

Developing Arts Tourism in Ireland

National Policy Context

Introduction and Welcomes

Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism

- The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism was established in its present form in June 2002. It brought together for the first time the tourism, arts, culture and film, and sport portfolios. It was variously described as the Department of Fun, the Department of Ligs and Gigs or, in Irish an Roinn Craic! But more seriously it opened up the possibility of developing synergy and interaction between these three sectors - which, of course, is related to the subject of today's seminar.
- We're working on a new Statement of Strategy for the Department at present and we're

redefining our mission - but we believe it can be expressed very simply. It is to enrich Irish Society by supporting a sustainable tourism industry and increasing access to, and participation in sport, the arts and culture. Our new Strategy will pick up on work we have been doing since 2002 in developing synergies between our sectoral areas. And we have a particular emphasis on developing cultural, arts and heritage tourism.

- We're a small policy-oriented Department of 130 in total. Our operational functions are carried out mainly through 20 or so State Bodies or Institutions that are under our wing. These include the eight National Cultural Institutions, the Arts Council, the Irish Film Board, Culture Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Regional Tourism Bodies, including Dublin Tourism, as well as a number of sport bodies. The Department sets the overall policy and legislative base for our sectors. We

allocate the budget and determine the institutional arrangements for the implementation of policy.

- More importantly, the fact that all of these bodies are under the aegis of one Government Department gives us exciting possibilities and opportunities to identify and push out a development agenda.

The Financial Framework

- Being one of the smaller Departments, there are constant pressures in securing an adequate level of Exchequer resources for our activities. Advocacy at central Government level for our three sectors is one of our main roles and preoccupations and there are multiple demands on our funding.
- Around this time of year we are being constantly barraged by our client base with

multiple requests for additional funding. This is where we all must work together to provide the hard facts and rationale for Government investment in the arts and tourism. We passionately believe in the value of that investment in terms of its economic return, its contribution to enhancing our overall quality of life and its central role in defining who we are in the world.

- Our financial track record since establishment has been impressive. In 2003 the Arts, Culture and Film core Departmental budget was €93 million and this has increased to €222 million this year. In the case of Tourism Services, the core budget has grown from €116 million to €159 million over the same period.
- We were successful in the case of the National Development Plan 2007-2013, in securing high visibility for our sectoral areas, with the inclusion of a Tourism Development

Programme of €800 million and a Culture sub programme of over €900 million. This should secure a substantial level of funding for investment in tourism product development, marketing and training and in cultural infrastructure, including the new ACCESS programme and exhibition, outreach and digitisation programmes. It is probably not an exaggeration to suggest that we have been undergoing something of a renaissance in the arts and culture sector in recent years, building on the vibrancy and creativity of the artistic and cultural community and our enhanced budgets. Let's hope that we can continue, given the more difficult financial and budgetary scenario we are now facing.

Importance of Cultural and Arts Tourism

- As I have said, since our establishment as a new Department, we have been very conscious of the potential to develop Cultural

and Arts Tourism. We have brought the Chief Executives and Directors of our State Bodies and Institutions together on many occasions and have discussed the potential for cooperation and synergies. However, given the depth of our artistic and cultural inheritance, and the vitality and diversity of our artistic community, we might, with some legitimacy, be accused of underperforming on our considerable potential in this area.

- Research put together by the Tourism Agencies – of which I am sure we will hear more later - shows that cultural tourism is growing in importance internationally. It has an annual average growth rate of 15%- three times the overall projected growth rate for general tourism. It represents over a third of all tourism business. We know too that such business is high yield and high spend.

- Tourism Ireland have already identified "sightseers and culture seekers" as our targeted overseas group and have repositioned their marketing and promotion effort towards this group. The current re-evaluation of Tourism Brand Ireland being carried out by Tourism Ireland is likely to reinforce this trend. Dublin Tourism also believe that there is latent potential in developing Dublin as a vibrant and dynamic cultural capital.
- Failte Ireland's Visitor Attitude Survey showed that in 2006, three in every five of our overseas holidaymakers rated history and culture as a very important factor in considering Ireland for a holiday. Two out of every three holidaymakers visited a heritage or cultural attraction during their stay. Yet we do not have an obvious or high profile as an international cultural or arts destination.

Policy Documents

- A number of national policy documents have been put together on the general subject of Cultural Tourism in recent years. Firstly the Department itself put together a Synergies Report in February 2006, which pulled together the work of an Implementation Group comprising senior Departmental officials and the Directors and Chief Executives of our State Bodies. This report identified potential areas of opportunity and cooperation among our own Bodies and wider interests. In 2006, a Cultural Tourism Task Force, chaired by Lochlann Quinn, reported to the Minister and the Chair of Fáilte Ireland on securing the potential of Cultural Tourism for Ireland.
- Earlier this year, Fáilte Ireland produced a new strategy for Cultural Tourism in Ireland, details of which I am sure will be outlined later in this seminar. In August of this year the Chair of the

Arts Council, Olive Braiden, published an article in the Irish Times on the potential of the Arts to enhance the tourism experience.

