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# **Waterford City & County Council**

## **Local Flavours**

### **Action Plan**



October 2021

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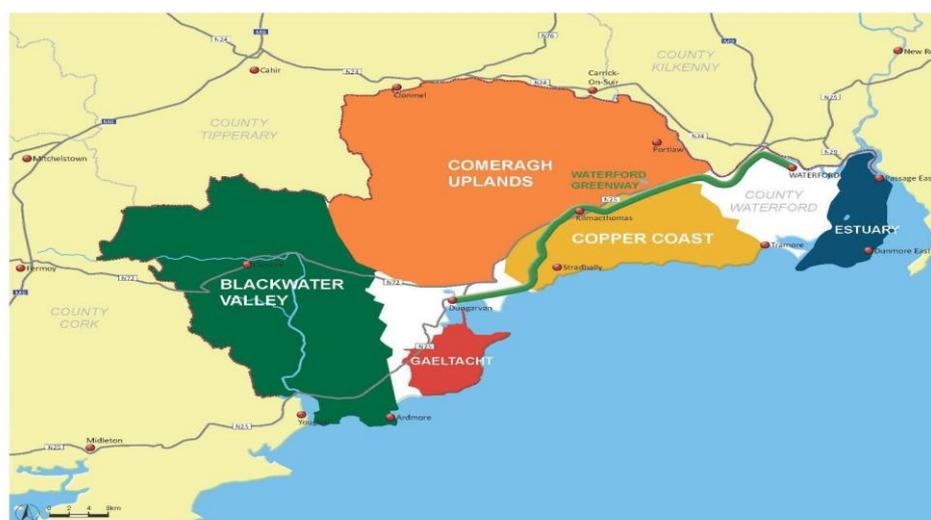
## Part I – General Information

<b>Project</b>	Local Flavours PGI05790
<b>Partner organisation(s) concerned</b>	Waterford City & County Council
<b>Country</b>	Ireland
<b>NUTS2 region</b>	Southern & Eastern Region
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## Part II – Policy Context

The Action Plan aims to impact	<input type="checkbox"/>	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	<input type="checkbox"/>	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed	Local Economic and Community Plan
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Map 1: identified project areas

## Policy Instrument: One Waterford – Local Economic & Community Plan

The development of a Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) for the period 2015 to 2020 and the amalgamation of Waterford City Council and Waterford County Council in 2014 created an opportunity for Waterford to start working collaboratively to achieve the vision of One Waterford which is a strong, sustainable, vibrant place to live, work and invest. The plan was scheduled for review in 2020 but as a result of COVID-19 this review has now been delayed to the end of 2021.

The LECP sets out a clear framework for economic and local development in Waterford and although it is a strongly action focussed plan it is not an operational plan or a spatial plan. The framework is a structure within which all local and regional stakeholders can work collaboratively to achieve the agreed mission and objectives and which will be implemented through a series of operational plans. One of the key six economic objectives of the plan is to accelerate the growth of the tourism economy which has the potential to become a key driver of economic growth and job creation across Waterford and the South East.

Tourism provides jobs in rural and urban areas and is populated by many Irish owned SMEs. Tourism also offers positive spill over into other aspects of the economy and society such as quality of life improvements for permanent residents and increasing the attractiveness of Waterford and the region for inward investment.

The LECP aims to develop a stronger Waterford through sustainable urban and rural places. It promotes economic growth respecting knowledge, nature and society and is centred on maximising the potential of local assets and attributes. The ethos of the Local Flavours project supports goal 4 of the LECP “Promotion of Rural Tourism in Waterford through Culture and Heritage”. This particular policy instrument integrates a number of actors in defining development pathways that are oriented towards the integration of local economic activities and the valorisation of local resources.

Despite this consultative approach town and village settlements within rural Waterford still struggle to fully exploit their cultural heritage potential owing to their location or proximity to the larger urban areas of Waterford City, Tramore and Dungarvan which possess strong tangible and intangible tourism, heritage and cultural assets.

This Action Plan seeks to improve authentic tourism opportunities for the geographic areas shown in *map 1* namely, Comeragh Uplands, Copper Coast, Blackwater Valley, An Gaeltacht and Waterford Estuary.



Waterford belongs to Ireland’s ‘Ancient East’ a historic region and Waterford City in particular has a strong heritage legacy. The targeted areas include a UNESCO Geopark, a collection of towns and villages and sites of heritage and cultural significance but yet struggle to fully exploit this potential owing to their rural location, proximity to the larger urban locations or having offerings that are not properly promoted.



This Action Plan seeks to follow a coordinated approach for authentic tourism in the identified areas through tourism diversification and collaboration which would enable rural innovation and sustainable rural development with key new stakeholders participating. The success of the plan depends on a more strategic selection and implementation of appropriate projects as per the aims and objectives of Local Flavours. A change in the governance arrangements within the tourism environment will also enable greater participation of local rural communities and will consequently enable a greater shared sense of place for their area.

As stated the LECP promotes economic growth and is centred on maximising the potential of local assets and attributes. Goal 4 of the LECP seeks the “Promotion of Rural Tourism in Waterford through Culture and Heritage”. This Action Plan seeks to improve Goal 4 to improve authentic tourism opportunities for the identified geographic

rural areas in Waterford. The successful formulation and implementation of this action plan will require the engagement of all stakeholders. This includes local government, state agencies and the private and community and voluntary sectors all playing key and vital roles in supporting and delivering success through collaboration, engagement, support and leadership.

The action plan aims to improve the policy instrument through the implementation of new projects and improved governance and will explore rural tourism diversification opportunities in the geographic areas identified as part of the Local Flavours project as outlined below.

- Enhancing Existing Assets: Valorising the potential that already exists in these rural areas through branding, bundling, marketing, education and identification of areas of opportunity.
- New Projects: Identify new innovative authentic tourism projects in each of the areas where industrial heritage, geology, biodiversity and activity tourism are all potential strengths. Recommendations in the action plan based on Local Flavours learning and the information provided in the status quo analysis will enable a structured approach to project selection for future funding calls.
- Improved Governance & Networks- Stronger flexible networks will enable rural innovation and collaboration with new stakeholder participation and representation on relevant tourism structures.

To ensure that this action plan is successful it is based on the learning gained from a thorough status quo analysis. A thorough analysis was required to guarantee maximum credibility and to ensure the best decisions are made and the optimal objectives are implemented. The research model for the Status Quo Analysis was based on the KRAFT indicators that were most relevant to our project and that will enable the plan to achieve its objectives.

*Enhancement and promotion of compelling rural Waterford  
visitor experiences in each geographical  
area will deliver memorable  
and inspirational moments,  
inspiring visitors to not only share their exceptional  
experience with others but to return, with  
positive impacts for both local  
communities and businesses.*

