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**THE ROLE OF HERITAGE ATTRACTIONS IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
STRATEGIES: THE EXPERIENCE IN IRELAND**

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ABSTRACT

Ireland, located on the north-west periphery of Europe, illustrates all the difficulties of a small, marginalised, island economy. It is an ancient landscape rich in heritage and cultural features. Tourism is now a vital part of the Irish economy. Recent research has demonstrated that the distinctive "Irishness", whilst difficult to define, is the major appeal for overseas markets. In 1989 the Irish Government challenged Bord Failte (the Irish Tourist Board) to double revenue from overseas tourists and create 25,000 new jobs. Heritage attractions, formed a fundamental feature of Bord Failte's Framework Plan for Tourism. The methodology adopted for heritage attraction development and interpretation is evaluated in

this paper, together with an assessment of the outcomes of the strategy. This particular initiative is discussed in the context of sustainable tourism strategies.

INTRODUCTION

There appears to be growing acceptance that heritage-based tourism is becoming increasingly attractive in the context of sustainable development, (21, 31, 45, 80). The heritage distinctiveness of the attractions of a country, or of a region is now providing the foundation blocks upon which tourism policies are being developed in destinations which are either (a) realigning their traditional tourism product (such as Spain, Malta and Ontario); or (b) seeking to

establish a year round tourism market (such as Wales, France, or Alberta in Canada); or (c) re-structuring their economies using appropriate tourism initiatives (as in the South Pacific, Slovakia or Hungary), (1, 3, 44, 45, 87, 92).

The strategic interest in the contribution of heritage attractions to tourism and regional development is based upon a number of factors, many of which are recognised in the European Union's recently endorsed "Action Plan for Tourism in the Member States" (EEC. 1991). Firstly, heritage attractions are indigenous and unique in their representation of an area's history (41, 61). Secondly, being indigenous, heritage attractions enliven, enrich and animate those naturally occurring themes and storylines upon which contemporary tourism marketing is based (40, 49).

Thirdly, it is now recognised that heritage attractions provide a relatively stable base of visitor activity. Longitudinal studies of day visitor patterns to a wide range of visitor attractions in Britain (2, 73), Alberta in Canada (1) and elsewhere (61) demonstrates that heritage attractions suffer smaller vicissitudes resulting from the vagaries of demand compared with other types of attraction, (76).

Further, research has shown that heritage attractions have innate appeal for overseas markets (44, 61, 67) whose, relatively, high levels of spend help contribute significantly to regional economies (30, 46). Finally, although the efficacy of the use of heritage to successfully influence tourist travel patterns and encourage the redistribution of visitors has been questioned (26) this function remains closely associated with heritage attraction strategies (89).

The heterogeneity of the heritage resource for tourism (41, 42, 61) is further complicated by the diversity of the interpretive opportunities and this demands that an appropriate planning approach is adopted (20). The potential of heritage attractions to meet the broad objectives of tourism policy and to satisfy the demands of a multi-segmented market depends upon such a strategic approach (37). The need for an interventionist approach for situations where tourism development has been characterised by a haphazard and piecemeal approach has been endorsed by Gilbert (36).

The use of interpretive planning to develop the rationale for a heritage-based tourism strategy has been fully discussed by a number of researchers, notably (20, 34, 59, 81). Others have demonstrated the appropriateness of utilising interpretation to promote sustainable tourism (33, 43).