- In reviewing these documents, a number of common themes emerge, which I am certain will be further developed during the seminar here today and on Thursday in Killarney. These themes are
 - the need for research and market intelligence to identify and target the profile and expectations of the cultural tourist
 - the importance of developing an easily accessible product bank, agenda and a rolling calendar of cultural and arts events, maximising the use of new technologies
 - the opportunities for bundling arts/culture events and themed product development
 - making the marketing of cultural tourism smarter and more effective and developing

- a strong international cultural tourism brand image for Ireland
- the importance of enhancing our cultural tourism assets and offering at national and regional level, and
 - the need to develop cooperation networks and understanding between the arts/culture and tourism sectors.

Incentives for Developing Cultural Tourism

- An important range of incentives and programmes already exist to develop the Cultural and Arts tourism product. They range from the programmes of the Arts Council, Culture Ireland and the Film Board, the ACCESS scheme under which a second round of capital grants amounting to €32m for 67 arts and culture infrastructure projects nationwide was announced in April, the Festivals and Cultural Events initiative operated by Fáilte Ireland and the ongoing programmes of capital

and current investment of the National Cultural Institutions.

- All of these programmes - of which we will hear more detail during the seminar – have a role to play in developing the cultural and arts tourism product in Ireland and overseas. We are already spending a lot of money in these areas and we need to ensure that the programmes are properly focused and are seen to be delivering value for money.

- A recent general tourism Product Audit conducted by Fáilte Ireland as part of its Tourism Product Development Strategy indicated that there was 4,800 individual products relevant to cultural tourism in Ireland. However the general conclusion was that many of these product offerings were not grouped or marketed in an optimum manner to attract overseas visitors or indeed to ensure their own ongoing viability. And as might be expected, the

overall supply side of Cultural Tourism was composed of a range of diverse players, with often conflicting attitudes, interests and objectives. So we have a great deal of product but we clearly need to present and market it better.

Some Interesting Examples of Best Practice

- From my own limited experience, I am aware of some good examples of product innovation in the cultural tourism product in recent years.
- The initiative of the Minister for Tourism at the time to revitalise the St. Patrick's National Festival in 1995 by establishing a dedicated company shows what can be done with leadership and vision, the commitment of key stakeholders, dedicated funding and the artistic and creative input of our theatre and artistic groups. The Festival has been extended in duration and quality

and plays an important role in opening the traditional tourism season, promoting community involvement in street theatre while providing striking visual images to market Ireland around the world on St. Patrick's Day.

- EU funding under the Tourism Operational Programme, 1994 – 1999 was very effectively used for investment in exhibition and interpretation of our invaluable National Collections by the National Cultural Institutions in Dublin and regionally. This included the development of the National Museum at Collins Barracks and Turlough Park, Castlebar, the re-housing of the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin Castle, the construction of the Millennium Wing at the National Gallery, additional facilities at IMMA and the National Library and in many regional centres.

- These developments have revitalised our cultural offering and provided the space to mount a significant increase in special exhibitions and events. And we have ambitious plans for the future, including the redevelopment of the National Concert Hall, the Abbey Theatre, Wexford Opera and other projects. The recent combination of the W.B. Yeats exhibition at the National Library, the Lucien Freud art exhibition at IMMA and Leonardo's Leicester Codex Exhibition at the Chester Beatty Library, would, I suggest, compare favourably with any cultural offering experience internationally. Entrance to these exhibitions were free but to what extent were they marketed internationally as a package?

- The Re Joyce Festival, Beckett centenary Festival and 50th Dublin Theatre Festival have been celebrated in style, while

developing the associated international cultural tourism potential now and for the future. The model of bringing together a range of diverse interests in special committees with dedicated funding, enabled us to put together imaginative programmes which were well- received by domestic and international audiences, and helped to raise the profile of the capital, and the country generally, as a vibrant cultural and arts destination.

The Way Forward

- We have raised the game in recent years in presenting and marketing our arts and cultural offerings domestically and internationally. But, as I said, we are still not well known or recognised as a cultural or artistic destination outside of our traditional and popular music and dance. What steps can we take to improve

matters? This is where many of you have a role to play.

- Perhaps, I could finish by asking a few pertinent questions, which I hope, will be answered, during this conference.
 - How can we develop a greater awareness internationally of our cultural and arts experience and offering?
 - How can we present and market it better, using modern technology?
 - How can we encourage better communication and cooperation between artists, groups and cultural offerings and tourism service providers?
 - How can we work together to enhance the case for sustaining official support for, and a higher level of private sponsorship for arts and culture?

- I look forward to hearing the presentations and discussion during the seminar here in Dublin and later this week in Killarney.