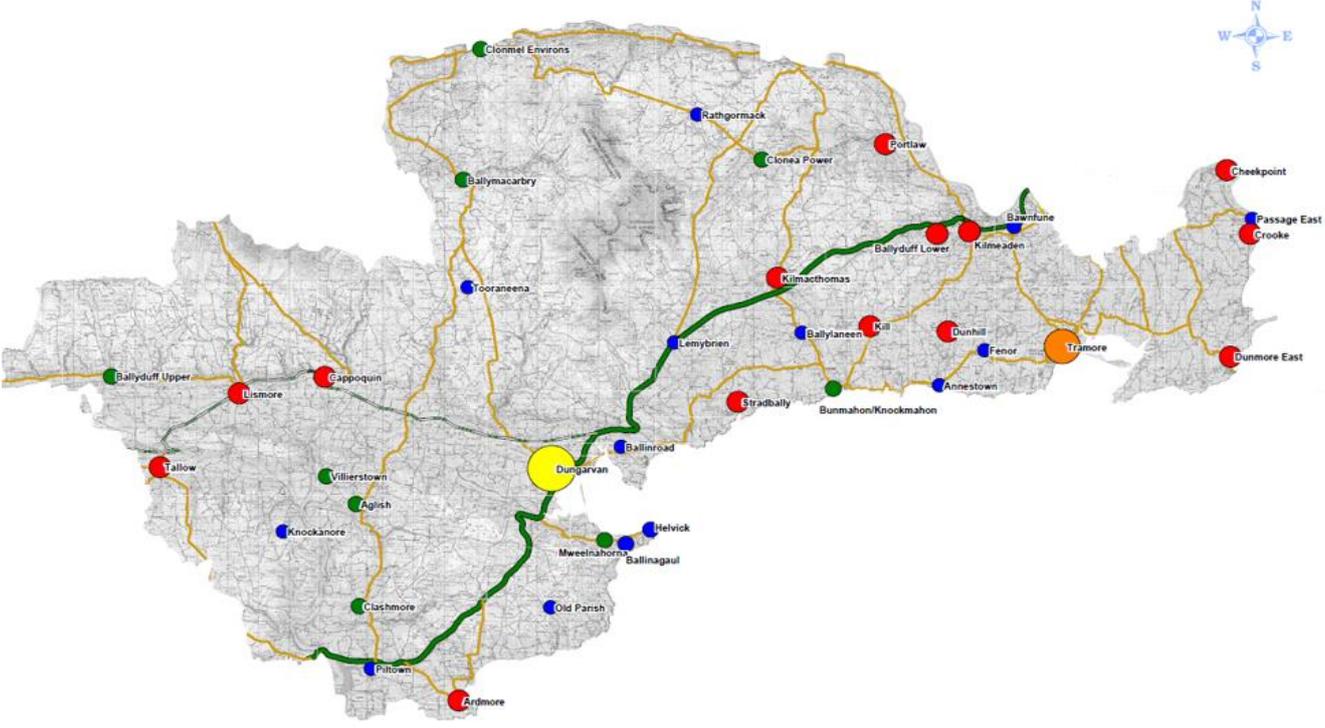
### **Part III – Background**

**Region Profile:** Waterford is the regional capital and largest urban centre in the South East of Ireland and the fifth largest city in the Republic of Ireland. It has a population of over 116,000 with a population of 603,902 within a 60 minute drive. Waterford City is the economic powerhouse of the South East of Ireland. Often voted as one of

the best places to live in Ireland, it is recognised as world class centre in terms of research and innovation with a proven track record as a successful location for world leading established and high growth multinational companies from around the world. Home of Ireland’s top ranking Institute of Technology, possessing 350 active international academic partnerships with students drawn from over 70 countries.



- Waterford City is the principal urban settlement and is the main economic driver for the SE Region under the National Planning Framework (NPF). The City and its suburbs accounts for 41.5% (48,216) of the total population.
- Urban Waterford (all settlements > 1,500) has a total population of 75,566 and accounts for 65% of the population and Rural Waterford accounts for 35% with a total population of 40,610.
- Tramore, a satellite town of Waterford City, is the second largest settlement with a population of 10,381.
- Dungarvan, is a growth town identified under the NPF and has a population of 9,227.
- Dunmore East (1,808), and Portlaw (1,742) and Lismore (1,374) are the only towns with a population over 1,000



**Waterford City** has undergone an exciting transformational period, from a historical manufacturing and port city to one where advanced manufacturing and knowledge based industries can marry with a significantly enhanced service sector particularly in retail and tourism to deliver an urban centre that can be a real driver for regional development and a centre of real consequence at national and International levels.

**Cultural Heritage Profile:** Waterford can trace its origins back to the third century when the King of Munster granted the Desii, lands from the Suir to the sea and from Lismore to Creaden Head, embracing almost all the present County of Waterford. In the 9th century the Vikings came to Waterford and these are two of the most significant events in history that gives Waterford its sense of place as Ireland's oldest city.



Waterford culture draws from many voices across a diverse social and political landscape and shaped by a collective memory of land and sea, urban and rural. It is shaped by song and storytelling finding expression in large scale programmes of international quality to those of smaller scale held in towns and villages throughout our county.

Heritage trails, cycle ways, mountains and the waters generate their own lattice of cultural pathways tying us together. Evocative artistic voices find inspiration in a history of Vikings, Celts, glass and language. The resulting rich cultural tapestry merges the traditional with the contemporary forming a backdrop to people's lives from local theatre production, visual and literary arts and a strong festival and street arts culture.

The rich culture and heritage springs from its establishment as the site of the first city in Ireland, founded by Viking traders in the 9th century. A place recognised globally for its manufacture of crystal and glass, its Irish language heritage (being one of the few Gaeltacht areas remaining in the country) and its strong festivals and a street art culture. It is a place where engagement and participation in cultural activities forms a backdrop to people's lives from local theatre production, visual and literary arts to the involvement of its citizens in professional and non-professional arts practice.

Developing the cultural landscape in the county are a team of local cultural agents, operating as part of the local authority structure, supporting a wider cohort of cultural managers, practitioners, educators and audiences and delivering the framework for culture and creativity across Waterford.

The essence of Waterford Heritage is the recognition of the mutually beneficial relationship between people and place. Human activity through the establishment of ancient burials and places of worship, farming of the landscape and development of urban centres has created a legacy of archaeological, built, cultural and natural heritage. It is what sets us apart from other places. By identifying the unique sense of place that is Waterford it stimulates pride in maintaining our heritage and stimulates interest in visitors and investors in exploring the city and county.



Our cultural heritage is the bedrock of our county, from our sport, language, musical traditions, through to our landscape and built heritage. Sport is a particularly important element of

this heritage. Hurling – Ireland’s oldest field sport and Camogie celebrated across the county, both have a hugely passionate fan base and an unparalleled network of voluntary and community activity, which proves a major cultural asset.



Our language is part of our cultural heartbeat. ‘Gaeltacht na nDéise’ is one of seven Irish-speaking areas in Ireland where our native language is still spoken as a living, community language and where our linguistic heritage and its importance are proudly and passionately promoted. The culture of language is celebrated publicly through festivals, events and activities with other Celtic minority language speakers in Wales and Scotland, in particular through exchanges, cultural visits and artistic collaborations.



Design and crafts are particularly strong in Waterford notably in glass with an association that dates back from 1783 through the Waterford Crystal brand to micro-enterprises in glass design and production in the city and county today. The rich cultural tapestry of Waterford crosses traditional and contemporary cultural forms, offering a range of high quality large-scale international festivals alongside multiple smaller scale and community-run festivals in towns and villages across the county.

Waterford’s heritage takes many forms – built, natural, cultural and linguistic, tangible and intangible. Heritage is all about people and place and our local heritage underpins a sense of place and identity for Waterford whilst providing a range of benefits to society, well-being and the economy.

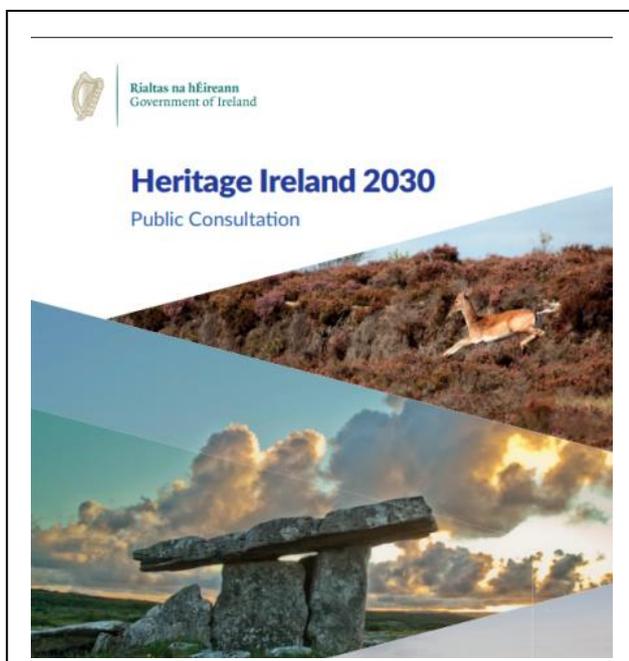
The conservation and management of heritage is directed by national legislation which supports a range of international conventions that have been ratified by the Irish Government. The principal national legislation in relation to the Built Environment is the National Monuments Act 1930-2004, and Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

## Legislation

Heritage in Ireland is governed by the Heritage Act 1995 which requires its National Heritage Council to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage. The Heritage Council’s priorities include the celebration of Ireland’s heritage on the international stage, the

conservation of the biodiversity of its rich landscape and the protection and promotion of its built and natural heritage for the wellbeing of its people and communities.

