

**Wexford Trails**

**5 Year Vision**

**Prepared by:**

**Wexford Walking Trail Members; Wexford Heritage Trail Members;**

**Wexford Garden Trail Members; and Wexford Craft Trail Members**

**June 2015**

|  |
| --- |
| C:\Users\Yvonne\Desktop\Consultancy\Bramble Crafts\WT_HeritageTrail_728x90.gif |
|  |
| C:\Users\Yvonne\Desktop\Consultancy\Bramble Crafts\WT_WalkingTrail_728x90 (1).gif |
|  |
| C:\Users\Yvonne\Desktop\Consultancy\Bramble Crafts\WT_CraftTrail_728x90.gif |
|  |



# **Vision for the Wexford Trails**

# Section 1 Background

In 2010, County Wexford was experiencing significant economic contraction as a result of the recession. This economic and financial crisis had also caused a dramatic impact on travel and tourism trends with overseas visitor numbers nationally falling from 7.4 million in 2006 to 6.6 million in 2009 with this decline occurring across all market segments. This trend was mirrored in the South East with overseas visitor numbers to County Wexford declining from 215,000 people to 166,000 people between 2006 and 2009. Revenue from overseas visitors declined from €67 million in 2006 to €44 million in 2009 for County Wexford. The volume of domestic trips was relatively stable but revenue was declining.

In response to this deteriorating financial collapse there was a major impetus to support initiatives that would stimulate job creation and attract overseas visitors to Ireland. It was recognised that the tourism industry was very important to County Wexford and if supports could be provided, that would both increase the number of visitors to the county and increase the bed night occupancy for hotels and accommodation providers this would create local employment.

In response to this economic challenge, in 2011, Wexford Local Development (WLD) and Wexford County Council (WCC) agreed to establish a series of tourism trails in collaboration with Fáilte Ireland. The aim was to market the tourism products of County Wexford nationally and overseas; increase the number of visitors to the county; increase the financial viability of tourism businesses and create local employment. This initiative focused on the formation of trails in the Garden, Heritage, Walking and Craft sectors. Members of each trail undertook a four month training programme; formed a committee; and developed criteria for membership.

The four trails have published collaborative brochures; created county maps; developed websites; established a presence on the Visit Wexford website and erected signage. WCC and WLD supported a branding initiative for these trails which was launched in 2014.

Now these trails are formed, it is widely acknowledged that a range of other initiatives can be instigated to further optimise the opportunities of working collaboratively. It is also recognised that the economic climate has significantly improved since 2010 and Fáilte Ireland launched its ‘Ireland’s Ancient East’ brand earlier this year that presents real opportunities for the tourism trails. This report articulates the views of all of the members of the different trails, who have been consulted with over the last two months, and identifies real opportunities for development if the appropriate supports can be harnessed.

