Wild Atlantic Way Case Study

November 2016
1. CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Western Ireland’s Tourism Challenge
Tourism is a critical component of the West of Ireland’s economy. The region faced a major challenge with international tourism numbers and its share of holiday visits to Ireland dropping significantly over the period 2007-2010 – performance which was exacerbated by the impact of the global financial crisis and Ireland’s challenging economic circumstances at the time. Urgent action was required.

The Solution
Fáilte Ireland developed and implemented the Wild Atlantic Way as a large-scale new tourism programme to directly tackle the problem. As its primary objective, the programme sought to grow economic contributions from international visitor markets.

The Programme
The Wild Atlantic Way is Ireland’s first long-distance touring route, stretching along the Atlantic coast from Donegal to West Cork. Supported by a substantial programme of infrastructure investment and experiential product development, the project aims to develop a branded route that will achieve greater visibility for the west coast of Ireland in target overseas tourist markets.

The Wild Atlantic Way destination brand was developed with a specific objective to be a unifying proposition for the West Coast of Ireland. Three overarching themes have been identified to guide the future development of the Wild Atlantic Way:

- Spirit of Adventure (Adventure);
- Life Shaped by the Atlantic (Culture), and
- Where Land and Sea Collide (Landscape and Seascape).

Key Route Characteristics
1. The Wild Atlantic Way is an **over-arching brand** which individual destinations and businesses can use to leverage much greater visibility and clarity of message in the international marketplace. The brand has been delivered in the first instance, through the identification of a coastal touring route which joins up a number of pre-existing roads and routes as well as a large number of towns and villages, attractions and experiences.
2. The Wild Atlantic Way has been devised as a new ‘experience’ and ‘destination’ to present the west coast of Ireland as a compelling international tourism product - seeking to achieve a level of cut-through which individual destinations would be unable to achieve.

3. At the outset it was assumed that only a small proportion of visitors would ‘do’ the entire Way, however there was a need for the ‘Way’ to have a scale and depth of experiences to create ‘visibility’ in international markets and for it to function as a device which has the ability to draw people back to the west of Ireland for a repeat visit.

4. Although positioned as a touring route rather than a drive, there was acceptance that core visitors markets (at least in the short term) would largely experience the Wild Atlantic Way through self-drive trips (95% car travel). While it is intended that infrastructure will be substantially enhanced over the course of the programme, the Way is based around a core touring route proposition (existing road infrastructure) supported by a wide range of walking, cycling and water-based trails. Loop itineraries, and walking/cycling/water-based options will continue to be developed over the course of the programme.

Policy Context
Failte Ireland’s strategy in growing the tourism economy is grounded in the principals of experience development. An Experience Development Framework serves as the guiding structure for the development of Ireland’s key tourism propositions (‘big ideas’).

The Wild Atlantic Way is designated as one of three Key Propositions (Iconic or ‘Big Ideas’). These key geographically based, thematic propositions have been identified as being of strategic tourism importance internationally.

» Dublin » Wild Atlantic Way » Ireland’s Ancient East

The purpose of the Experience Development Framework is to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to the identification and development of memorable tourism experiences.

Associated with each of the key tourism propositions are a number of related ‘Signature Experiences’ and a large number of ‘Supporting Experiences’ which are identified for their ability to deliver on the essence of one of the propositions. The Experience Development Framework sets out the relationship between Brand Ireland, key propositions, themes, signature experiences, and supporting experiences. Propositions such as the Wild Atlantic Way are intended to serve as the magnet to gain international visitor attention.
2. THE WILD ATLANTIC WAY

1. Synopsis / Executive summary

- **Project description**
  The Wild Atlantic Way encompasses the coastline and hinterland of the nine coastal counties of the West of Ireland – Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry and Cork. The route stretches for almost 2,500km from the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal to Kinsale in West Cork.

  The route itself is intended as the magnet or calling card to gain the attention of the international visitor, and acts as a device to entice people to the west of Ireland. Once there, visitors are encouraged to further explore and engage with tourism experiences and communities in a wider geographical area in the west of Ireland.