Ireland’s Heritage Act (1995) broadly defines ‘national heritage’ as ‘including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks, inland waterways’. The list, while containing specific items, is capable of expansion and omits reference to intangible heritage (folklore, music, language).



A new National Heritage Plan “Heritage Ireland 2030” is currently being developed to deliver a coherent and comprehensive framework of values, principles, strategic priorities and actions to guide and inform the heritage sector over the next decade. The consultations undertaken to date have identified the need to properly articulate an understanding of heritage which addresses the breadth, complexity and nuances of heritage.

*“Heritage is more than monuments, towns, townscapes, landscapes, seascapes, artefacts, collections, tourism and economy, though it is each of these. It is about people, creation, interaction, and function – a dynamic process that reflects the legacy, actions and aspirations of people into the future”*

The continued absence of cultural heritage as a central concept in Heritage Ireland 2030 has come in for some criticism given that it allows people connect with other elements of heritage, and it is an important centre-point from which communities can engage with heritage.

Waterford has a strong cultural heritage sector with internationally recognised and award-winning festivals, events and activities. Waterford City and County Council has shown significant leadership in supporting cultural heritage development for many years, recognising the value of culture and creativity as both central to the well-being of its citizens and in driving the economic fortunes of the region into the future.



This includes support of large-scale cultural developments including the Viking Triangle, Waterford Museum of Treasures, leadership of the Three Sisters European Capital of Culture 2020 Bid, development of a Cultural Quarter in the O’Connell Street area of Waterford City and development of a Cultural & Creativity Strategy.

### Waterford Heritage Plan (2017-2022)

At a local level, the Waterford Heritage Plan (2017-2022) has guided the conservation, research, enhancement and access to heritage of the City and County. The aim of this plan is to set out a strategic and co-ordinated approach for heritage in recognition of the benefits that heritage delivers; identifying a sense of place for

Waterford, learning lessons from our past to plan for the future and added value for the development of Waterford City and County.

Strategic objectives of the plan are;

- Increase public excitement about all aspects of heritage
- Increase physical access to heritage sites
- Increased access to heritage information
- Increase community involvement in heritage projects
- Increase heritage related tourism
- Increase appreciation of heritage amongst key stakeholders and the public
- Increase conservation and recording of heritage
- Increase funding for heritage in Waterford

## Waterford Built Heritage

Waterford has a unique and varied built heritage. This heritage is a physical reminder of the culture, ideals and history of previous generations. It includes castles, country houses, churches and public buildings, some of which were designed by eminent architects. However, more modest structures such as town houses, thatched cottages and farm complexes also contribute significantly to the character of the County. Waterford also has a rich industrial and maritime heritage which includes mills, quays and lighthouses. This wide variety of building stock has, over time, contributed to the special character of the County and is a unique resource which, once lost or damaged, cannot be replaced.



Waterford Council is obliged to protect the built heritage under Part IV of the Planning Development Acts 2000-2010 as amended. To ensure best conservation practices are observed, the Planning Authority will take account of the conservation guidelines issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and other statutory bodies. The built heritage is protected through its Record of Protected Structures of which there are 1477 in Waterford and through the designation of Architectural Conservation Areas.

*Thatch Cottage – Dunmore East, Waterford*

## Our Rural Future

The Government recently unveiled its blueprint to transform rural areas across the country entitled “Our Rural Future”. The policy acknowledges the significant impact rural tourism has on rural communities and economies and includes measures aimed at helping the tourism and hospitality sectors recover after the pandemic. The

policy recognises that tourism growth must be environmentally, commercially and socially sustainable in rural areas, and include community and visitor awareness and involvement. Waterford City & County Council's participation in the INTERREG Local Flavours project is based on such principles. Key projects such as the Visitor Experience Development Plan and the 'explore more Waterford' app are well placed to help sustainable rural tourism growth in Waterford when combined with the "Our Rural Future" rural development policy.

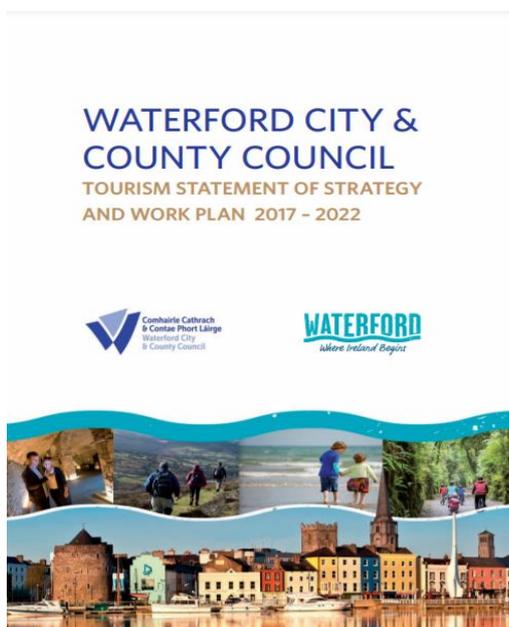
### National Planning Framework

At a national level the **National Planning Framework 2040** recognises the importance of rural tourism stating "Rural areas make a major contribution to Ireland's identity and to overall national development in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms. Rural areas, including Gaeltacht regions and Ireland's inhabited offshore islands, hold much of Ireland's natural resources, biodiversity, environmental qualities and landscape and contribute in a unique way to Ireland's culture."<sup>2</sup>; and "Tourism has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland".

