

Press Release

December 5th 2016

Trees Have a Magic number as €550k Investment Seeks to Unleash Tourism Potential in Forests

Fáilte Ireland today announced a capital funding package of **€550,000** for Coillte as part of a strategic partnership to boost the tourist experience at a number of the state owned forestry company's sites and unleash their significant potential for visitors. This team up with Coillte is the latest in a series of partnerships that Fáilte Ireland is developing with key State agencies and bodies which own and manage attractions and sites that are considered to be of vital importance to tourism. As part of this strategy, Fáilte Ireland is giving capital funding to projects of tourism value as well as providing its considerable expertise in tourism development and marketing.

Today, Fáilte Ireland and Coillte launched their partnership with the announcement of the €550,000 funding package for the development of project designs for six projects:

- Avondale Forest Park Experience, Co. Wicklow
- Curraghchase Forest Park, Co. Limerick
- Ards Forest Park, Co. Donegal
- Wild Nephin and Ballycroy, Co. Mayo
- Coolaney Mountain Bike Centre, Co. Sligo
- Facilities for motorhomes at sites along the Wild Atlantic Way

Significant further funding to progress these projects will be announced once the projects have been designed and costed.

Announcing the funding, the Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Patrick O'Donovan TD said:

"I am delighted to see such joined-up working between two state agencies where the strengths and assets of each are being combined to really provide us with an enhanced visitor experience. In an unpredictable trading environment, there can be no room for complacency in tourism and we have to continually go out there and battle with competing destinations to win more visitors to our shores. Partnerships like this - which will ultimately provide us with more compelling experiences on the ground - help provide the cutting edge we need to compete."

Speaking today, Fáilte Ireland's Director of Strategic Development, Orla Carroll emphasised:

"We know from our own research that more and more visitors want to experience the Irish landscape up-close and personal. The wild and rugged environment of the Wild Atlantic Way and the lush, green and fertile landscapes of Ireland's Ancient East are very strong magnets for visitors when choosing a holiday destination. These Coillte properties provide our visitors with an opportunity to really get back to nature and get in touch with Ireland. With the great potential that these sites have, this partnership will be a win-win for both agencies and provide tourism benefits for all the communities involved."

Gerard Murphy Managing Director of Coillte Forest said: "Coillte is Ireland's leading provider of outdoor recreational activities, with over 2,000km of waymarked trails, 180 recreation sites and 12 forest parks on our estate attracting 18 million visits annually. Coillte's forests, tracks and trails are ideal for lovers of the great outdoors, nature enthusiasts and those who want to explore Ireland's rich cultural heritage, which is woven into the fabric of the forests We believe we have the facilities and the resources to attract even more visitors and we are delighted that we have an opportunity to develop this partnership with Fáilte Ireland and to continue to grow our long-term vision of making a key contribution to tourism and local economies."

The development of strategic partnerships with state agencies and bodies in order to maximise the tourism potential of State lands and assets, is one of the deliverables set out in Fáilte Ireland's Tourism Investment Strategy 2016-2022. Similar partnerships are also in place with a number of other State agencies and bodies, including the Office of Public Works and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

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Note for Editor

Fáilte Ireland, the national tourism development authority, was established in 2003 to guide and promote tourism as a leading indigenous component of the Irish economy.

The tourism and hospitality industry employs an estimated 205,000 people and generates an estimated €5.7 billion in revenue a year.