  A key objective of the 2015 – 2019 Operational Programme is to identify a series of loops off the main route to further encourage visitors to explore the wider region and to increase the dwell time of international visitors.

  At almost 2,500 km, the Wild Atlantic Way covers an extensive geographical area which can prove difficult for visitors to understand and consume in its entirety. Six geographic zones have been identified to amplify different sections of the ‘Way’ and to make it easy for consumers to orientate themselves based on their motivations. Route presentation through zones also allows presentation of the brand to travel trade through a series of easily consumable and distinct geographies and itineraries.

  The Wild Atlantic Way was devised as a new ‘experience’ and ‘destination’ by Fáilte Ireland to present the west coast of Ireland as a compelling international tourism product.

  The ‘Way’ is Ireland’s first long-distance touring route, stretching along the Atlantic coast from Donegal to West Cork.

  The programme aims to develop a route that will achieve greater visibility for the west coast of Ireland in overseas.

Source: [www.wildatlanticway.com](http://www.wildatlanticway.com)
A number of urban centres have been identified as gateways including; Cork, Killarney, Limerick, Ennis, Galway, Westport, Sligo, Donegal and Letterkenny. Even though some towns and cities are not located directly on the route, they have an important role to play as key accommodation hubs which service the wider area in addition to having an appeal in their own right.

**Key Project Components**

- ✔ A new overarching Brand
- ✔ Multi-region, covering 9 counties and a strong depth/range of experiences
- ✔ Concept is based on a core touring route proposition
- ✔ Strong community support and engagement
- ✔ Dedicated consumer and trade website [www.wildatlanticway.com](http://www.wildatlanticway.com)
- ✔ Investment in high quality and consistent wayfinding
- ✔ Development of Signature Discovery Points (access points, lookouts, attractions, focal points) and 188 Discovery Points
- ✔ Itinerary and trip planning a key focus for consumer and trade engagement
- ✔ Supported by extensive experience development planning and business support programmes
- ✔ Dedicated international and domestic marketing campaign support.

**Budget and sources of funds**

The Wild Atlantic Way is a major long term investment programme incorporating significant levels of capital and revenue investment. Initial development started in 2010/11, with the 2015-2019 Operational Programme guiding ongoing investment.

**Sources of Funds**

Investment in the development and implementation phases has been driven by Fáilte Ireland, drawing on substantial national government support. Capital investment in route development and interpretation has been funded 100% by Fáilte Ireland - only a small part of the route (Donegal) has accessed EU support through the Interreg programme. Programme implementation has also benefitted from a broad range of regional agency (business support) and local government (supporting infrastructure) investment. Public sector support is intended as a catalyst for flow-on private sector investment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Stage</th>
<th>Investment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial research and development (brand development, environmental research etc)</td>
<td>Approximately €300,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Route development to date (capital investment)</td>
<td>€12M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Atlantic Way operational investment (events, experience development planning, monitoring)</td>
<td>Estimated €2M to €3M annually</td>
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Although not quantifiable as discrete budget areas, business support activities delivered by local development organisations and Fáilte Ireland/ Tourism Ireland’s overall marketing activities also contribute significantly to programme implementation.

Fáilte Ireland has a **core team of 19.5 FTEs** engaged in developing and delivering the programme.

2. **History, development and performance**

   - **Project history from start to current status, and the roles of different stakeholders in funding and delivery**

**Project Development**

In developing the programme, three principal options were identified as a means of redressing the fall in international visitation.

**Option 1 - Status Quo**

This option continued with a regional approach to tourism development with each of the regions competing with one another for market share. All of the regions contributed to a large mix of experience brands; however these struggled to stand out in international marketplace and lacked the point of difference to achieve cut-through. It was considered that pursuing this option would not result in a sufficient disruption of the downward trend in overseas bednights and revenue that was the case at the time. It was this ‘status quo’ option that had been in force when the decline occurred so there is no evidence to suggest that it would have the ability to arrest or reverse the decline.