### Waterford City & County Development Plan

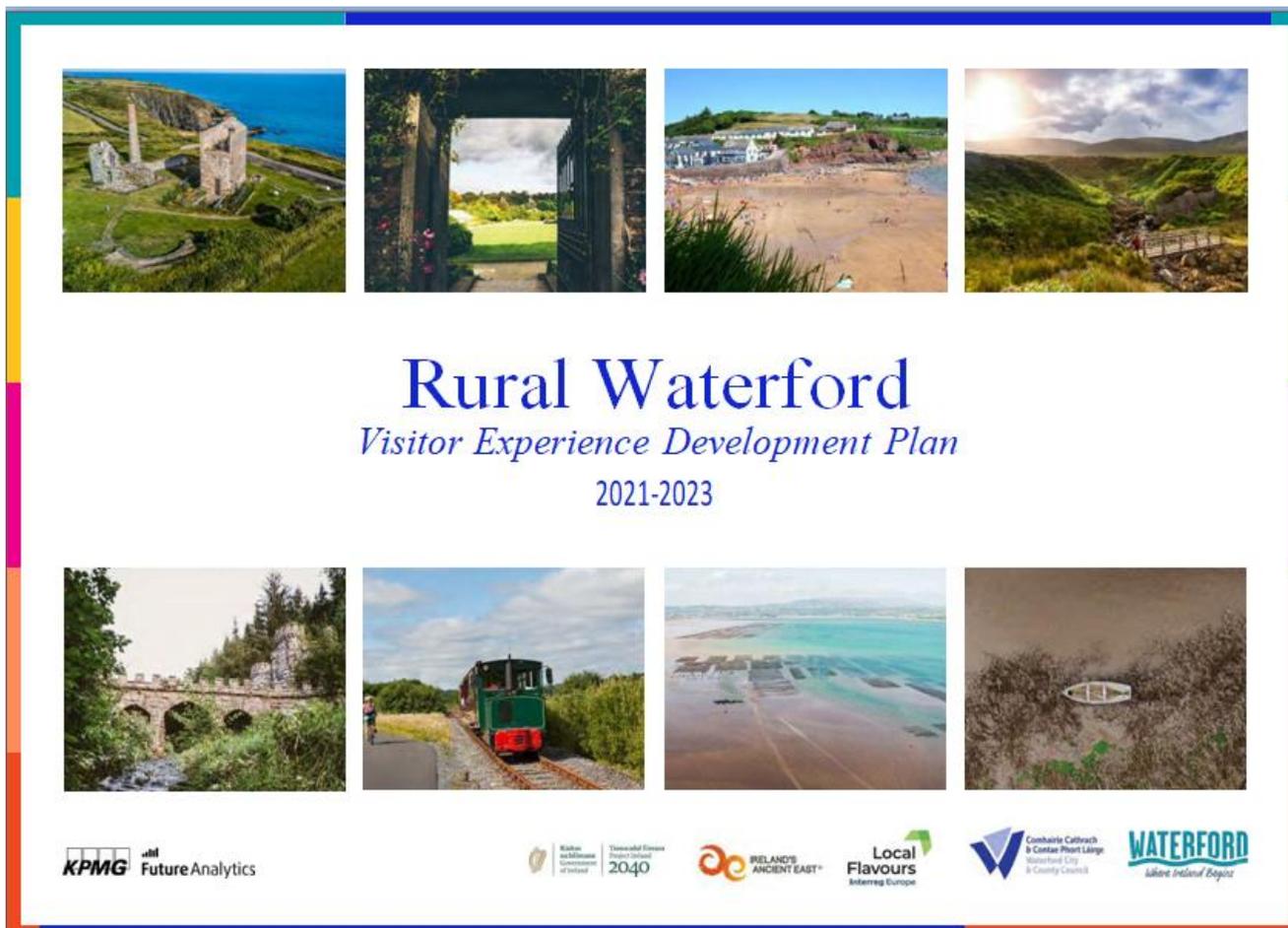
A combined Development Plan for Waterford City & County is currently being developed. The Local Flavours Steering Group has already made a submission to this plan based on the work undertaken in the Local Flavours project. The previous plan for County Waterford was from 2011-2017. An amalgamation of the administrative areas of the city and county meant that the development plans for the city and county were merged and the process of the development of that plan is ongoing.

### Waterford City and County Council's - Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Plan 2017-2022.



The Tourism Statement of Strategy highlights the transformation that has taken place in tourism in the county over the previous ten years. This includes investment in several flagship attractions in the city as well as the Waterford Greenway and flagship festivals including the West Waterford Festival of Food. Amalgamation of the two local authorities in Waterford in 2014 presented the opportunity to create a unifying destination brand 'Visit Waterford, Where Ireland Begins', launched in 2015. A key focus of the strategy is to build on existing co-operation between public and private sectors to arrive at a 'whole-of-sector' approach to tourism. It is also considered important that Waterford City & County Council recognise and prioritise the development of those places in Waterford that have the potential to deliver best economic return on investment. This ensures the best use of resources and encourages visitors to come to the county.

## Part IV – Progress to Date



The image shows the cover of the 'Rural Waterford Visitor Experience Development Plan 2021-2023'. It features a central title in blue serif font: 'Rural Waterford Visitor Experience Development Plan 2021-2023'. The cover is framed by a colorful border (blue, yellow, pink, orange) and contains eight small landscape photographs arranged in two rows of four. The top row shows: 1) a coastal ruin on a cliffside, 2) a view through a wooden doorway, 3) a sandy beach with buildings, and 4) a sunlit valley. The bottom row shows: 1) a stone bridge over a stream, 2) a green train on tracks, 3) a wide river or estuary, and 4) a stone structure in a field. At the bottom, there are logos for KPMG Future Analytics, the Irish Government, the Department of Tourism, Ireland 2040, Ireland's Ancient East, Local Flavours Interreg Europe, and Waterford City & County Council.

## VISITOR EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR RURAL WATERFORD 2021-2023

Launched June 2021

The Rural Waterford Visitor Experience Development Plan aims to identify existing and potential compelling experiences that bring rural Waterford to life.

It builds on the Interreg Local Flavours ethos of delivering memorable moments to visitors. It aims to increase the dispersion and numbers of visitors to the towns and villages of rural Waterford seeking to increase tourism revenue in a sustainable way.

It supports a sustainable rural economy based on low-impact activity tourism and the harnessing of collaborative investment and support and was developed in conjunction with the Local Flavours Steering Group and tourism stakeholders and agencies in Waterford.

Please use link to view the VEDP in full.  
<https://bit.ly/3h6Qgmw>

## Explore More Waterford App

An innovative online app to engage visitors to visit rural Waterford, 'Explore More Waterford', has been developed and launched in June 2021 as part of the Local Flavours Project

Users of the app can navigate through areas or themes to seek points of interest. The app includes pre-set routes available in suggested trips or an option to plan tailor made itineraries by listing favourites. Users can search by names for specific places included in the app by clicking on the magnifying glass. Websites appear as if contained in the app and use of the back button will return users to the app.

The objective of this innovative app is to provide visitors with all the information they need to explore rural Waterford by theme or area, encouraging increased dwell time and an enhanced experience of the county.

*'Magnificent houses and gardens, green and blue adventures, Waterford Greenway and Foodie Destination of the Year 2019 - Waterford has it all. Use the app to navigate your way along the magnificent Copper Coast, Blackwater Valley and the Waterford Estuary. Pick up cúpla focal in An Gaeltacht and be left breathless in the beauty of the Comeragh Uplands'*



**WANT TO EXPLORE RURAL WATERFORD?**

**DOWNLOAD THE 'EXPLORE MORE WATERFORD' APP TODAY!**

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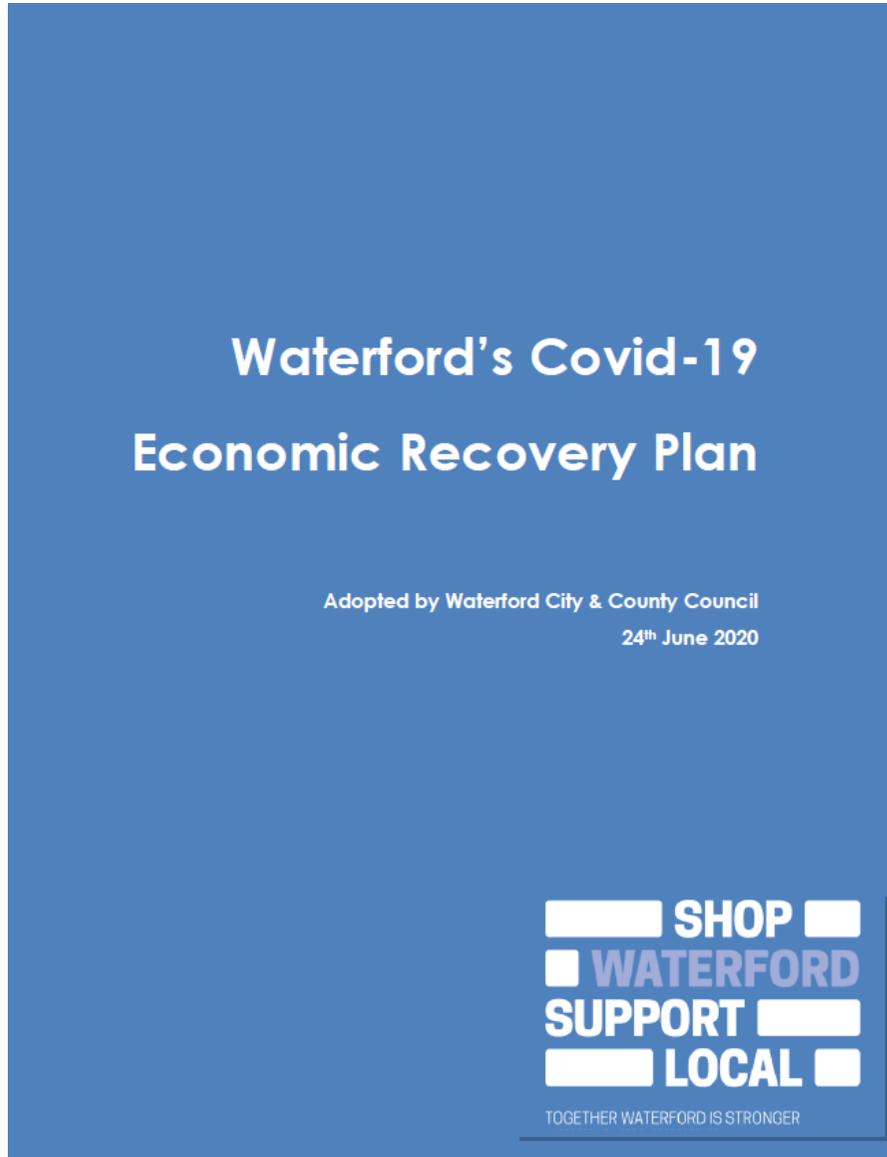
Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040

Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge  
Waterford City & County Council

**WATERFORD**  
Where Ireland Begins

## Policy Change Effected



Waterford's CV-19 Economic Recovery Plan was created as an immediate and direct response to the impact that Covid-19 had on the people and businesses of Waterford. The plan is designed for the uncertain and complex environment which Covid-19 created.

The plan was not the economic strategy for Waterford; that is contained in our policy instrument addressed by our action plan, Waterford Local Economic & Community Plan, but was intended to enhance, accelerate and compliment existing plans.

The Rural Economy was identified as a sector to be targeted with the objective of: Focus on key projects to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and enhance the rural economy. Under the transformative objectives one of the actions included was: '**Collectivise branding/marketing of rural Waterford's identity through Local Flavours Interreg Rural Tourism project increasing footfall and dwell time in rural areas**'.

The CV-19 Economic Recovery Plan was created as a response to the pandemic to help urban and rural Waterford recover in a collaborative way and although Waterford has always been a county rich in tourism assets the majority of visitors have always visited the urban centres using rural areas as transit zones. Before COVID we were engaging with Local Flavours and our partners to develop learnings around this issue and we were able to incorporate this learning into Waterford's COVID recovery plan to try to maximise the touristic potential of rural Waterford through its cultural heritage and assets in a sustainable way to increase visitor footfall, dwell time and spend.

The lessons learned from our participation in the Local Flavours project created an awareness of the importance of rural tourism and micro-heritage in particular. We incorporated the knowledge gained through Local Flavours engagements such as the plenary meeting on 19th May 2020 where Karvalics László (iASK) debated the concept of micro-heritage, and Tamás Fejérdy (iASK) and Mario Neve (UNIBO) introduced the concept of treating visitors as guests and focusing on a group of guests that may return to an area repeatedly. The knowledge gained around marketing and product identification of rural areas directly influenced the decision to include this action as part of the new policy document.

We were able to use the inclusion of Local Flavours in the Policy Document as a platform to apply for national funding enabling us to turn a policy into a concrete action in the development of an APP and Visitor Experience Development Plan.

## Policy Change Submissions

### WATERFORD CITY AND COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

# 2022–2028

Pre-Draft Strategic Issues Paper



As part of the Local Flavours project the Local Stakeholder Group (LSG) submitted a priority paper to the Draft Waterford City and County Council Development Plan a summary of the submission is detailed below.

### Development Plan / Local Flavours – key priorities

The implementation of the Visitor Experience Development Plan and accessing the required resources for priority rural projects will be key indicators of success of being part of the INTERREG Local Flavours programme in not only influencing and informing policy change but also in enabling sustainable tourism and rural economies within Waterford.

The way forward identified by the LSG for the identified cluster areas in Waterford is through effective partnerships, connectivity of the tourism/heritage assets to experiences and a coherent focus on getting the story to the customer – inspiring them to travel off season, stay longer and enjoy the essence of Rural Waterford’s identity. The future of many rural economies relies on capitalising on the opportunities presented by experiential tourism, the need for farm diversification and alternative enterprises. There has been a growing shift towards independent tourists seeking diverse appropriate accommodation infrastructure to allow them to move freely and conveniently between attractions- **therefore an objective of the Plan should be to support sustainable on-farm or farm related tourism ventures and associated infrastructure and in particular diverse accommodation offerings suitable to the locale.** Previous interpretation of the Development Plan restricted the opportunity for rural tourism accommodation.

To further maximise the touristic potential of Waterford’s cultural heritage and assets in a sustainable way, Waterford “Local Flavours” Local Steering Group has identified 7 Catalyst Projects that should be encompassed within any future Development Plan:

### CATALYST PROJECTS:

1. Examine the potential of Creaden Head as a significant early Mesolithic heritage site with digital visitor offering
2. Develop Tankardstown as a visitor centre attraction of note with geological/adventure/heritage aspect
3. Identify and develop a Coastal Cliff Walk Route linking the seaside villages along the Copper Coast stretch and connecting the Tramore-Dungarvan-Waterford City axis via Waterford Greenway
4. Create an interactive experience of key assets through digital discovery points at key locations within the cluster areas to avoid over proliferation of interpretive signage
5. Examine the potential of delivering Comeragh Uplands as a National Park connecting villages and existing walks as part of overall trail plan approach
6. Deliver Blackwater Valley Blueway and provide specific focus on Blue Economy/Coastal Tourism and regeneration
7. Support the concept of significant regeneration of Portlaw Tannery site to be used as a Biodiversity Park complete with visitor attraction embracing adventure tourism/industrial heritage tourism offerings.

## SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis of Waterford’s tourism offering outlined below is based on a combination of consultation findings, research and analysis in the SQA.

### Strengths

<p><b>Authentic local food story</b> with strong food offers, tours and festivals, and Food the Waterford Way network.</p>	<p><b>Diverse geography</b> across the county ranging from dramatic Comeragh mountains, to coast, rivers (Blackwater to the west and Suir to the north), Waterford Estuary and countryside; unspoilt natural landscapes.</p>	<p><b>Heritage towns</b> such as Lismore, Cappoquin, Ardmore, Portlaw.</p>	<p>Irish language and cultural tradition in the <b>Gaeltacht na nDéise</b>.</p>
<p><b>UNESCO Geopark</b> designation for Copper Coast Geopark providing networking and promotional opportunities and recognition of geological importance.</p>	<p><b>Scenic drives</b> including the Copper Coast and Blackwater Valley Drive acting as a motivator to increase dwell time.</p>	<p><b>Range of big houses and gardens</b> including Mount Congreve Gardens, Lismore Castle Gardens, Cappoquin House and Gardens, Curraghmore House and Gardens, Dromana House and Gardens.</p>	<p><b>Range of outdoor activities</b> including a significant water-based activity offer in Dunmore East</p>
<p><b>Promotion of rural Waterford experiences as part of Ireland’s Ancient East and Munster Vales</b> encouraging regional dispersion, tapping into key Fáilte Ireland objectives.</p>	<p><b>Development of the Waterford Greenway</b> a nationally significant recreation facility which encourages visitors to leave the urban areas of the county and access the countryside.</p>	<p><b>Range of walks</b> which enable access to the scenery including mountain walks (Nire Valley, Mahon Falls), cliff walks (Ardmore and Dunmore East) and St Declan’s Way Pilgrim Path.</p>	<p><b>Accommodation providers</b> which offer a range of visitor experiences working with local partners.</p>
<p><b>Accessibility</b> with proximity to Rosslare ferry port, and urban centres of Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny and Cork; N25 providing east west access to the county.</p>	<p><b>High quality festival and events</b> delivered throughout the destination e.g. Comeraghs Wild Festival, Copper Coast Festival, Blackwater Valley Opera Festival, All Together Now, Dunmore East Bluegrass Festival.</p>	<p><b>Villierstown Quay providing access to Blackwater River</b> and water-based activities including canoeing, kayaking, and angling.</p>	<p><b>The people of Waterford;</b> their pride in place and welcoming manner making visitors feel comfortable.</p>

