessibility.

Having accomplished the initial aim of understanding the current status of unregistered trails, the subsequent steps

involved crafting a clear roadmap. This roadmap is designed to guide the prioritisation of walks and trails. The plan is to collaborate with community, voluntary, or public organizations, encouraging them to notify Sport Ireland Outdoors of trail developments for inclusion on the official register.

A crucial requirement at this stage is the establishment of Project Screening Criteria. These criteria will play a pivotal role in determining and prioritising a 90-day roadmap for the systematic registration of walks and trails with Sport Ireland. The goal is to achieve quick wins through collaborative efforts and by establishing a shared work structure. This approach not only aims to increase the number of registered trails but also to institute a clear, unified process to achieve this objective.

A subsequent meeting was convened at the Inishowen Innovation Hub in Buncrana on September 28th, 2023, involving key stakeholders from the North West Community Development, namely Catherine McLaughlin and Kevin Doherty, along with Inga Bock and Darrly Connor. The meeting successfully aimed to progress with the development of the trail network in Inishowen, aligning with Action 18 outlined in the Inishowen Peninsula Destination Experience Development Plan (DEDP) on Page 40.

Moving forward, the meeting attendees unanimously identified Lenan and Butler's Glen Loop as priority walks/trails for development and inclusion on Sport Ireland. It was agreed that additional waymarking and boards were essential for both beach carparks before any inspection is conducted, emphasising the commitment to creating an enriched and organised trail network for the Inishowen Peninsula.



Grianán of Aileach

From a tourism standpoint, an action called out in the Inishowen Destination Experience Development Plan involves the Grianán of Aileach.

The primary objective was to foster collaboration and establish a sustainable management and visitor experience stakeholder group. The focus encompasses a comprehensive review of various aspects of the visitor experience, such as signage and interpretative needs.

The successful outcome was the preparation and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) involving Fáilte Ireland, Donegal County Council, and the Office of Public Works (OPW). With the stakeholder group's composition finalised, an inaugural meeting took place in April.

The primary agenda for this gathering was to scrutinise the objectives of the stakeholder group and assess the projects earmarked for implementation in 2024.

Post the inception meeting, a project plan is in the pipeline. This plan will intricately outline defined milestones, meeting dates, and expected deliverables. The collective efforts aim to enhance the overall visitor experience at the Grianán of Aileach and contribute to the sustainable development of the tourism destination.

Capitalising on Cruise Business in Inishowen

Foyle Port, Fáilte Ireland and Explore Inishowen CLG has embarked on a strategic initiative to leverage its growing cruise business, with Louise Denver at the helm as the newly appointed Cruise Marketing Executive with Foyle Port.

The Inishowen Destination Experience Development Plan underscores the necessity for a cohesive marketing strategy to enhance the experience for departing cruise passengers, aligning the goals of local businesses and tourism authorities. With that in mind, a pivotal meeting took place on the 22nd November 2023 with Excursion Ireland, a significant player in cruise itinerary planning. This meeting explored opportunities for collaboration, leading to a consideration of local businesses that successfully completed the Business-to-Business (B2B) Saleable Experience Programme for future itineraries.

Businesses that completed the B2B Saleable Experience Programme are now in the spotlight, offering unique and attractive experiences to be featured in upcoming cruise itineraries. This initiative not only enriches the cruise passengers experience but also aligns with our regional tourism aspirations to spread visitors move evenly around the region and benefit from increased dwell time and spend. Acknowledging the importance of an organised approach, a dedicated marketing toolkit is currently under development. This toolkit aims to empower businesses keen on capitalising on the cruise business in Inishowen. Its expected to launch in the coming months for the 2025 season and it will equip local businesses with the tools and resources necessary for effective promotion.

The proactive measures taken, in collaboration with key stakeholders, illustrate a commitment to transforming the cruise business into a catalyst for local economic growth and an enriched tourism experience. The upcoming launch of the marketing toolkit is anticipated to be a milestone in achieving these objectives.

Enterprise Supports, Mentoring and Training:

Fáilte Ireland's goal is that all visitors experience the world-class service our industry here in Ireland is famous for. To this end, on the Inishowen Peninsula, we have provided training to front-line staff in tourism businesses. 138 live training events, mentoring and courses were delivered to trade throughout 2023 to guide industry through operating their businesses. These have been developed in consultation with industry experts to meet industry needs. Programmes included 'Building Your Business Marketing Plan', 'Developing your Digital Marketing Plan for optimal Return on Investment (ROI)', 'Smart Operations for Activity Providers', and 'Tactical Marketing Actions to Drive Shoulder Season Sales for Tourism SMEs' to name but a few.