**Option 2 - Honeypot Growth**

This option was based on focusing future growth on those centres that were already popular with visitors and try to grow them further. This option would involve the development of a single new attraction of sufficient scale to focus attention on the west coast. It was considered that such an approach would not provide a solution for the entire western seaboard and would not have the ability to sufficiently disrupt the geographical seasonal inequities that currently exist along the west coast.

**Option 3 - Overarching Brand**

The Preferred Option The third option considered the development of an overarching brand for the west of Ireland which would equip it with a greater potential to achieve ‘cut-through’ in target overseas markets by developing the concept of the Wild Atlantic Way as both a brand.
and a touring route. Comparator experiences such as the Great Ocean Road (Australia), the Garden Route (South Africa) and the Big Sur (North America) were all examined. The brand was tested and consumer groups responded very positively to it. As part of this Option, two further options were considered.

- A route based on branding of existed roads along the West Coast - the basis of what has become the Wild Atlantic Way

- The development of a single walking route or greenway. This option would have required significant new infrastructure which could not have been developed in time for a 2014 launch, and would not have met the core expectations of international visitors. Fáilte Ireland did however see value in walking and cycling routes and loops as part of the overall proposition, and this work has been built into the 2015 to 2019 operational programme.

In order to allow for the cycling/walking proposition to be integrated, the original name of ‘Wild Atlantic Drive’ was changed to ‘Wild Atlantic Way’ so that it would not imply to the visitor that the Wild Atlantic Way is just about driving and that there are also options to explore the Wild Atlantic Way based on public transport, cycling, walking, and on the water.

From a development perspective, a number of aspects are important to note;

- The sensitive nature of the west coast environment was a key consideration from the outset – approximately 75% of the route has environmental designations of varying types. An environmental assessment was carried out to inform route development and environmental impact remains a key part of overall monitoring. Development of the route has had a positive impact in the sense that it has heightened attention on the quality and special nature of the environment - Fáilte Ireland has embraced the environmental aspect to project development and delivery – a key part of the Wild Atlantic Way proposition is that it remains ‘wild’.

- The challenging nature of a project that involved multiple partners and jurisdictions. Although Ireland had already implemented a new tourism structure which had moved away from the former regional tourist board approach, the project remained complex. Aspects to note included;
  - Strong leadership from Fáilte Ireland was essential in driving through implementation
  - National level resourcing of the project was critical - Fáilte Ireland has 100% funded route development and interpretation - contracting with local authorities to implement signposting etc
  - Engaging communities at an early stage in the process to ensure ownership of the concept has been viewed as an important step.

- The initial rationale for the project was to raise awareness and drive visitation from target international markets, however the Wild Atlantic Way brand and experiences has also now gained traction in domestic markets – the autumn 2016 campaign focuses on attracting shoulder season trips from domestic markets.
Development Timeline: Key Milestones

Stage 1: Develop brand proposition and identity, and key market segments
- 2011-12 Identification of preferred solution, Wild Atlantic Way Brand Proposition development
  - Market research & Brand concept and brand development.

Stage 2: Route Identification
- 2012-13: Initial identification of route and wayfinding strategy
  - Publication of brand proposition & Route Identification Report.

Stage 3: Way-finding strategy including directional signage
- 2013: Implementation and Delivery of Discovery points
  - Strategic Environmental Assessment, Wayfinding & Local projects.

Stage 4: Delivery of 'Discovery Points'
- Launch of branded Wild Atlantic Way route (February 2014) & Signature Discovery Points.

Stage 5: Selling Wild Atlantic Way experiences
- Operation and Implementation (2014 onwards): Selling Wild Atlantic Way experiences, marketing and communications
  - Branding Guidelines and Good practice visitor management guidelines published
  - Development of quality and depth of walking, cycling and water-based infrastructure.