Consequently, the use of an interpretive planning framework, to guide the production of a tourism strategy, based upon indigenous heritage attractions has developed from a sound conceptual base. There have, however, been few analytical studies which have monitored the process from design through to implementation. This paper examines the five year period 1989-1994, during which time Bord Failte (the Irish Tourist Board) embarked upon an ambitious programme to revitalise Ireland's flagging tourist industry based upon a heritage attraction strategy. This strategic approach is particularly appropriate in a country where "the link with tourism is integral to the whole topic of heritage, both as a concept and as policy" (13). Indeed, Brett goes on to argue, "that "hentage" is itself an essential part of the national economy. The future, we may say, is in heritage"

TOURISM IN IRELAND

Ireland is an island of 84,000 sqkm on the North-West periphery of Europe. The population of the Republic of Ireland is 3.5 million which, at 50 people/sqkm was the lowest population density of any European Union member state until the 1995 enlargement. The six counties of Northern Ireland, which are part of the United Kingdom, have endured a quarter of a century of terrorism until the peace process of 1994. Whilst this did not encroach into the Republic (whose 26 counties established independence in 1921), it undoubtedly inhibited tourism growth because potential visitors were unaware of this fact. With the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994, the Republic of Ireland is the only state within the European Union without a land connection to mainland Europe.

In his major work on Ireland, Freeman (35) writes that, "the fascination of Ireland lies in its distinction from Great Britain, its separate if related history, its population problem unique in Western Europe, its farm pattern and agriculture, and even in the ethos of its people". Ireland is an ancient landscape with archaeological sites pre-dating the Egyptian pyramids by 1000 years. It is essentially a Christian country with evidence of centres of worship dating from 1500 years ago, founded upon and interwoven with strands of Celtic history (28, 34, 53, 55).

The industrial revolution of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe essentially bypassed Ireland. As a result, the country has focused upon its unique advantages for agriculture as the basis of its economic prosperity now accounting for 10% of GDP and achieving a high export

content (25). Ireland remains, therefore, essentially rural, green, and is often referred to as "The Emerald Isle".

As has been mentioned earlier the island of Ireland consists of the Republic of Ireland and of Northern Ireland which is constitutionally part of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland has been torn by civil strife for the past 25 years. This has culminated in negative images hardly conducive to developing a tourism industry, and having a deleterious impact upon tourism in "the South" as well as the North (90).

The Autumn 1994 peace initiative and cease fire has given new momentum to the process of collaborative planning for tourism between Bord Failte and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. This process has been growing over the past five years (17) but has focused upon specific initiatives such as the International Fund's Support for the border counties development programme such as the Shannon-Erne Waterways link. Both Tourist Boards are now aligning their strategic programmes with heritage as a corner-stone of this joint approach.

TOURISM TRENDS

The rich cultural heritage, abundance of archaeological and historical sites, together with its relative remoteness, provides the essential fabric upon which the tourism industry of Ireland is based. As Brunt explains, "the net result is a geography of contrasts, and one that well illustrates the difficulties of a small marginalised island economy" (18). As part of the European Union (47) the economic development strategy of Ireland is based upon open trade, foreign investment and, increasingly the realisation of its tourism potential. The

countries competitive advantage lies, therefore, in the key strengths of Irish tourism (17):

- * high quality scenic landscapes
- * a quiet island with a relaxed pace of life
- * distinctive heritage and culture
- * absence of mass tourism
- * friendly, welcoming, convivial people
- * quality resources for outdoor activities and sport
- * green and "unspoilt" natural environment

Tourism is now a vital part of the Irish economy accounting for 7.2% of GNP, however, as O'Connor and Cronin (56) point out, "tourism has had a major influence on the economy and cultural fortunes of Ireland for over a century". In the 1987-1993 period, however, revenue from tourism has increased by 70% in constant prices after having been stagnant for two decades (15). Bord Failte, established in 1955, is charged by government with responsibility for the development and marketing of Irish tourism.

The World Travel and Tourism Review 1993 clearly shows the scale and importance of tourism to Ireland. In the period 1987-1990 international tourism receipts from tourism in Ireland were growing at a faster rate than elsewhere in Europe, or indeed, the rest of the World. International tourist arrivals in 1993 totalled 3.8 million an increase of 4% compared to the previous year. Tourism in Europe is showing an annual growth rate of 4.9%, which is slower than many other regions of the World (66). As a result, the Commission for the European Communities (since October 1993 known as the European Union) has produced its "Action Plan for Tourism". This Action Plan recognises the importance of regional distinctiveness in heritage and culture as a fundamental strength upon

which to build Europe's tourism competitive edge. In this context, and in the way in which the European Union then dispenses its structural funds to assist regional development (47), Ireland is particularly well placed to (a) make a significant contribution to Europe's tourism industry, and (b) benefit from EU funding programmed (60).