Business Advice Clinics

From a tourism perspective, we are thrilled to share the highlights of the impactful initiatives that unfolded in 2023, specifically tailored for the enrichment of tourism stakeholders in Co. Donegal. In an endeavour to foster the growth and diversification of tourism businesses, Fáilte Ireland orchestrated Business Clinics, a dynamic avenue for key tourism enterprises to chart their optimal course forward.

These clinics, held on Tuesday, 7th March 2023, at the scenic Redcastle Oceanfront, Golf & Spa Hotel, were more than mere information sessions. The Advice Clinic, a complimentary, one-to-one, 30-minute engagement with Fáilte Ireland advisers, offered a unique platform for existing and potential tourism businesses to share their ideas and receive tailored guidance. This resulted in a significant impact, with 15 Inishowen businesses enrolling in the New to Tourism and Saleable Experience Programmes as a direct outcome of these sessions.

As a testament to the success of these clinics, throughout 2023, the Inishowen Peninsula witnessed the emergence of 12 new businesses, each contributing to the vibrancy and diversity of the local tourism scene, 8 of which are in the Accommodation space which is much needed.

A Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) **Saleable Experience Programme** was delivered to assist targeted businesses to sell their experience to the domestic and international marketplace. Throughout the fully funded programmes, participants learned the skills to create a written pitch for buyers and a B2B fact sheet, the contents of which are used in Fáilte Ireland buyer guides. 22 businesses have completed the B2B Saleable Experience Programme throughout 2023 while a further 13 businesses have successfully completed the B2C Saleable Experience Programme.

Digital that Delivers

A lasting global impact of Covid is the acceleration in the widespread adoption of digital technology, and to stay competitive, Irish tourism businesses need to make sure that we are at the forefront of this digital transformation.

Fáilte Ireland's Digital that Delivers program is a ground-breaking initiative, designed to power digital transformation for visitor attractions, activity providers and day tours over a two-year programme. This program supports businesses to showcase their product in front of more domestic and international customers, grow online sales, and develop digital skills. Businesses on this programme will become more promotable, searchable, and ultimately bookable online. We are delivering this programme in partnership with leading digital experts to provide training, mentoring and financial supports.

11 businesses from Donegal graduated from the programme in 2023 while a further 22 were recruited in the same year to start a 2-year digital transformation programme, 6 of which are based on the Inishowen Peninsula.

Over €652,000 has been allocated to Donegal businesses and 17 further businesses have successfully registered for the next intake of the programme.

Case Study: Digital Transformation for Inishowen Maritime Museum & Planetarium

Background: The Inishowen Maritime Museum & Planetarium (IMMP) is a cultural gem situated in the scenic region of Inishowen. The museum showcases the rich maritime history of the area, offering visitors a unique and immersive experience. Despite its historical significance, the museum faced challenges in attracting visitors, and its online presence needed a digital overhaul.

Objective: The primary goal of the Digital that Delivers Programme was to enhance the digital maturity of the Inishowen Maritime Museum & Planetarium. This initiative aimed to elevate the museum's online presence, making it more appealing to potential visitors and improving its capacity to drive visitation.

Digital Maturity Assessment: The project began with a comprehensive digital maturity assessment conducted by a team of experts. This assessment involved a manual review of the museum's website and an online survey completed by the IMMP team. Digital maturity, in this context, referred to the readiness and effectiveness of the museum in leveraging digital technologies to achieve its goals and remain competitive in the tourism sector.

Achievements: The Digital that Delivers Programme proved to be a significant success, resulting in several key achievements:

Funding Secured: The programme successfully secured €20,000 in funding for IMMP, providing crucial financial support for the digital transformation efforts.

Website Overhaul: The museum's website underwent a thorough review and refresh. The goal was to create a visually appealing, user-friendly, and informative online platform that would serve as a virtual gateway to the rich maritime history offered by IMMP.

Booking Systems and Distribution: The project addressed and optimised the booking systems, ensuring a seamless experience for visitors who wished to plan their trips in advance. The distribution channels were also reviewed to maximise the museum's reach and accessibility.