Stage 6: Marketing and Experience Development
- 2015-16 Wild Atlantic Way operational programme
  - 1 year after launch, a 5 year operational plan was developed which sets out the strategy for implementation
  - Mid-term route review and discovery points built into the programme
  - Implementation of a major new experience development programme commenced in 2016. Experience Development Plans are being prepared for regions across Ireland (including the Wild Atlantic Way), providing destinations and businesses with frameworks which assist them in identify and bringing their unique visitor experiences to market.
Key Project Components

**An Overarching Brand**

- Creation of an overarching brand – adding weight and identity to individual destinations
- Supported by brand guidelines.

**Route identification**

- Based on existing road network
- Environmental audit informed route selection
- Explore the Route – visitors can use an interactive map to outline the full coastal route of the Wild Atlantic Way
- Wild Atlantic Way has a number of distinct zones
  - Northern Headlands, Malin Head to Donegal Town
  - The Surf Coast, Donegal Town to Erris
  - The Bay Coast, Erris to Galway Bay
  - The Cliff Coast, Galway to Ballybunion
  - Southern Peninsulas, Ballybunion to Baltimore.

**Single Web Platform**

- [www.WildAtlanticWay.com](http://www.WildAtlanticWay.com) is the official tourism information website and is operated by Fáilte Ireland. It provides comprehensive information to inspire visit to Ireland’s vibrant coastal route. It enables visitors to virtually explore the route, assists with trip planning and offer the most up to date information
- The ‘Get Inspired’ section – visitors are invited to select things to do by theme
- Browse Stories – for top tips, suggestions and insider knowledge from the people who know the Wild Atlantic Way best. Visitors can also add their own experience and share it with others.
**Dedicated Marketing and Campaign Support**

- International market focus
- Investment in events as trip motivators
- Wild Atlantic Way integrated within overall Ireland marketing activity
- New €1m autumn campaign - ‘Embrace the Wild Atlantic Way of Life’ launched in September 2016
  - Shoulder season focus
  - Call to action: urging domestic consumers to switch off their smart phones, ignore all their emails and truly get away from it all with a break along the world’s longest defined coastal route.

**Route Development and Infrastructure**

- Identification of network of Signature Discovery Points - key landscapes, access points, attractors etc
- Installation of photo points and interpretation story panels at each of the 188 discovery points completed in time for the 2016 visitor season
- Interpretation and branding programme at the discovery points and along the route.
- Capital investment in new attractors and upgraded experiences i.e. Fanad Head Lighthouse & Visitor Centre.

**Itinerary Development and Trip Planner**

- Trip Planner – a tool to help consumers plan the perfect trip using pins to save trip ideas to an interactive map that can be edited printed or shared with friends
- Transport options including the Open-Road bus pass which allows travel on all Bus Éireann scheduled services. Bus Éireann also have a special Wild Atlantic Way Open-Road Travel Pass - a hop on, hop off ticket.
Business and Trade Support

- A range of business support programmes are available via Fáilte Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices
- Support aims to equip the industry with market insights and competitor set analysis, and to facilitate networking between businesses to work together to develop, improve and protect ‘Wild Atlantic’ tourism experiences
- LinkedIn Wild Atlantic Way Trade Forum
- Trade Manual prepared
- No online booking component planned in the immediate future - emphasis on working through third parties and engaging with international buyers (actively grouping/presenting Wild Atlantic Way experiences)
- An experience development programme being rolled out for regions - experience development plans and implementation support - aiding businesses and destinations to develop the depth and quality of market-ready visitor experiences.

Walk/Trail Development

- New walks and trails continue to be developed over the term of the 2015-19 Operations Plan – adding options for visitors and improving connectivity with Wild Atlantic Way communities
- The Derrigimlag-Connemara loop was developed in 2016, establishing an interpreted looped walk on the site of the Marconi Wireless Station and Alcock & Brown Transatlantic Landing site - bringing two of the most important industrial stories of the twentieth century to life for visitors.
• **Prospects and projections**

The Appendix to this report contains a summary of project objectives and operational measures and targets.