In the early 1980's tourism in Ireland was stagnant, characterized by little investment in product development. During this period, policy makers in Ireland were, in the words of Deegan and Dineen, (27) "preoccupied with the twin problems of public finance, and high rates of unemployment". In addition, following the accession of the Republic of Ireland to the European Community in 1973, the country's regional development policy has had to be framed in the context of Community regional policy (founded in 1975), which sees Ireland as a single region from a EU perspective (57). The resulting debate about the implications of the integration of this policy continues today and remains inconclusive (47). Pearce (60) suggests, however that, from a tourism perspective, community regional policy has proved beneficial for Ireland.

By the mid-1980's, it was clear that Irish tourism was in need of a major review if the opportunities of Community membership were to be realised and Ireland's tourism product to be revitalized to meet the emerging demands of international tourism markets. The 1985 "White Paper on Tourism" was a clear articulation of Government thinking, specifying a broad objective:

"To optimise the economic and social benefits to Ireland of the promotion and development of tourism both to and within the country consistent with

ensuring an acceptable economic rate of return on the resources employed and taking account of:

- tourism's potential for job creation
- the quality of life and the development of the community
- the enhancement and preservation of the nation's cultural heritage
- the conservation of the physical resources of the country, and
- tourism's contribution to regional development"

The 1985 White Paper clearly focuses upon job creation as a key objective but, it should be noted, makes the connection with heritage as both a beneficiary of and a contributor to, tourism development.

Since 1985 there has been a "plethora" (27) of consultants and government reports on the tourism industry. In the main these have focused upon organizational analysis, strategic opportunities and external threats, (see for examples: KPMG (48), Price Waterhouse (62), Tansey Webster Associates (79). The heritage sector has not been immune from this review process, with the Ventures Consultancy (86) being commissioned to undertake a heritage attraction audit and to develop the findings into an interpretive-based heritage attraction strategy. The methodology underpinning this strategy and its implementation are discussed below.

In 1987, the Irish Government published its "Programme for National Recovery" and two years later its "National Development Plan 1989-1994". Within the context of these national plans the government charged Bord Failte with the task of doubling tourism and increasing tourism-related employment by 25,000 new jobs in the plan

period. Bord Failte responded with its strategy: "A New Framework for the Development of Irish Tourism" (5).

A NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR TOURISM

This tourism framework plan recognised that the achievement of these targets was not simply a marketing issue. A substantial and sustained investment programme was required for accelerating the growth that would produce an internationally competitive Irish tourism industry. As the same time the plan recognised the strategic opportunities to more evenly spread the benefits of this labour intensive industry through the planned distribution and pattern of tourism. In the period 1978-1988 the distribution of tourists, and hence tourism revenues had changed little. In 1987 half the total direct revenue from tourism was concentrated in two of Ireland's seven tourist regions--Dublin Eastern (29%) and Cork/Kerry (21%). (60).

The framework Plan was based, in part, upon the analysis contained in the consultants reports which had identified barriers to growth (48, 63). In particular, these barriers to growth were identified as high peaked seasonality and low levels of profitability. The Plan articulated a four part strategy with four essential objectives (Table 1).

The Plan focused investment within identified geographic centres which were identified as being capable of achieving results within the time frame of the plan period. Each of these areas--four were spatial five were centres of population--were required to have six essential elements for

successful tourism development (see Table 2).