Content Enhancement: The content on the website was enriched to provide a more engaging and educational experience for visitors. This includes multimedia elements, interactive features, and detailed information about the museum's exhibits and history.

Conclusion: The Inishowen Maritime Museum & Planetarium has embraced digital transformation through the Digital that Delivers Programme, positioning itself as a modern and attractive destination for visitors. The funding secured and the recommended enhancements to the website, booking systems, and content are expected to drive increased visitation, contributing to the museum's long-term success in preserving and sharing the maritime history of Inishowen.

Sales, Media and Publicity:

Fáilte Ireland regularly brings both domestic and overseas journalists to Donegal to showcase the best the region has to offer. We also promote the region to tour operators on familiarisation trips to the peninsula and the county.

In 2022 and 2023, Representatives from Tourism Ireland's offices in Germany, Spain, Nordics, USA, Italy, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom embarked on a captivating journey through Donegal - hosted by Fáilte Ireland. The purpose of this visit was to immerse the team in the unique and enchanting offerings of Donegal, reinforcing their appreciation for the destination and enhancing their ability to showcase it on the international stage. The exhilarating itineraries were truly remarkable, showcasing visits to renowned landmarks and cultural treasures. Our delegation explored the Inishowen Peninsula, traversed the captivating Wild Alpaca Way, immersed themselves in the history of Doagh Famine Village, discovered the wonders of Wild Ireland, sailed with elegance on the Amazing Grace Yacht Charter, explored the historic Fort Dunree, marvelled at the grandeur of Donegal Castle, witnessed masterful craftsmanship at Hanna Hats and Triona Design, relished in the opulent hospitality of Harvey's Point Hotel, Arnold's Hotel Dunfanaghy, The Redcastle Oceanfront Golf & Spa Hotel, The Waterfront Dungloe, and experienced the enchantment of the 5-star Lough Eske Castle. The breathtaking scenery at Malin Head & Sliabh Liag was a highlight, making the entire journey a truly unforgettable experience. The group also delved into the natural wonders of Glenveagh National Park, indulged in relaxation at The Shandon Hotel and Spa, and discovered the charm of Rockhill House Letterkenny.

As a testament to Donegal's allure, Lonely Planet recently named it the fourth-best region in the world to visit in 2024, surpassing destinations like Southern Thailand, the Swahili Coast in Tanzania, and Montana in the United States.

Described as having the highest sea cliffs in Europe at Sliabh Liag, at 601m (1972ft), and miles of unspoilt coastal hiking trails along the Wild Atlantic Way, Donegal offers an immersive experience with its ancient forts, musical traditions, and rich Irish heritage.

The goal of this visit was to re-familiarise the Tourism Ireland team with Donegal's exceptional tourism offerings, ensuring that they return home armed with a deep understanding and renewed enthusiasm to promote Donegal worldwide. This initiative aligns with Tourism Ireland's integrated communications brief, which shapes their advertising, PR, e-marketing, and direct marketing strategies.

The team at Tourism Ireland, with a global reach encompassing over 22,000 media outlets monthly, plays a crucial role in generating exposure. In 2019 alone, they achieved an equivalent advertising value (EAV) of €414+ million.



Wild Alpaca Wag, Inishowen



Marketing Campaigns:

Collaborative Triumph: *Marketing Campaign for Donegal and Derry*

In 2022, Tourism Ireland, in a groundbreaking collaboration with Fáilte Ireland and Donegal County Council, embarked on a €580,000 marketing campaign aimed at promoting the scenic wonders of Donegal, in particular the Inishowen Peninsula and Derry in the highly competitive Great Britain market.

Campaign Objectives:

The primary goal of the nine-week marketing campaign was to increase awareness and attract more visitors from Great Britain to Donegal and Derry. The campaign sought to showcase the unique attractions and experiences offered by these two destinations while fostering a sense of unity under the slogan, "Two Unique Places, One Amazing Holiday."

Key Initiatives:

The campaign featured a multi-faceted approach to reach a wide audience in the Great Britain market. Noteworthy initiatives included: Digital Ads in Prime Locations: Engaging digital ads were strategically placed in London's Waterloo station, capturing the attention of a diverse and extensive audience. Additionally, roadside locations in prominent cities such as London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, and Edinburgh were adorned with eye-catching visuals.