**Prospects**

Although hard visitation data is limited at present, good progress has been made on establishing the programme. Fáilte Ireland has identified that the key challenges facing the Wild Atlantic Way in 2016 are:

1. Raising awareness of the Wild Atlantic Way
2. Shoulder Season Extension
3. Regional Spread of Visitors

Planned activities include;

**International Awareness**

Tourism Ireland will continue to promote the Wild Atlantic Way internationally as part of their ongoing marketing communications plan. In addition to this activity Fáilte Ireland will establish a Public Private International Marketing Fund to design and implement a dedicated Wild Atlantic Way consumer marketing campaign to increase awareness levels and generate incremental international bednights.

**Domestic Consumer Marketing**

While the initial focus of Wild Atlantic Way was to grow international visitation, marketing has also now been extended to domestic markets. A digital campaign was implemented in spring 2016 to reinforce the Wild Atlantic Way proposition at the forefront of consumers’ minds during key booking periods.

**Season Extension Initiatives**

A significant challenge for many of the communities along the Wild Atlantic Way is the seasonal nature of visitation and business trading. The ‘season’ can be as little as 8 weeks for destinations outside well-established tourism hubs. Part of the challenge is also influencing engrained business behaviour and attitudes. While anecdotal evidence from tour operators and local destination managers is that visitor demand is now showing evidence of growth during the shoulder season, many SMEs and lifestyle businesses have continued to be reluctant to extend their opening periods, resulting in some instances where there are limited experience or activity options available to visitors outside the accommodation properties who have remained open. Season extension initiatives include;

- Launch of the ‘Embrace the Wild Atlantic Way of Life’ marketing campaign in September 2016. The €1m campaign targets domestic markets to develop a longer season – driving a greater frequency of short breaks in the Autumn season
- Support tools and engagement to raise awareness of the opportunities available from businesses being autumn-ready' and growing their trading season (please see industry capability building activities, page 14).

**Signature Experience Plans**

In 2016, work commenced on development of a suite of Experience Development Plans. It is intended that the plans will be practical action plans that can be implemented over 2-3 year
periods, and will be developed with “hero” tourism products at the heart of each plan. The experience plans and the business engagement support work which will aid their implementation are key steps for each region in bringing high quality experiences to life.

**Industry Capability Building and Investment**

Fáilte Ireland is delivering a comprehensive range of business supports to tourism businesses along the Wild Atlantic Way to support capability building and to ensure that their partners are well equipped to exploit opportunities.

Supports will be delivered across a variety of topics including sales & distribution, revenue management, cross promotion, digital supports, ambassador programmes and customer care. Support activity includes:

- A food and drink story toolkit for the Wild Atlantic Way
- A series of webinars covering a wide range of business support activity
- A program of business development seminars, workshops and mentoring services
- A formal agreement with Enterprise Ireland whereby all tourism businesses can now avail of the supports and services offered by Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) nationwide. LEOs are ‘first stop shops’ for people interested in starting up a new business or already in business including entrepreneurs, early stage promoters, start-ups and small business looking to expand.

New investment in products and experiences will continue to be encouraged. Fáilte Ireland has gathered anecdotal evidence of the Wild Atlantic Way proposition beginning to influence investment decisions – increasing usage of Wild Atlantic Way phrasing in new business start-ups and initiatives has been monitored as a means of assessing impact. This anecdotal feedback has been backed up by banks having approached Fáilte Ireland to seek confirmation on the initiative as it has been included as part of financial investment propositions.
3. Key learnings

SUCCESS FACTORS

A Strategic Approach
- Wild Atlantic Way is fully embedded within a strategic experiential approach at national level – one of three core propositions critical to the success of Ireland’s tourism industry. The initiative benefits from a comprehensive monitoring mechanism and strategic management/operations plans.

Thinking Big
- Neither half measures nor the status quo would achieve the necessary impact to address the challenges facing the tourism sector. Fáilte Ireland and partners have committed to a large-scale, long term programme. The potential market impact available from the depth and range of experiences incorporated within Wild Atlantic Way exceeds what could have been achieved by individual regions or council areas.