## Weaknesses

Visitors mostly focused on Waterford City & larger urban areas meaning a lack of rural dwell time.	Tourism industry in rural Waterford not responding to visitor demand for experiential tourism.	Lack of visible accommodation in rural areas meaning overnight spend opportunity not maximised.	Issues of seasonality (in tandem with Covid and Brexit) impacts on viability of businesses.
Natural assets of the area not entirely accessible or presented in a visitor focused way e.g. parts of the river shore and coastline.	Inconsistent level of quality of visitor experiences in terms of how visitor ready they are.	Difficult to attract small tour groups to include the coastal route in their itinerary.	Need for more local stakeholders to drive development.
Rural Waterford not maximising economic value of major attractions such as Waterford Greenway and River Blackwater to increase dwell time and dispersion of visitors throughout the area.	Lack of diverse visitor attractions.	Perceived lack of funding for experience development amongst local stakeholders.	Farmers deterred from allowing more access for walking routes due to insurance concerns.
Low levels of cross selling and industry collaboration between geographic areas.	Lack of joint ticketing or cross selling of attractions, activities, and accommodation.	Competition with neighbouring counties promoting day trips.	Impact of development diluting the traditional culture in Gaeltacht na nDéise.
	Lack of cohesive journeys – few routes around the county.	Inadequate visitor infrastructure e.g. condition of roads, lack of toilets, parking, cafes.	

## Opportunities

Creation of new and enhanced cluster of engaging experiences in the five geographic areas.	Maximising stakeholder engagement in the development of any relevant Fáilte Ireland VEDPs focussing on coastal experiences, Blueways etc.	Engagement with Munster Vales for promotion and development of rural Waterford experiences.	Availability of Fáilte Ireland Covid-19 Safety Charter and associated supports.
Maximise the offer in destination towns such as Lismore, Ardmore and Dunmore East with a distinctive visitor offer.	Increasing and promoting environmental enhancement and community engagement through a sustainable and regenerative tourism approach.	Collaboration with neighbouring counties accommodation centres, activities and experiences.	Engage tourism stakeholders in on-going development and promotion of the Explore More Waterford visitor app to raise awareness of the rural Waterford offer.
Increasing the capacity of tourism stakeholders to engage in cross selling, collaboration and promotion of bundled experiences.	Tapping into Ireland's Ancient East promotion of rural Waterford itineraries as a route to market for local experiences and to maximise national spend opportunity.	Visitors seeking open air destinations and experiences in Covid-19 context.	Development of a business network amongst tourism stakeholders including representation on Visit Waterford with sub-group for experience development.
Range of funding schemes available for capital projects which could be used for experience development initiatives including Leader, Fáilte Ireland, RRDF, FLAG, Town and Village Funding, Údarás na Gaeltachta.	Development of linked network of Blueways e.g. linking Waterford to Wexford and Wicklow, and Blackwater Blueway.	New ways for visitors to engage with the Irish language such as day courses, an Irish language walking tour, and musical concerts with Irish dance lessons in the Gaeltacht na nDéise.	Highlighting the cultural offer through a West Waterford Music Festival.
Creation of more river and coastal walks.	Consideration of new and enhanced immersive visitor experiences such as ways to engage with the hero product in each destination cluster, and ways to better access the hero product for the visitor.	Seeking designation of Comeragh Mountains as a national park.	More spurs from the West Waterford Greenway e.g. linking to Lismore and west to County Cork, link to Kilmeaden, Portlaw and Carrick-on-Suir.

	<p>Maximising the potential of the rural Waterford food offer including on-farm food tours, more visitor experiences in each cluster, development of a network of food offers along the Waterford Greenway and combining experiences e.g. Blackwater Gin and Knockanore cheese.</p>	<p>Twinning towns and villages with European equivalents.</p>	
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### Threats

<p>Lack of co-ordination between stakeholders could mean that opportunities are being missed.</p>	<p>Overseas visitors lacking confidence to travel.</p>	<p>Activity providers facing insurance cost challenges.</p>	<p>Lack of signage and visitor facilities in some areas.</p>
<p>Pace of international tourism recovery due to Covid-19 crisis and ongoing threat to domestic tourism from national lockdowns.</p>	<p>Impact of Brexit on numbers of visitors from Great Britain.</p>	<p>Lack of awareness among domestic and international visitors of the wider offer in rural Waterford apart from the Waterford Greenway.</p>	

# Foundation of Waterford City & County Council's Action Plan

## The Geography

The five areas of rural Waterford encompass an exceptionally diverse range of places, including the iconic mountain range of the **Comeraghs**, with spectacular and accessible views, the beautiful **Blackwater Valley** with its castles, big houses and quaysides; the tranquil **Waterford Estuary** home to an early human settlement history and strong maritime heritage; the stunning **Copper Coast** with beautiful beaches and the increasingly popular Waterford Greenway, and **Gaeltacht na nDéise** with its fishing heritage and proud traditions and culture.

## The Market

The status quo analysis that informed this action plan highlighted the transformation that has occurred in tourism development, marketing and promotion in recent years with a trend, in Ireland and internationally, towards more **experiential tourism**, travel motivated by the desire to connect with a place, its culture and people. Memorable experiences, or the potential for such experiences, can motivate visitors to decide to go to one place or another, to remember the visit and recommend a visit to others afterwards. A memorable tourism experience is inherently personal, engages the senses, makes connections on an emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual or social level and creates a lasting memory. Experiences can include physical attractions but also events and activities. Developing experiences is about a combination of natural landscape assets, tourism products, customer service, and stories to create a compelling consumer offer.

## The Assets

Rural Waterford has a diverse range of tourism resources and associated visitor experiences. A summary of the primary assets are;

- Picturesque towns and villages
- Welcoming and friendly people
- The spectacular Comeragh mountains
- Stunning coastline including the Copper Coast UNESCO Geopark
- Two of Ireland's largest rivers, the Blackwater and the Suir
- World-class visitor attractions such as Mount Congreve Gardens and the Waterford Greenway
- A wealth of history and culture – including one of Ireland's earliest known settlements
- Vibrant festivals including the Comeraghs Wild Festival; the Copper Coast Festival, Sea Sessions at Dunmore East, Blackwater Valley Opera Festival and the music festival All Together Now
- An exceptional food offering with Waterford awarded 'Ireland's No. 1 Foodie Destination' in 2019 by the Restaurants Association of Ireland
- Activities on land and sea including the increasingly popular Waterford Greenway, walking trails and adventure activity companies.

## The Approach: Employing the KRAFT Methodology

### Creativity & Innovation

- A more holistic approach to rural tourism can yield significant benefit to sustainable rural development approaches and offers an innovative way to retain rural populations in towns and villages
- The LEADER Community-led Local Development approach and its action on Economic Development Zones offers a good platform for creativity and innovation within rural tourism stakeholders of Waterford
- The creativity potential of Rural Waterford is strong, but opportunities for human capital and industry/workforce upskilling amongst tourism stakeholders should be availed of to further strengthen this identified KRAFT potential.
- COVID – use of digital solutions specifically in the COVID environment

### **Social Capital /Network Potential**

- Forums for effective alignment of tourism/rural development interests or the sharing of information do not exist to any great extent and in their absence what becomes dominant are the interests of individual institutions and stakeholders.
- The density and quality of rural tourism networks working more closely with Waterford City, Tramore & Dungarvan can be crucial to the overall development of the County – such clusters need to be genuine rather than emerging in the context of applying for funding. The development of rural tourism networks with a long-term vision that can work across geographic boundaries and avail of education and training opportunities offers strong potential.
- Research indicated that communication channels and collaboration within rural Waterford tourism stakeholders required improvement. In order for any networking to be successful, local communities must formulate a long-term vision for the future, forming partnership networks with enterprise, education and training providers and local government.