# Section 2 Wexford Trails - Five Year Vision

***‘To increase the number of local, domestic and overseas visitors to County Wexford.’***

## Section 2.1 Initiatives Relevant to all Trail Members

* **Develop an iconic Trail Brand with national / international recognition** 
  + Collaborate with neighbouring counties (Wicklow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Carlow)
  + Attract tourists from Dublin to visit the Wexford Trails
  + Encourage bus tourism
  + Link in with the Fáilte Ireland’s theme for the region ‘Ireland’s Ancient East?’
  + Bundle and link all of the trail products together under a unifying theme
  + Utilise effectively the ‘Visit Wexford’ website
  + Develop the trails app which was created by Design Works with support of Wexford County Council
  + Market the trail product offering overseas
  + County signage using the Design Works branding
  + Trail maps in each town
  + Create connections between the different trail products
  + Identify weaknesses and animate the development of possible new trail products
  + Appoint a Wexford Trails Animation Officer who could help with strategy and marketing
  + Stands at Shows which feature trails, rather than have individual attraction stands
  + Rather than distributing brochures at conferences – consider devising a card with a QR code which would bring visitors to our website
  + We need to go on a promotion drive – make presentations to key tourism bodies/ agencies i.e. Fáilte Ireland, Visit Wexford, Tourist Office staff etc. Low awareness of Wexford Trails in the industry, also need to connect with hotel staff
* **Pricing / Bundling of Products**
  + Explore opportunities for joint ticketing and / or discount tickets
  + Create bundles of products around the county towns
  + Foster collaboration with the accommodation sector for mutual synergy
  + Appoint a Wexford Trails representative on the Visit Wexford Committee
  + Package 2 to 3 day breaks / festivals etc under themes linked to accommodation providers
* **Links to transport nodes**
  + Develop packages from Dublin / Rosslare / Waterford Airport
* **Networking**
  + Quarterly trail meetings with representatives of all of the trails
  + Sequence festival events across the year
  + Ensure the distribution of brochures are efficient. This could include the use of a WLD Tus scheme and 2 branded vans that distribute the brochures weekly. The Tus workers would be Trail ambassadors and would also do work experience in the trail attractions
  + Get a specific display stand designed (maybe by Craft’s Trail and sponsored by Hotels) for Wexford Trail brochures so they can be a feature in hotel lobbies etc. Also get our map framed and placed in each accommodation provider.
* **Food Trail** 
  + Link local food into the trail brand using the findings in the WLD Food Strategy (2014)
* **Ecclesiastical Trail** 
  + Identify and develop an ecclesiastical trail linked to other trails

## 2.2 Summary

The fullest collaboration is essential. A special Trails Animation Officer might be considered by WCC or WLD through the Rural Development Programme. We need to prioritise trail development now as a major county-wide initiative to become integrated with Ireland’s Ancient East. A big start has been made with the formation of 4 trail brands and the walking trail launch planned for later this year.

Wexford Trails also needs representation on Visit Wexford to cement a relationship with hotels. This would help us in future discussions on how we can collaborate with this industry to our mutual benefit i.e. raising awareness with hotel staff, promotion etc.

On-going evaluation of the trail networks should be continued and this has very effectively been undertaken by WLD and has proved to give insightful information on the impact of the trails and how they should be developed further. It is important to continually monitor and evaluate new initiatives to ensure they are effective.

WLD also commissioned a Local Food Strategy that was completed in 2014 and the findings from this could very easily be linked across trail members.

# Section 3 Walking Trail Objectives

**Vision**

**‘To provide a network of walks of varied character integrated faithfully with their landscapes and authentically with their various histories’.**

## 3.1 Operational Tasks

1. Agree a collective vision between WCC and the WWT network on how the walking trails should be developed over the next five years.
2. Enter into operational agreement with WCC for on-going expansion and maintenance of the walking trails and agree points of contact for walking trail development.
3. Contacts to be maintained with Municipal Districts so that elected members are informed of the trail developments in their District.
4. Establish a point of contact with the Regional Recreational Officer in Coillte to support the development of walking trails on Coillte lands.
5. Maintain links with the National Trails Office to ensure all trails are compliant with NTO standards.
6. Maintain close links with WLD and collaboratively devise a strategic approach of working together utilising the Rural Development Programme and social employment schemes such as RSS and Tus. Agree a point of contact for walking trail development.
7. Meet WCC / WLD every six months to ensure efficient mechanism of working together with regards to maintenance and development issues etc.
8. We need to develop a strategy to ensure sustainability and continuity of funding. Maintain and strengthen connection with the NTO and Fáilte Ireland.
9. Ensure sharing of expertise and resources between all walking trail members.
10. Hold annual walking trail festival and build links with Wales.
11. Develop a walking trail guidance pack to give to community groups interested in developing new walking trails.
12. Create integrated marketing approach: Collaborate with WCC and other trails so that visitors are referred to other tourism sites in the locality.
13. Develop WWT website. Website would become a repository of information (maps, photos, brochure). Put testimonials from walkers. Links to other sites such as NTO. Could also show clusters – including other trails, craft etc. Show potential trail linkages such as Oulart to Raven Point.
14. Devise WWT app with support of Wexford County Council GIS Department.
15. Guided Tours and Highly Qualified Guideson Busy Trails and Sites such as Historical/Nature Trails and sites. Paying customers appreciate quality and inadequately informed guides have a very negative impact. Planning for this should begin now by investigating what would be effective and desirable standards. Initial exploratory discussions might be held with Management of Kilmainham Jail for instance.
16. Investigate historical walks linking towns & other areas for example the old walking route to Dublin.
17. Co-operate with local historical societies for example Horeswood, New Ross, Graiguenamanagh and other societies in County Wexford and neighbouring counties.
18. Add walking events to the fringe events of festivals - Opera, Strawberry, Piano, Dunbrody etc.
19. Liaise with walking / hiking / scouting & guide groups to establish links. This is invaluable as these groups know the potential of trails i.e. already walks are being explored from Oulart to Raven Point; Oulart to Boolavogue and Duncannon to Arthurstown. Conduct survey of what these interest groups require and would like to see developed i.e. many like to walk 3 – 3.5 hour walks. It would be a great way to establish links with potential users and also they could become our ambassadors, spreading the word to other walkers and groups in Ireland and aboard as many of these groups walk abroad as well.
20. Collaborate on trail access issues and permissive rights agreements to develop ‘best practice’ in this area.
21. Target of 4 new walking trails each year (1 in each district).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |
|  |  |