Strong Leadership
- Strong leadership and financial backing from Fáilte Ireland to drive the project was essential. A core team of 19.5 FTEs supports program implementation.

Wide Ranging Partnership
- While nationally led, development and implementation has required Fáilte Ireland to engage with a wide range of partners including; environmental, cultural and heritage agencies, local government, business support providers and local communities.

Brand-Led
- The Wild Atlantic Way destination brand was developed with a specific objective to be a unifying proposition for the West Coast - a compelling proposition which had the potential to make the necessary impact in international markets.

Comprehensive Investment Approach
- Establishing Wild Atlantic Way and bringing it to market has required a comprehensive investment approach covering; capital investment in wayfinding and route development/maintenance, marketing and branding investment, digital platforms, business support, experience development and partnership formation.

Trade Support
- Securing buy in and commitment from industry and travel trade – while the Wild Atlantic Way programme does not seek to provide direct online booking solutions, significant resources have been directed towards ensuring take up of the ‘Way’ proposition by tour operators.
**Which aspects did not go as planned – and what are the implications for the projects delivered through the Discover England Fund?**

**WITH HINDSIGHT…**
- Discovery Points along the route was potentially an overly ambitious number, despite the 2500km length of the route. In retrospect, ensuring that all 188 have clear points of differentiation has been challenging.
- Communities have embraced the Wild Atlantic Way enthusiastically providing input prior to signage and interpretation was implemented. Given the positive response, community engagement could potentially have taken place at an earlier stage.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCOVER ENGLAND FUND PROJECTS**
- Large scale projects which seek to disrupt or shift the market stand the best chance of achieving their objectives when integrated within the context of overall strategic tourism objectives. The Wild Atlantic Way being developed as a national initiative led by Fáilte Ireland ensured that this has been the case.
- The Wild Atlantic Way is a largely a self-drive destination at present. The route has consciously been positioned as a touring proposition, with information on transport options provided and walking/cycling options are being developed, however the project accepts the reality that the ‘Way’ is most readily accessible via self-drive or coach tours at present – initial investment has focused on improving the quality of this experience.
- Developing online/dynamic booking was not a feature of initial stages of the programme – State Aid regulations made the addition of this type of functionality problematic and Fáilte Ireland felt that third party solutions are already available. The focus was placed on establishing the brand, ensuring core components of the route were in place, and working closely with international buyers/tour operators.
- The ambitious scope and scale of the initiative has meant that a medium to longer term scale in terms of delivering outcomes has been required. Significant time and resources were directed towards research, concept development and brand development prior to initial implementation.
- In the case of Wild Atlantic Way, although it is inherently a brand-led project, bringing a significant set of new experiences or itineraries to the market necessitated a comprehensive investment strategy, incorporating; capital investment, business support programmes and marketing support as well as the time commitment to forming the necessary project partnerships.
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APPENDIX

Project ambitions – what was it expected to deliver?
The Wild Atlantic Way was established as a means of turning around negative visitation and market share trends in key international visitor markets. A core objective of the Wild Atlantic Way brand is to help move Ireland and in particular the West of Ireland from a place to come “someday” to a “must visit now” destination.

Vision
To create a world class, sustainable and un-missable experience brand that engages and energises the visitor so that they become powerful advocates and leaves them wanting to return for more.

Strategic objectives of the Wild Atlantic Way Proposition

1. The strategic objectives behind the development of The Wild Atlantic Way initiative are:
2. To generate and sustain economic opportunity and economic development through tourism in the West of Ireland.
3. To re-package the Atlantic seaboard as a destination to overseas (and domestic) visitors and establish a destination brand and touring route product of sufficient scale and singularity to enable successful marketing overseas;
4. To drive an increase in visitor numbers, dwell time, spend and satisfaction within the destinations;
5. To drive an increase in visitor numbers to less visited areas and encourage better visitor management in areas that are currently achieving greater visitor numbers;
6. To be the catalyst for an increase in collaboration between destinations, industry providers and groups along the west coast;
7. To improve the linkages between and add value to a range of attractions and activities (& experiences);
8. To reinforce the particular strengths and characteristics of the key destinations along the route (such as the Ring of Kerry and Connemara) while at the same time offering the visitor one overarching compelling reason to visit;
9. To ensure that the Wild Atlantic Way is delivered in accordance with the principles of sustainable tourism, ensuring that economic, social and environmental benefits are delivered in a balanced way.