Collaborative Effort:

The success of the campaign was attributed to the unprecedented collaboration between Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland, Donegal Tourism, and Derry and Strabane District Council. This collaboration allowed for a synergistic pooling of resources, expertise, and regional insights.

Influencer Familiarisation Trip:

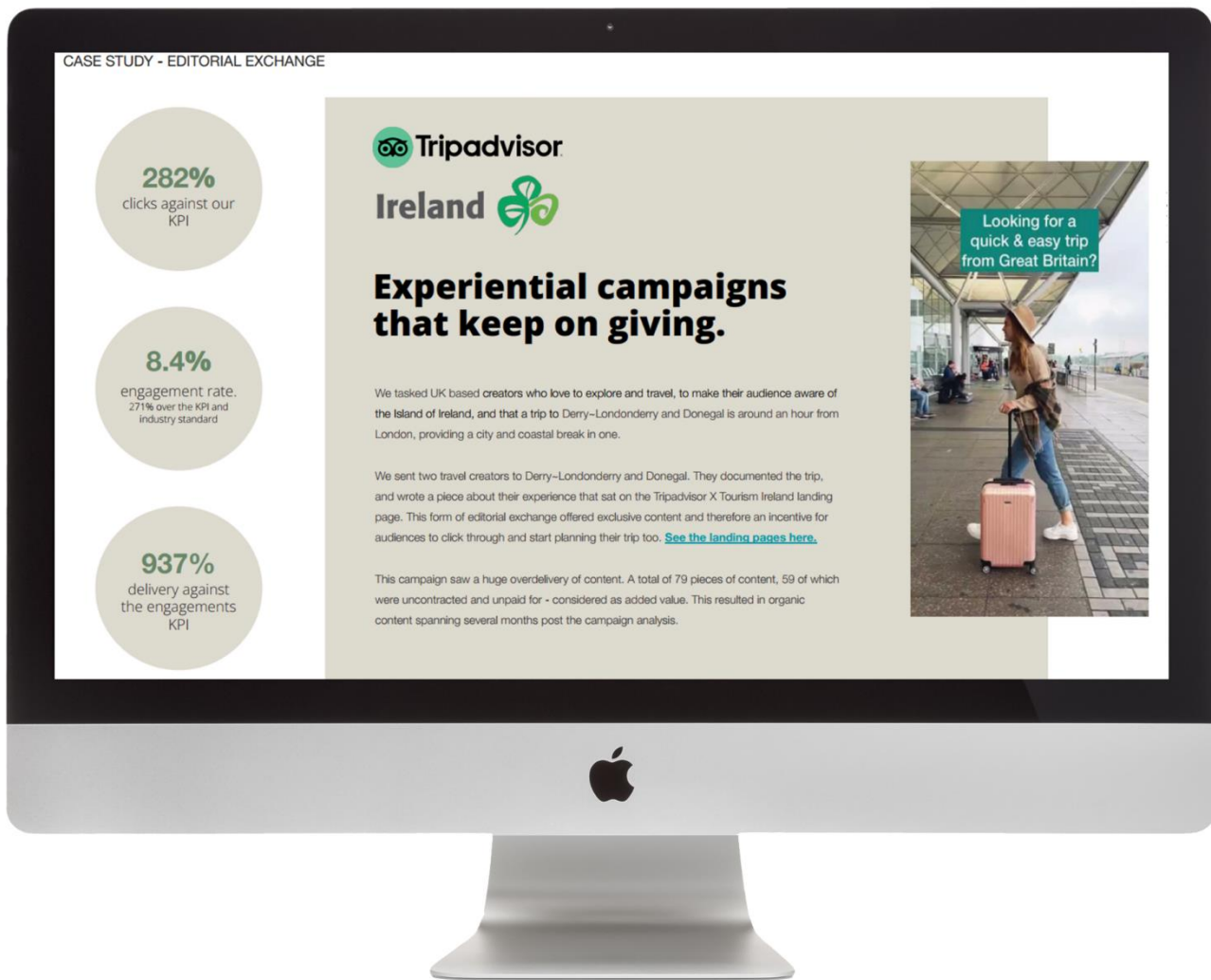
A pivotal component of the campaign's success was a familiarisation trip hosted by Fáilte Ireland for the Tourism Ireland GB team. This trip provided firsthand experiences and content that proved instrumental in crafting a targeted approach towards influential figures.