# Section 4 Heritage Trail Objectives:

**Group Mission Statement and Objective:**

The Wexford Heritage Trail will promote the heritage attractions of Wexford for the benefit of the visitors and tourism through the setting and achieving of standards of excellence sought by public demand.

**Research**:

*To further enhance and develop our network*

**Local (within Wexford)**:

* + Develop linkages with trails i.e. Heritage with Walking Trails i.e. 3 Rock walk finishes at INHP.
  + Research linkages within county – developing events around themes such as 1798, Marshall, Norman etc
* Devise a Marshall Trail within County Wexford and beyond

**National:**

* Research linkages to attractions on Ireland’s Ancient East Trail i.e. Norman theme: Ferns, Tintern, Hook Lighthouse, Reginald’s Tower, Trim Castle etc.

**International:**

* Explore possibilities of international trail development i.e. Norman trail with Wales (Pembrokeshire) and France (Normandy)
* Research stories relevant to each time period in Ireland’s Ancient East and use these as an element in the Wexford Heritage Trail.

**Marketing**:

*Establishing and reinforcing Wexford Trail brand. Crucial that we establish a stand alone brand which can, in turn, fit in with other brands such as Visit Wexford and Ireland’s Ancient East.*

* **Festival**: Wexford Trail festival in off season Sept – March. Could focus each year on different geographic area – incorporate Craft, Garden, Heritage and Walking. Show personality of Wexford. Weekend events to attract families and mid week events on the culturally curious. Work with the hotels to promote this event and encourage footfall.
* **Website**: Develop Wexford Trail website including translation fees.
* **Apps** (layered) covering individual trails (Heritage, Craft, Garden & Walking) and Wexford Trail as a whole.
* **Create video** for use through social media and promote, grow and reinforce a strong Wexford Trail brand in line with themes from Irelands Ancient East.
* **Radio ads –** to promote Wexford trails. Create an “Experience” and “Call to visit” concept or “Wexford – What’s your link?” i.e do you have Norman ancestry, did you visit the beaches as a child? etc
* **Maps:** covering all trails in Wexford Trails portfolio. Wexford Trail brand maps in a prominent location in each town and at ferry port. (see picture p9)
* **Presence at expos:** Promotion at fairs, workshops etc. Attendance at Meitheal - offer a package in conjunction with hotels, in line with the offerings of Irelands Ancient East.
* **Brochure Distribution** of all Wexford Trails’ member brochures. Investigate use of distribution company for brochure drop at local, regional and national levels. Explore an overall packaged option to incorporate all brochures in one sleeve – particularly useful when distributing outside Wexford.
* **Street banners** i.e. tear drop banners – located at ferry terminals etc
* **Joint Discounts:** –‘Discover Wexford Trails’ 2 for 1 offer . Organise/promote regular themed events, particularly in off season. Discounted ticket to the top 5 attractions for off peak.