The 1989 Framework Plan specifically recognised the important contribution to be made by enhancing the heritage attraction base in the context of a strategy for sustainable tourism. The articulation of this Framework coincided with the preparation of "The Operational Programme for Tourism" (29). This programme was designed to secure assistance from the European Regional Development and Social Funds of the EU provided for in Articles 3 and 5 of Council Regulation (EEC) No 2052/88 of June 1988.

Investment under the operational programme (29) was particularly directed at product development, which significantly included heritage attraction development. Of the five product themes identified in the Plan, heritage and culture was prioritised and specific outcome targets set for each region (visitor numbers, income generation and job creation).

There are five common threads woven through this Operational Programme. The first is the recognition of the need for quality in product development aimed at an increasingly sophisticated and discriminating market. The second is the quest for sustainable tourism development within the stated objectives of rapid growth. Thirdly, there was the need to embrace the principles of community involvement in the development process (74) whilst achieving centralised planning to avoid duplication of resources. Fourthly, the need to create the 25,000 new jobs associated with tourism activity was prioritised. Finally, the aim was to successfully integrate heritage into the strategy.

At this stage it is important to note that these five issues also permeate the current tourism Development Plan for the period 1994-1999 (11). This new five year plan identifies a target of 6% annual growth in overseas revenue from tourism, the, subsequent, creation of 35,000 new jobs, an increase in non-peak season traffic from 70% to 75%. The Development Plan for 1994-1999 acknowledges the challenge of balancing the issues of environmental; economic; social sustainability in meeting these targets. Heritage once again underpins this new strategy but the emphasis has changed significantly and is discussed in full later.

The 1989 Operational Programme successfully secured £118 million of EU structural funding to back the total £300 million investment programme. Of that total 42% was initially earmarked to support up to 145 heritage projects. In 1990, Bord Failte posed a number of key questions about the successful planning, development and interpretive aspects of a heritage strategy (14).

THE HERITAGE PRODUCT-- A STRATEGY

Of primary concern, confirmed by market research (67), was that the essential attraction of Ireland as a distinct holiday destination focused around various facets of "Irishness". Whilst most people may not have heard of Ireland's top 5 attractions they have a concept of "Irishness". Consequently, Bord Failte was concerned about the ability to optimise the experience of "Irishness" for the visitor. How does the visitor encounter the essential "Irish" cultural and heritage product? How can a comprehensible, accessible, authentic, product be developed? What form of

intervention and planning is required to avoid duplication and ensure complementary development? Finally, what could Bord Failte do to ensure a cohesive network that presented the heritage of Ireland in a cohesive manner (14).

In order to advance the strategic consideration, the Venture's Consultancy was appointed in 1990 to undertake an audit of the Irish heritage product and to recommend a strategy for heritage attraction development and interpretation. Underpinning the need for this strategic review was the large number of applications for Bord Failte for ERDF support which indicated that Ireland was "embarking upon a headlongrush to develop wall-to-wall heritage centres, interpretive centres or visitor centres with little thought to an overall plan or objective focused upon satisfying the target customer" (14).

The strategy produced by the Ventures Consultancy was presented at a national conference in Dublin in 1990 (7) for debate. Rather than following a regimented chronological approach for heritage attraction development, the strategy focused upon the interpretive planning approach pioneered by the US National Park Service, Parcs Canada, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation in North America, (see for example: UNESCO (82), USNPS (83) and the Countryside Commissions in Britain (see for example: Countryside Commission, (22, 23), Countryside Commission for Scotland (24). This identified dominant themes which shape heritage and culture and each theme has six storylines which emerge from them (86). Each of the themes (see Tables 3 and 4) suggests the basis for vibrant and relevant attraction development. More importantly Bord Failte were given a

strategic planning tool to adjudicate development proposals.

Following presentation of the proposals at the 1990 National Heritage and Tourism Conference (6) an 8 person committee representing a variety of organisations (Governmental and quasi-governmental) was established to review the strategic proposals and apply it to the overall development scheme. The report of this Committee (7) effectively endorsed the interpretive strategy and effected its implementation with an allocation of £54.6 million of ERDF funds.