A detailed listed of project goals and outcomes can be found in the Operations Plan http://www.failteireland.ie/Wild-Atlantic-Way/The-Wild-Atlantic-Way-Operational-Programme.aspx

Measurement of success
Given the scale of the overall programme, measurement and monitoring is extensive, with the current operation plan providing for major review points during 2016 and 2017.

The VICE model provides the basis for impact monitoring. High level programme objectives are as follows;
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>High Level Goals</th>
<th>Measures and Targets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visitor</td>
<td>Satisfy and engage visitors</td>
<td>Keep the satisfied/very satisfied percentage at or above 90% for the key factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grow paid bednights</td>
<td>Increase paid bednights from overseas and domestic markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>Increase industry earnings</td>
<td>Grow tourism earnings from both overseas and domestic markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong stakeholder engagement</td>
<td>Increase meetings and participation of main stakeholders and partners,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Satisfy and engage locals</td>
<td>Ensure that locals feel engage and consulted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure that locals feel that tourism benefits them and their locality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase employment</td>
<td>Grow tourism jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Protect and enhance asset base</td>
<td>Monitor the condition of the built and natural environment.</td>
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</tbody>
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In developing the evaluation and monitoring framework it was determined that focusing on paid bednights rather than visitor numbers has a number of benefits, with particular regard to the environmental impact of the programme:

- The objective of growing length of stay rather than number of visitors has a softer impact in environmental terms.
- Increased length of stay in the context of a touring route will lead to a better geographic distribution of visitors.
- A better seasonal spread of bednights can mitigate congestion of key locations during peak months.

- **Project achievements, by time period – footfall and sales, RoI, any other key metrics (including economic impact)**

**Awards & Accolades**

- Best Tourism Initiative 2014 - Chambers Ireland
- National Impact Award – LAMA Awards 2014
- Best Tourism App - Appy Awards 2014
- President’s Prize - Irish Landscape Institute Awards 2015
- Best in Digital Geography & Location-based Services – Eir Golden Spider Awards 2015
As a major new tourism proposition the Wild Atlantic Way is still in its infancy but Fáilte Ireland are pleased with the progress that has been made. The 2015-2019 Operations Plan set the following growth forecasts for the ‘Way’;

Wild Atlantic Way – Growth Forecast 2014-2020

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<td>Domestic Paid Bednights</td>
<td>7,970</td>
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<td>Overseas Paid Bednights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domestic Paid Bednights</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
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<td>Overseas Paid Bednights</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
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Hard statistics are limited at present but impact to date includes;

- Brand awareness by international visitors is the key Fáilte Ireland measure – through its brand tracker survey, initial research indicated awareness of 7% from intenders/those interested in taking a trip to Ireland. Although a relatively low
number it is important to note that the Wild Atlantic Way is an entirely new proposition only just brought to market - Fáilte Ireland has a target of generating 20% awareness

- Excellent response from businesses along the route – anecdotal evidence of unsolicited approval and positive feedback regarding the Wild Atlantic Way proposition
- Anecdotal evidence of new businesses and experiences using Wild Atlantic Way in business names and marketing - Fáilte Ireland are monitoring take up
- Positive engagement by tour operators - amending their itineraries and routes to incorporate or lead with Wild Atlantic Way descriptors and terminology.


3 www.wildatlanticway.com


5 Wild Atlantic Way signature discovery points  http://www.wildatlanticway.com/directory/?c0=566&vw=map&so=0&scroll=500&c1=665#53.583800|-7.989175


7 Business Supports  http://www.failteireland.ie/Supports.aspx


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