**Capital:**

*Purchase of items and resources which reinforce Wexford Trail brand*

* + - * **Printing new brochure** in line with the Wexford Trail branding. Consider changing cover page to portrait to fit in brochure displays systems. Also look at a sleeve to accommodate all 4 trails for ease of distribution particularly outside Wexford.
      * **Road signage** in line with DesignWorks guidelines for all Wexford Trails – necessary to instil brand image
    - **Develop interactive display** – telling the story of Wexford through Wexford Trails: ‘Discover Wexford Trails’.
    - **Develop Augmented Reality App** for Wexford Trails, where users can either download an app to their mobile or borrow hand held devices from each site. Using the Trail brand, the app could tell the story of Wexford through the eyes of each site, the story would be personal (e.g. a garden visited in Winter could show its appearance in full bloom during the summer, a Castle could come to life and be rebuild before their eyes, this has been very effective in sites such as the Houses of Parliament in London).
* **Video ‘Telling the Story’** of Wexford using Wexford Trails as education tool – at national school level . This could be linked to the Augmented Reality app above.
  + - **Feasibility Study** on developing future trails: Norman, 1798, Food, Ecclesiastical, Music/Culture, Literary (around Wexford’s writers) etc.
* **Video ‘Telling the Story’** of Wexford using Wexford Trails as education tool – at national school level - (ref Augmented Reality above)
* **Purchase of large brown map signs** showing all Wexford Trails:for towns/ferry port (see below)
* **Purchase of Heritage Trail flag type signs** (see pic p4) for each attraction.
* **Gaelic Kingship project:** could be grounded with both Ui Chinnsealaigh & Leinster Kingships which can tell a story covering at least a thousand years, including two hundred years of Norman history in Wexford.
* **Promotional Aids using Wexford Trail/Wexford Heritage Trail branding:** Purchase baseball caps, recycled cotton bags, usb sticks (to include Wexford Trail YouTube clip), t-shirts, pens, keyrings etc for use at expos, festivals, events etc.

**Animation Officer:**

*To work on how our heritage and culture is presented to the visitor – how it is interpreted and animated:*

* + - **Animation Officer** to work on:
    - co-ordination of Wexford Trails member trails,
    - development strategy and marketing plans
    - develop and maintain linkages with hotels and accommodation providers, Visit Wexford and other entities
    - Explore access to bus tours
    - Facilitate collaboration between all Trail sites, hotels and all other tourism businesses, Visit Wexford etc with a view to creating a ‘destination Wexford’.

**Training:**

* **Telling the Story** – ref Irish Heritage Council workshop – how to tell the individual trail story within the Wexford Trail and then link to Ireland’s Ancient East. Important that all Trails (Heritage, Craft, Garden & Heritage) are aware of what it is to be a Wexford Trail, the advantages, benefits etc.
* **Training course for future Wexford Trails members** – rather than individual i.e. Craft, Garden etc , could devise common Wexford Trails training programme with specific elements for individual trails where necessary.
* **Photographic**/video training and then create a YouTube video
* **Training programme** all Wexford Trails network members to re-enforce what it is to be a member of each trail - advantages and benefits.



Signage for use in towns - using map of all WT trails



Signage re-enforcing brand

# Section 5 Craft Trail Objectives:

**Craft Trail Vision:**

***“To provide a network of craft workers to share the creative vision of rich authentic  
handcraft in the county”***

**Objectives:**

***Trails Collaboration:***

* Support a designated ‘Trails Administrator’ appointed through an appropriate employment programme, e.g. Tus, Job Bridge, etc. with specific skillset to ensure:
  + The maximum distribution of brochures to tourist offices, hotels and other service providers
  + The optimisation of marketing opportunities, both collectively for all the trails and for the ‘Wexford Craft Trail’
* Support open bi-annual meeting for all trails and their members

***Strategic Marketing:***

* Develop a comprehensive marketing plan, utilising existing reports and, if required, marketing experts to guarantee:
  + The enhancement and maintenance of the Craft Trail’s website and the utilisation of social media to its full potential
  + The development of the trail through promotion and quality of work on the local; national and international stages
  + The promotion of an image of quality
  + The maximization of opportunities for e-commerce
  + An awareness of collective branding and marketing techniques
  + The development of integrated marketing of attractions so that visitors are referred to all the craft businesses on the Trail
  + The development of 1 minute video clips for the promotion of each craft business
  + The continued development of brochures, including combined brochures/maps for the overall trails
  + An agreed approach to brochure display that consists of unique display stands at strategic locations displaying only Wexford Trails brochures and business flyers

***Signage:***

* To enter into discussions with WCC regarding signage for the craft businesses and the Trail itself. Newly developed signage will be displayed in the premises of the trail members.