In January 1992 Bord Failte convened a second national heritage and tourism conference to review progress of the strategy's implementation and impact (9). The review was based upon four critical pieces of research:

- (i) a comparative assessment of the actual developments against the strategic plan (73). This review concluded that the strategy had proved an effective vehicle with its objectives being achieved;
- (ii) a visitor survey of users at heritage attractions to assess improvements in product development (52). This confirmed increased levels of satisfaction following investment in the product;
- (iii) the impact on overseas marketing and the attraction of new overseas markets to Ireland (51, 58) which concluded positively;
- (iv) the stimulation of private sector investment, the redistribution of visitors, and the creation of jobs.

Browne (16) reports that over £100 million has been invested over the past five years in Ireland's heritage and tourism with a further £200 million earmarked for the 1994-1999 period; 25,000 new jobs have been created; and significant shifts in the geography of inter-regional tourism reported. The framework was a useful starting point in encouraging innovation, authentic development, structured thinking and overall coherence.

The framework also successfully encouraged the development of management skills associated with heritage tourism and attraction operations in Ireland. In addition to the increased awareness stimulated by the two national conferences there have been a number of other initiatives. These include:

- (i) the production of a directory of consultancy services which includes advice about working with consultants (10)
- (ii) the commencement of a diploma in Irish Heritage Management in UC Cork (19)
- (iii) a review of training needs for heritage by the State training agency, CERT (88)
- (iv) a proposal to establish a national centre for Heritage Interpretation
- (v) the establishment of "Heritage Island", a marketing consortium for heritage attractions
- (vi) continued visitor research, funded by the industry, in 1993 (77).

CONTROVERSY AMIDST SUCCESS

The strategy and the development of new heritage tourist attractions has not been without controversy. The controversy has mainly focused around the locational issues of interpretive centres in sensitive areas. It has also been questioning of the hi-tech interpretation at "heritage centres" at the expense of conventional museums which claimed to be starved for resources in their mission to curate the "real" heritage of the country. This debate was fuelled by the decisions of the Office of Public Works to proceed with new interpretive centres in fragile, protected, environments in the face of strong opposition from conservationists (75).

There has also been a healthy debate about the systematic interpretive planning approach adopted in "categorising" the heritage of Ireland. The debate has ranged from cynical, editorial, comments in national and local newspapers to informed, academic, writing. O'Connor (56), for example, says of the interpretive plan: "From a marketing point of view, this could prove to be a useful tool if it prevents a duplication of investment, though this has to be weighed against the fact that there is a potentially, unlimited, degree to which anything can be classified, themed or storylined". O'Connor goes on to note that under the plans, "historic importance is not in itself a justification for large scale investment" (56).

Gilbert (36), on the other hand, has questioned the ability of the plan to achieve the stated objectives of re-distributing tourists and for stimulating visitation to non-traditional tourist destinations. In this context, Sterry (69) has offered the critique that, heritage centres rarely contribute to the

concept of a "sense of place" and that the, often elusive, search for "Irishness" may not be assisted by the construction of capitolally expensive new heritage experiences (see also Wooder (91).

Perhaps the more substantive criticisms surround two fundamental considerations of strategic planning for heritage tourism. The first, raised by Deegan and Dineen (27) suggests that long-term sustainable tourism objectives cannot be attained by the cash-grant system characterised by the EU regional funding programme of the past five years. They argue that such a programme is producer-orientated rather than consumer-orientated. As a result, projects emerge which meet development but not marketing criteria. This issue was, however, fully addressed in the Ventures Report (86) and was adopted by Bord Failte in its implementation of the Strategy.

The second set of considerations are of broader interest to heritage managers and to interpreters in particular. They relate to (i) the coverage given to politically sensitive aspects of heritage interpretation, and (ii) the democracy of community involvement in the interpretive planning and delivery process.