### **Sustainability Potential**

- Rural Tourism potential, if not sensitively exploited in a coordinated manner, will have far less impact and long-term effect. Strategic development is required in all of the KRAFT potential areas and in particular with regard to the County Development Plan approach to Rural Tourism & Development. The key enabling Capital projects identified in the VEDP can lead to the kind of spill-over effect which makes towns and villages and their environs dynamic, creative and the entire region sustainable over the long term.

This Action Plan seeks to support cohesive development of tourism in the rural areas of Waterford by identifying the opportunities and actions that will encourage visitors to stay for longer, spend more in the rural communities and have an enhanced experience in the rural areas of County Waterford.

Enhancement and promotion of compelling rural Waterford visitor experiences in each character area will deliver memorable and inspirational moments, inspiring visitors to not only share their exceptional experience with others but to return, with positive impacts for both local communities and businesses.

The action plan will aim to identify existing and potential compelling experiences that bring rural Waterford to life and enable visitors to immerse themselves in the culture and landscape of the county; interacting with people, engaging the senses, and learning the history and stories of the places. It builds on the Interreg Local Flavours ethos of delivering memorable moments that inspire tourists to not only share their experience with others but also makes them want to return.

**What Success Looks like:** Successful implementation of our action plan will see increased numbers of visitors (both international and domestic, staying for longer and spending more in local communities. The wider objective is to create an environment within which it is more viable to establish and continue a tourism business in rural Waterford, and where rural communities within and between each of the five areas are working together and cross promoting for the benefit of all – one Waterford tourism community under the umbrella brand of Visit Waterford.

## Summary Matrix of the Actions

#	Name of the Action	Nature of Policy Instrument Improvement/Intervention	Timeframe		Coordinator	Stakeholders	Cost	Result indicator(s)
			Start date	End date				
1	Creation of Rural Tourism Network Clusters	Improved governance and change in the management of policy instrument	Q1 2022	Q1 2023	Waterford Local Flavours LSG	Local Flavours LSG Visit Waterford LEADER WCCC Fáilte Ireland LEO Dunhill Educational Centre Tourism Stakeholders	€15,000	Number of Rural Tourism Networks Established Number of rural tourism stakeholders/businesses engaged in networks Training needs across the geographical areas identified
2	Valorise rural area potential through marketing and innovative use of digital technology	Implementation of new projects based on learning	Q1 2022	Q1 2023	Waterford Local Flavours LSG	Local Flavours LSG Visit Waterford Copper Coast Geopark WCCC Fáilte Ireland Marketing Department Waterford Council Dunhill Educational Centre Tourism Stakeholders	€10,000	Rural Waterford App developed and used as a marketing tool for Tourism Team in Waterford Council and Visit Waterford Number of Rural Waterford App downloads Number of cultural heritage events/initiatives supported
3	Monitor impact of COVID 19 Rural Economy Plan as part of Waterford COVID19 Economic Recovery Plan	Change in strategic focus – new policy instrument influenced	Q1 2022	Q4 2022	Waterford Local Flavours LSG	Local Flavours LSG Visit Waterford LEADER WCCC Fáilte Ireland LEO Dunhill Educational Centre Tourism Stakeholders	N/A	Number of rural projects supported

## Part IV – Details of the Actions Envisaged

<b>Action 1</b>	<b>Name of Action: Creation of Rural Tourism Network Clusters</b>
<b>Relevance to the project</b> (Please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)	<p>Experience shared from our Local Flavours partners reinforced the importance of stakeholders working together to maximise touristic potential. Experiences shared by our Local Flavours partners highlighted the necessity of stakeholders in all regions needing to learn how to work towards one goal and at times this has proven difficult, shared best practices have also shown that once the benefits of collaboration were made apparent it was easier to get stakeholder buy in. The success of the Local Flavours on-line thematic meetings inspired the concept of providing training on-line in a user friendly way and also the provision a networking portal for stakeholders to collaborate and engage.</p> <p><b>Featured Best Practice: Saimaa Destination Co-operation (SDS - FI)</b>          The creation of the Lake Saimaa Association was a very interesting practice. The creation of a management board with representatives from different regions is a best practice in the co-ordination of effort and resources across different regions and is a very transferrable concept especially for this action ‘Creation of Rural Tourism Network Clusters’.          The importance of the support from the SME sector and their buy in into any project is a very real goal for Waterford and it was very informative to hear how over 200 SME’s participated in the Saimaa example. The building of a brand and the creation of a network management structure as well as gaining the support of Visit Finland is reflective of what we are trying to achieve with our Local Cultural Flavours project in Waterford.</p> <p><b>Featured Best Practice: Participatory approach Spoorzone (NL)</b>          Stakeholder engagement and development was an essential element this best practice showing innovative ways to attract and stimulate stakeholder involvement. This concepts used in this best practice are reflected in our use of networking portals that are an integral part of this action plan.</p> <p><b>Featured Best Practice: Day by Day Summer Programme in Kőszeg and its Surroundings (Kőszeg – HU)</b>          We found the project had many transferable qualities and some really good ideas for us to consider in Waterford.          -For smaller touristic regions bundling the experiences together enhances the attraction of the region.          -Encouraging stakeholders to cross sell their products has benefits for the whole region.          -When visitors attend one local experience they can be encouraged to extend their visit through information provided by the tour guides, local people or accommodation providers.          -Initial success encourages others to join in the venture so it is important for successes to be made know to the local stakeholders.          -An idea can start very small with just a few dedicated people and without a budget and can grow to have significant impact on region.</p>

	<p>-Touristic assets can exist but if they do not have sufficient marketing and awareness of their existence they can fail to reach their potential. By gathering like experience together, on a national or regional scale economies of scale can be achieved. Marketing budgets can be combined.</p> <p>-When bundling like experiences together this action plan needs to be cognisant that it may prove to be more difficult to get the larger more successful attractions to join as they are already successful and may even be better off on their own.</p>
<b>Nature of Policy Instrument Improvement/Intervention</b>	Improved governance and change in how Rural Tourism/Cultural Heritage Development is progressed in LECP/other Rural Development Planning approaches
<b>Nature of the action</b> (Please describe precisely the content of the action. What are the specific activities to be implemented?)	<p>Reinforce and facilitate tourism networks with identified representatives for each of the five destination clusters. Each group to have a focus on local economic development that benefits all communities in each area. The objective will be to foster a collaborative approach to visitor experience development and greater engagement in tourism development.</p> <p>Activity 1: Create tourism networks in 5 geographical areas</p> <p>Activity 2: Creation of a rural tourism sub-group of Visit Waterford with representation on main group</p> <p>Activity 3: Provide an on-line networking portal for each cluster to facilitate information sharing, collaboration, bundling and cross selling.</p> <p>Activity 4: Identify Training Needs of the clusters and create rural tourism online training programmes for up-skilling and bundling opportunities</p>
<b>Players / stakeholders involved</b> (Please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role.)	Local Flavours LSG, Visit Waterford LEADER ,WCCC, Fáilte Ireland, LEO, Dunhill Educational Centre, Tourism Stakeholders
<b>Timeframe</b> (Please specify the timing envisaged for the action.)	Completed Q1 2023
<b>Costs</b> (Please estimate the costs related to the implementation of the action.)	€15,000
<b>Indicative funding sources</b> (Please describe how the action will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II?)	WCCC Tourism Budget for Local Flavours