Results and Impact:

The campaign surpassed expectations, reaching a staggering 6.8 million people within the Great Britain market. The unique collaboration and strategic placement of digital ads contributed to increased visibility and interest in Donegal and Derry as tourist destinations. The culmination of efforts led to the campaign winning the prestigious Best Travel and Lifestyle Award at the Influencer Marketing Awards in the summer of 2023.

Influencer Marketing Success:

The Tourism Ireland GB team emphasised the pivotal role played by the Fáilte Ireland hosted familiarisation trip in tailoring the campaign for maximum impact. The trip allowed the team to curate experiences and content that resonated with influencers, making the campaign not only visually appealing but also authentic and relatable. The acknowledgment at the Influencer Marketing Awards underscored the effectiveness of this approach. This collaborative marketing campaign for Donegal and Derry stands as a testament to the power of strategic alliances, targeted initiatives, and innovative approaches in the tourism industry. The success of this campaign not only boosted tourism in the featured destinations but also established a blueprint for future collaborative efforts in promoting regional tourism on an international scale.



Inishowen wows British travel journalists

The journalists' action-packed programme included Grianán of Aileach, a guided tour of Wild Ireland in Burnfoot, Fort Dunree and the Wild Alpaca Way

In October 2023, a group of influential British travel journalists embarked on a journey to explore the wonders of Inishowen as guests of Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland. The primary goal was to allow the journalists to experience the region's tourism offerings first hand and subsequently showcase these experiences to their British readers, encouraging them to visit Donegal.

The journalists' itinerary was carefully curated to provide them with a diverse and immersive experience of Inishowen. Key highlights of their action-packed program included: **Grianán of Aileach**: The historic Grianán of Aileach, offering panoramic views and a rich cultural experience. **Wild Ireland in Burnfoot**: A guided tour through the enchanting Wild Ireland in Burnfoot, showcasing the region's natural beauty

and wildlife. **Fort Dunree**: An exploration of Fort Dunree, combining history and breathtaking coastal scenery. **Wild Alpaca Way**: A unique experience along the Wild Alpaca Way, highlighting the region's distinctiveness and appeal.

To complement the exploration, the journalists indulged in the local culinary scene, having lunch at **The Red Door Country House** in Fahan and dinner at **McCrary's in Culdaff**. This allowed them to not only savour the local flavours but also showcase the gastronomic delights of the region.

Fáilte Ireland along with Tourism Ireland strategically organised this familiarisation trip to leverage the influence of the participating journalists.



The visit aligned with Tourism Ireland's 'twinning' initiative, wherein each overseas market is paired with a specific region on the island of Ireland. Britain, in this case, is twinned with Donegal and Derry, emphasising the North-West region in its promotional efforts for the year.

By hosting this group of British travel journalists, Fáilte Ireland along Tourism Ireland successfully gained exposure for Donegal and the Wild Atlantic Way in the British media. The firsthand experiences and positive coverage generated by the journalists are expected to inspire British travellers to explore the unique offerings of Donegal, contributing to the region's tourism growth.

Familiarisation trips, such as the one undertaken by the British travel journalists in Donegal, prove to be effective tools in promoting tourism destinations. The case highlights the importance of collaboration between tourism boards and the media in creating a positive narrative that encourages international travellers to explore new and exciting destinations.



British travel journalists and Grace Armitage, Tourism Ireland (second right), at Fort Dunree. Photo: Tourism Ireland

Boosting Tourism in Donegal through Strategic Partnerships and Media Collaboration - Travel expert Simon Calder encourages British holidaymakers to explore Donegal

Tourism Ireland, in collaboration with travel expert Simon Calder and The Independent, embarked on a comprehensive promotional campaign to encourage British holidaymakers to explore the beauty of Donegal, particularly the Inishowen Peninsula.

The initiative aimed to leverage Simon Calder's influence and The Independent's reach to showcase the attractions of Donegal, ultimately boosting tourism in the region. Tourism Ireland forged a strategic partnership with The Independent and Simon Calder, a renowned travel journalist following the Fáilte Ireland hosted familiarisation trip earlier in the year.