Although the Bord Failte heritage-attraction Strategy, particularly the themes and storylines framework, encourages both a "full" treatment of heritage and community involvement there remains concern that some of these aspects have not been fully explored. The tendency to sideline "real issues" in interpretation, called "hot" interpretation by Uzell (84) has provoked others to voice comment over the past decade (38, 39, 40). In the initial review of the implementation of the Bord Failte plan by Stevens (73) concern was also expressed

that the storylines being developed were made palatable and avoided sensitive issues featuring, instead, stereotypical images of Ireland's past--a fear echoed by authors in the recent work by O'Conner and Cronin (56).

Although there has been an enthusiastic involvement by many community groups in heritage attractions a community's willingness, or ability, to participate is shaped by many factors. These factors include the existence of leadership as well as resource matters and local motivation. The different levels of community participation has been discussed by Breathnach (12, 36). Bord Failte, in recognising this particular issue, are prioritising the localisation of decision making and activity in the current five year plan.

Following this open debate, Bord Failte made some significant policy statements within the period of the first plan (up to 1994). They concluded:

a. Tourists are coming to Ireland to discover what is distinctive about the landscape, the history, the culture, the architecture, the people and so on. They are not coming to see "heritage centres" as such and the construction of a visitors' facility should only be a subsidiary consideration to facilitate understanding of, and access to, a real attraction. There is no future for attractions which have no authentic base in the area.

b. Policy commitment must be to quality rather than scale for its own sake. Many of the most fascinating attractions of the country require only easy access, good presentation, sensible signposting, an informative plaque or a high quality guide book to bring them to life for visitors.

c. The greatest care must be taken to ensure that any built attraction does not diminish the atmosphere and the setting of the very feature on which it is based.

As Deegan and Dineen (27) point out, the performance of Irish tourism based upon this strategy has been impressive. For example, there were 85 tourist attractions charging an admission fee in 1987. By 1993, this had grown to 219. The number of admissions recorded in this period doubled from 3.4 million to 6.9 million. These visitors spent IR£24 million in 1993, a figure which has doubled in just two years. The visitor response has also been encouraging. Market research in 1993 showed that: 80% rated culture and history as an important reason for choosing Ireland; 46% visited at least one place of cultural or historic interest; 72% rated our history and culture as "good" (11).

Overall, therefore, the review has been generally positive about the outcomes of the 1988-1993 Framework Plan, and particularly the methodology and achievements of the heritage strategy. A more critical examination revealed a number of strategic and policy issues which have been incorporated into the current "Tourism Development Plan 1994-1999" (11).

These are:

A. Strategic Issues

- (i) The importance of Ireland continuing to invest in its cultural and heritage tourism and developing joint initiatives in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board

- (ii) The predication of the concept that the tourist attraction of Ireland must be firmly based on the heritage of the country and that heritage embraces the natural, manmade, and cultural heritage
- (iii) Recognition that societal and demographic changes will significantly influence the future demand for attractions
- (iv) In responding to these changes Bord Failte will place greater emphasis upon conservation of heritage in an holistic fashion; on information; on participation and involvement in heritage; and further enhancement of the presentation of heritage
- (v) Attraction development must be sustainable and relevant to the local community
- (vi) A limited number of attractions of significant scale and with an international reputation are needed

B. Policy Issues

- (i) Attraction planning, at both the regional and site level, must incorporate a visitor management plan
- (ii) In general Ireland has too many manufactured "Heritage Centres" and the future policy will focus on improving the standard of which exists and on presenting some of the unique and neglected aspects of the heritage to visitors

in an interesting manner. Some themes have been undervalued in developments so far, for example agriculture, industry, culture, transport and politics