Action 2	<b>Name of Action: Valorise rural area potential through marketing and innovative use of digital technology</b>
<b>Relevance to the project</b> (Please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)	<p>COVID-19 has posed a serious threat to the tourism economy in Waterford with rural areas that depend on tourism income severely impacted. It has however given rise to digital solutions and the development of an app to encourage visitors to explore rural Waterford and allow tourism providers to valorise their destination potential. The promotion and easy identification of an area's cultural heritage not only for tourists but also for those living in these areas was essential to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.</p> <p><b>Featured Best Practice: Museum Card (Savonlinna - FI)</b> The use of mobile technology can assist visitors to access the resources of a region. An app with a built-in ticket for example can encourage visitors to go to see experiences that they might not have been aware of previously.</p> <p><b>Featured Best Practice: Saimaa Destination Co-operation (SDS - FI)</b> The building of a brand, the network management structure as well as gaining the support of Visit Finland is reflective of what we are trying to achieve within Local Flavours Action Plan in Waterford.</p> <p><b>Featured Best Practice: Cultural Route of Becharac and Ganga (IFT - HR)</b> The importance of culture and the necessity of ensuring that all aspects of an area's culture is recorded and preserved whilst also allowing others to explore it. The practice was influential in raising awareness of culture and folklore in rural Waterford.</p>
<b>Nature of Policy Instrument Improvement/Intervention</b>	Implementation of new projects based on learning and content from Rural Waterford VEDP and Cluster Networking
<b>Nature of the action</b> (Please describe precisely the content of the action. What are the specific activities to be implemented?)	<p>Activity 1: Creation of Rural Tourism App</p> <p>Activity 2: Activity 3: Incentivise and promote Cultural Heritage awareness and identity through support of local authentic tourism events and initiatives</p> <p>Activity 3: Promote Cultural Heritage branding identity for geographical areas</p>
<b>Players / stakeholders involved</b>	Local Flavours LSG, Visit Waterford Copper Coast Geopark, WCCC Fáilte Ireland Dunhill Educational Centre, Tourism Stakeholders across the region
<b>Timeframe</b> (Please specify the timing envisaged for the action.)	Complete Q1 2023
<b>Costs</b> (Please estimate the costs related to the implementation of the action.)	€10,000
<b>Indicative funding sources</b> (Please describe how the action will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II?)	<p>Funding for the development of App has already been secured through central government funding for measures to negate the impact of COVID.</p> <p>Potential exists to access further resources from central government.</p>

<b>Action 3</b>	<b>Name of Action:</b> Monitor impact of COVID 19 Rural Economy Plan as part of Waterford COVID19 Economic Recovery Plan
<b>Relevance to the project</b> (Please describe how this action derives from the project and in particular from the interregional exchange of experience. Where does the inspiration for this action come from?)	<p>The Plan for Waterford’s Economic Recovery was prepared as an immediate and direct response to the impact that Covid-19 has had on the people and businesses of Waterford. The plan was designed for the uncertain and complex environment which Covid-19 created.</p> <p>An agile approach to implementing the plan will allow Waterford to adapt to the evolving environment and enhance, accelerate and compliment existing plans in a number of key sectors in the local economy which have been most impacted by Covid-19 e.g SMEs, tourism, culture and the rural economy. The initial focus of the plan is on these sectors but a key element of this plan is to continue to work with stakeholders to monitor the impact of the crisis on different sectors and use our networks to continue to develop collaborative and innovative responses to Covid-19.</p>
<b>Nature of Policy Instrument Improvement/Intervention</b>	Change in strategic focus – new policy instrument influenced
<b>Nature of the action</b> (Please describe precisely the content of the action. What are the specific activities to be implemented?)	<p>Activity 1: Monitor impact of new policy instrument</p> <p>Activity 2: Implement and develop relevant projects that contribute to rural economy</p>
<b>Players / stakeholders involved</b> (Please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role.)	<p>Local Flavours LSG</p> <p>Dunhill Multi-Educational Centre</p> <p>Tourism Stakeholders across the region</p>
<b>Timeframe</b> (Please specify the timing envisaged for the action.)	Complete Q4 2022
<b>Costs</b> (Please estimate the costs related to the implementation of the action.)	N/A
<b>Indicative funding sources</b> (Please describe how the action will be financed. Is it through the policy instrument(s) indicated in part II?)	Potential exists to access further resources from central government.

## Result Indicators

Name of the Indicator	Action 1	Action 2
<b>Indicator 1</b> Policy Instrument incorporates the development of Rural Tourism based on local cultural heritage	X	X
<b>Indicator 2</b> Rural Waterford App developed and used as a marketing tool for Tourism Team in Waterford Council and Visit Waterford		X
<b>Indicator 3</b> Rural Tourism Networks Established	X	

## 1. Risk Assessment

**Risk assessment** is the basis for effective implementation of activities, considering specific requirements for all stakeholders.

**Potential external and internal risks** should be analyzed which may affect the realization of the intended activities or affect the non-realization of the defined AP goals.

According to the content of the project and the number of stakeholders, risks should be separated into different **categories**. Their **impact, and probability of occurrence** should also be defined

#	Risk Classification	Risk Description	Impact Severity (1-5)	Risk Probability (1-5)	Risk Score (Impact x Probability)	Contingency Plan	Responsible
1	External Risk	Changes in the tourist behaviour e.g. post pandemic behaviour	4	3	12	CV19 Economic Recovery Plan	Economic Development
2	Project Execution Risk	Staffing Resouce	2	2	4	Transfer project to Tourism Team & Visit Waterford	Tourism Team WCCC
3	Stakeholder Risk	Lack of engagement from rural stakeholders	4	2	8	LSG utilised to encourage local participation.	LSG
4	Regulatory Risk	Non-inclusion of the sustainable use of cultural heritage in tourism objectives in strategic documents	4	2	8	Enhanced enagement with local elected representatives / policy structures to ensure benefits of inclusion are realised	Local Flavours Project Team & LSG

## 2. Impacts

This part of the AP should focus on the possible outcomes of the actions. Depending on the actions, **focus must be given** mainly on **social and policy impacts**.

How and in what way would the actions and the successful implementation **affect the society and policy** in the near future?

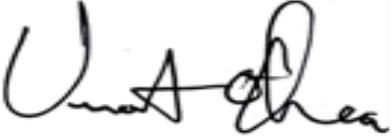
This part should **refer back to the result indicators and monitoring** section.

#	Name of the Action	Policy Instrument	Self-defined performance (result) indicator	Impact (on society and/or policy)
1	Creation of Rural Tourism Network Clusters	Local Economic & Community Plan	<p>Networks Established</p> <p>Representation on Visit Waterford Group</p> <p>Training assessment carried out</p> <p>Networking portals established</p>	<p>Integration of Rural Tourism Stakeholders into PR &amp; Marketing body allowing for rural tourism providers to raise issues and influence policy change.</p> <p>Training identified will provide stakeholders on the cultural heritage of their area and surrounding areas allowing them to become ambassadors.</p> <p>Networking portals will encourage collaboration allowing for the exchange of information, bundling of packages and access to on-line training.</p>

2	<b>Valorise rural area potential through marketing and innovative use of digital technology</b>	Local Economic & Community Plan	<p>App fully developed and promoted.</p> <p>Community led brands developed</p> <p>Events supported to raise awareness of local cultural heritage, locally and nationally.</p>	<p>App will make it easier for visitors to explore rural Waterford and offer a platform for local stakeholders to market themselves.</p> <p>The branding of areas will offer a distinct cultural identity that will fit into the overall Vist Waterford brand.</p> <p>Raising awareness of the cultural assets that are available will benefit the local area, help keep traditions alive and enhance the authentic experience for visitors.</p>
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3	<b>Monitor impact of COVID 19 Rural Economy Plan as part of Waterford COVID19 Economic Recovery Plan</b>	Waterford COVID19 Economic Recovery Plan	<p>Rural Economy Plan Impact Monitored</p> <p>Projects developed and implemented that contribute to rural economy within Pandemic environment.</p>	<p>Monitoring the impact of the COVID19 crisis on different sectors within Rural Communities will help develop collaborative and innovative responses that will assist tourism stakeholders to adapt and survive/thrive</p> <p>Innovative projects that contribute to the Rural economy will offer new opportunities for rural communities to emerge from the pandemic.</p>
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Date: 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Signature: 

Stamp of the organisation (if available):