The resulting content included five articles, five videos, and an interactive map on The Independent's website, creating a dedicated Wild Atlantic Way hub in the travel section. Simon Calder and his crew visited key attractions in Donegal, such as Glenevin Waterfall, Nancy's Barn, Malin Head, Buncrana, Glencolmcille Folk Village, and Glenveagh National Park. The team also captured engaging content at Fort Dunree, Grianán of Aileach, Tory Island, The Crolly Distillery, Harvey's Point, Hanna Hats of Donegal, and McCafferty's Bar in Donegal town. The articles and videos featured interviews with locals, breathtaking footage, and insights into why the North-West coast of Ireland has been a source of inspiration for artists and filmmakers.

The collaboration extended to The Independent's online platforms, including ads on Independent.co.uk, posts on social

channels, and sponsorship of one of Simon Calder's weekly emails. The partnership aimed to generate around 1.4 million impressions or opportunities to see, enticing potential British holidaymakers to visit the dedicated Ireland hub on The Independent's website.

Tourism Ireland's 'twinning' initiative involved pairing Great Britain with Donegal in 2023. This strategic focus on the North-West aimed to highlight the region's unique offerings, emphasising its distinct appeal to potential British visitors. The partnership with The Independent and Simon Calder provided a powerful platform to showcase Donegal to a large British audience. The immersive content, interactive map, and strategic promotion on various platforms contributed to increased visibility and interest in the region. As the campaign continues, Tourism Ireland anticipates a positive impact on tourism, with British holidaymakers inspired to explore the wonders of Donegal along the Wild Atlantic Way. The collaboration not only boosts immediate tourism but also establishes a foundation for future partnerships and promotional activities..

Discovering Inishowen: The Jewel of the Wild Atlantic Way

On June 17th, 2023, The Irish Independent featured an enticing article titled "The Great Western Adventure," shedding light on Inishowen.

Inishowen emerges as a must-visit destination, enticing travellers with its blend of natural beauty, historical landmarks, and thrilling water activities.

The Irish Independent's article acts as a gateway to the wonders of Inishowen, inviting readers to embark on "The Great Western Adventure" and discover the charm of the largest peninsula in Ireland which it says proves to be a hidden gem with its exceptional accommodations, stunning beaches, and an array of activities and attractions that beckon tourists to explore its natural beauty.



Above: The Irish Independent, 17th June 2023 "The Great Western Adventure".

Below: Simon Calder visiting Wild Alpaca Way on the Inishowen Peninsula.



What's next for the Inishowen Peninsula

At the time of the bulletin, a review of the progress of the Inishowen Peninsula is well underway, led by the Co-Chairs, with the lead agencies Fáilte Ireland, Donegal County Council, OPW, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Local Enterprise Office, Inishowen Development Partnership and the Loughs Agency. As the 2023 season came to an end the partners came together to take stock of all the fantastic work that has been delivered since the plan was launched in December 2022 and refocus the efforts of the Inishowen Peninsula Destination Development Implementation Team into 2024.

There are 97 actions outlined in the plan which revolve around five Catalyst Projects and ten supporting hero experiences which are key for the implementation of the plan to be a success over the next five years. These projects link directly back to why the plan was needed in the first place. This review is showing that 25% of the DEDP actions to date are complete, or in progress. But there is still a lot to do. The following key themes are emerging as priorities to focus on as we enter the summer season of the second year of the life of the DEDP in Inishowen:

Catalyst Projects – Continued development of Fort Dunree and the North West Greenway Network.

Supporting Hero Experiences - Cohesion on Trails Development for Coastal and Inland Looped Walking Trails, and Grianán of Aileach, Inishowen Maritime Museum & Planetarium, Inch Wildfowl Reserve, Inishtrahull Island, Adventure Activities, Marine Ecotourism and Inishowen's Culinary Experience.

Online Digital Presence – A focus on transforming the digital presence of the destination, increasing revenue generated through online channels, through Fáilte Ireland's Digital That Delivers initiative.

Visitor Management and Congestion solutions.

Sustainability, Eco Tourism and Dark Skies opportunities.

All this activity will continue to be led and coordinated through the members of the Inishowen Peninsula Destination Development Implementation Team.

Stakeholder engagement is at the core of strategic destination development and sustainable long term tourism growth which is why we have developed a comprehensive communication plan to keep interested parties updated on the completion of the Inishowen DEDP as it progresses, and we welcome your feedback.

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