- (iii) There needs to be more programmes of development which can deliver new products in greater depth. The "Heritage Towns" Programme will get increased emphasis as a means of achieving this objective
- (iv) Quality heritage attractions need not cost millions of pounds. More must be done to conserve the small individual heritage sites and present them better to visitors. There is a major role here for the myriad of new community-focused development groups such as LEADER, and County Enterprise Boards
- (v) The heritage must be protected from shoddy exploitation stimulated either by greed or by undervaluation of their status;
- (vi) The heritage policy should be integrated into all components of tourist product development. For example, in developing accommodation it is possible to restore the simple traditional buildings of the countryside as houses to let or preserve decaying stately homes as "Historic Hotels". The "Historic Hotel" is not a panacea for saving Great Irish Houses. Some, like Castletown House, hold a special place in this tradition and should be restored

to their former glory. Tourist Information Offices are another ideal use for heritage properties

- (vii) There needs to be a continued investment in the human elements of the visitor attractions. The basic skills of business planning and management are just as fundamental as skills in interpretation and history. High standards of customer service and the traditional "Failte" (welcome) count for more in the end than hi-tech interpretation per se
- (viii) Professional marketing must be seen as an integral part of any project, rather than an optional extra. In particular, good, timely, market research is a prerequisite to matching the product to visitor needs

A LOCATION POLICY FOR HERITAGE ATTRACTIONS

All things being equal, Bord Failte intends to influence the locations selected for investment in heritage so that they make the optimum contribution to our overall development framework for centres of tourism. The current Tourism Development Plan (11) proposes a four part development framework embracing tourism centres, rural tourism areas, touring areas and special interest centres.

There are 41 Tourism Centres, each with at least 400 rooms in a 15km radius and they account for 85% of all tourist beds. There are three types of centres, graded by size, and this is a guide to the scale of attractions

needed. A national programme to floodlight historic buildings is one example of the type of development being advocated in tourism centres. Many of these tourism centres are now being by-passed by ring roads, which is a new opportunity to breathe life back into their heritage core. Some of Ireland's larger provincial cities badly need a major weather-independent attraction. One solution would be to establish museums of total national collections in these cities, e.g. "The National Museum of Folk Life" for Galway, or "The National Museum of Exploration" for Cork.

By contrast, the 25 Rural Tourism Areas are off the beaten track, where visitors can enjoy peaceful holidays "steeped in the living tradition of Rural Ireland". Simple accommodation, rural attractions, visitor farms, island holidays, Gaeltacht holidays are some of the hallmarks of this experience. The most essential ingredient is that the visitor is taken into the heart of the local community and is helped to enjoy their normal daily lives with them.

The 40 Touring Areas identified by Bord Failte feature the finest mountain, lakeshore, coastal, river valley and heritage landscapes in the country. The priority will be to ensure that these areas are better managed with a view to landscape conservation and recreational amenity.

The final element of the framework is Special Interest Activity Centres. There are 35 locations with the potential to be developed as centres of excellence for a wide range of special interest products. For many of these products, such as walking, cruising or cycling, the access to interesting heritage features is what can give Ireland a competitive edge over other countries as a venue for such activities.

In addition, the next five years will see investment by Bord Failte targeted at a number of distinctive heritage development programmes in particular:

- * Heritage Towns
- * Nostalgia-based attractions
- * Coastal heritage
- * Contemporary Ireland

This programme of investment in the 1994-1999 plan for heritage tourism is IR£150 million of EU structural funds with a further IR£100 million of matching investment from the public, private and especially, the community sectors.

CONCLUSIONS

The current development plan represents a real shift in policy emphasis towards sustainability. The government has introduced a deliberate restraint on the annual growth rates in the volume of tourists, with a target to improve yield while achieving a revenue growth rate of 6% per annum, (increasing revenue generated by foreign tourism by IR£1 billion by 1999), with an increasing emphasis upon sustainable quality. There remains a continued emphasis, however, upon job creation with a target set at 35,000 new jobs in tourism over the next six years. An increase of 1.1 million in overseas visitors is envisaged from the 1993 total of 3.3 million.

Throughout the period of the first Development Plan there has been on-going discussion about the role of government and, particularly, of Bord Failte in developing tourism in Ireland (27, 36), despite the acknowledged success over the past 5 years. In April 1994, the consultancy Arthur D. Little, were appointed by the

Minister for Tourism and Trade to review the role and operations of Bord Failte in the context of the 1994-1999 targets for tourism growth.

On 3rd November 1994, the Minister for Tourism and Trade announced a major reorganisation of Bord Failte based upon the consultants recommendations (50). These recommendations highlight the need for Bord Failte to refocus on its core activities. The report urges the strengthening of the strategic management role; it recognises the need for a more "hands-on" approach to developing the emerging sectors of the industry; and, finally, the report

recommends the maintenance of the ERDF investment management system for public sector attractions. The management of funds for private sector projects is to become more commercial focused.

It is clear that the government sees Bord Failte becoming more of a facilitator and offering the industry strategic advice. The continued development of heritage remains a central feature of the development plan with Bord Failte maintaining its strategic planning position. The lessons learnt between 1988-1993 will usefully inform Phase II of the Development process taking Ireland's tourism towards the Millennium.

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Table 1

The Framework Plan (1989) - Strategy and Objectives

A. Strategy

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. Product | develop a more attractive product and wider product range |
| 2. Competitiveness | provide better value and quality |
| 3. Promotion | increase market penetration |
| 4. Distribution | improve external distribution |

B. Objectives

1. Development of new products that will attract additional visitors.
2. Increase the scale of developments through more substantial investment
3. Provide weather independent facilities
4. Expand the accommodation base and range.

Table 2
Investment Criteria

Five Areas of Focus (Population centres)

- (i) Major Centres, e.g. Dublin, Kilarney
- (ii) Regional Centres, e.g. Wexford, Sligo
- (iii) Local Centres, e.g. Castlebar, Dingle
- (iv) Theme Towns, e.g. Kilkenny, Cobh
- (v) Seaside Resorts, e.g. Ballybunion, Bundoran

Four Spatial Areas

- (i) Touring Areas, e.g. Ring of Kerry, Boyne Valley
- (ii) Special Interest Areas, e.g. Burren
- (iii) Development Areas, e.g. Shannon System
- (iv) Product Areas, e.g. Localised opportunities

Six Essential Elements of 'first base' development

- (i) Accommodation Base and Range
- (ii) Food and Beverage
- (iii) Activity and Special Interest Facilities
- (iv) Night Entertainment
- (v) Transport
- (vi) Visitor Services

Table 3

Dominant Themes in Heritage - Interpretation: Basis for Strategy

- * Living Landscapes (man's relationship with natural environment)**
- * Making a Living (the challenge of living off the land and sea)**
- * Saints and Religion (the influence of religion and worship)**
- * Building a Nation (social, cultural and political influences)**
- * The Spirit of Ireland (contemporary expressions of Ireland)**

Table 4

Emerging Storylines

1. Living Landscapes	a	Living with Land and Sea
	b	Mountain and Moorland
	c	Cliffs and Caves
	d	Bogs and Wetland
	e	The Gulf Stream
	f	Wildlife and Nature
2. Making a Living	a	Emigration and the Great Famine
	b	Living with the Sea
	c	Industry, Transport and Power
	d	Inventions and Traditional Irish Products
	e	Lifestyles
	f	Farming Heritage
3. Saints and Religion	a	Pagan and Prehistoric Ireland
	b	Origins of Christianity
	c	Saints and Seaways
	d	Religious Upheaval
	e	Revivals and the Living Faith
	f	Missionary Life
4. The Making of a Nation	a	The Story of Ireland
	b	Celtic Heroes
	c	Villains, People and Places
	d	Battles and Rebellion
	e	Invasion and Conquest
	f	Anglo-Irish Landscape and Legend
5. Living with Landscape	a	Literary Ireland
	b	Folklore and Legends
	c	Ireland Entertains
	d	Irish Language
	e	Gaelic Games
	f	The Irish Horse