***Business Development:***

* Develop the Wexford Craft Trail and facilitate and support its members in the development of their individual businesses:
  + To acquire a knowledge of tourism trail structures and networking opportunities
  + To encourage and support one another within the Trail
  + To encourage a sense of local pride and identity
  + To bring the “human touch” back to the visitor experience
  + To promote and assist networking and cooperation initiatives
  + Ongoing evaluation of the Craft Trail, encouraging new memberships and development of the trail

***Network:***

* To facilitate the continued development of the Wexford Craft Trail network:
  + To organise an annual promotions drive and networking event at the earliest opportunity of the tourist season – to key tourism bodies, agencies, tour and bus tour operators, hotels, tourist offices, etc.
  + To develop a “Trails Month” or “Trail Blaze” every year through a consolidated effort from the trails network
  + To develop tours and events at times of high tourist footfall in the county, e.g. Opera Festival, etc.
  + To facilitate a profiling of the Craft Trail from relevant journalists and high end media, interior magazines, etc.
  + To source funding for network activities
  + To understand how to develop an export market for the Trail’s craft businesses

***Product Development:***

* To assist in product development within the Craft Trail and in each individual business:
  + To have an awareness of collective craft activities and events such as pop up shops, exhibitions and outlets in retail stores
  + To be familiar with craft display techniques
  + To understand visitor requirements for an open studio
  + To have an awareness of statutory bodies and other relevant structures available to support the development of craft initiatives within the county

# Section 6 Garden Trail Objectives:

**AIM:** To provide a network of gardens and garden related locations throughout Co. Wexford that will attract visitors both from the domestic and international market.

The key objectives of the Wexford Garden Trail are:

* To maintain and Develop the WGT Website.
* To maintain and Develop the WGT Social media facebook page.
* To encourage and support one another within the Trail.
* To develop tours and events at times of high tourist footfall in the county.
* To Support a designated ‘Trails Animation officer’ appointed through an appropriate employment programme who will manage the maximum distribution of brochures to tourist offices, hotels, tourist attractions and activities and other service providers
* To link in with the other Wexford trails to facilitate a strong ‘Wexford Trails’ brand.
* To create and maintain a good relationship with tourist offices, hotels, tourist attractions and activities and other service

**Recommendations and Priorities for 2016:**

Wexford Garden Trail strongly requests for trail road signage

**Marketing Strategy:**

Brochure**:** There has been widespread sense of the current Garden Trail brochure and map are not working as anticipated.  Wexford Garden Trail has put forward an amended brochure front cover and map which we suggest will address the issues**.**

# Section 7 Conclusions:

Fáilte Ireland’s new initiative aims to make the South and East a very attractive proposition for those interested in understanding the relationship between local place, past and people.

“*With the great amount of history and heritage in such a relatively compact area, ‘Ireland’s Ancient East’ will allow us to seriously build on the assets we have in the East and South – and the significant investment which has been made in tourism attractions in the region over the last few years. While appealing to a different type of a visitor, I am confident that Ireland’s Ancient East will prove as effective and popular as the Wild Atlantic Way and will deliver significant additional numbers of visitors, revenue and jobs to the region*”

(Minister Donohoe, Minister for Tourism, Transport and Sport, 2015)

Ireland’s Ancient East is based on comprehensive research in overseas markets which has defined the product offering around four thematic pillars:

• Ancient Ireland - The Dawn of Civilisation

• Early Christian Ireland:

• Medieval Ireland

• Anglo Ireland

Wexford Trails celebrate the county’s rich heritage and the opportunity is to collaborate and develop new initiatives that draw additional visitors to the county. Based on Fáilte Ireland statistics, overseas visitors to Ireland was 7,604,000 in 2014 and County Wexford attracted 229,000 visitors in 2013 bringing in a revenue of €60 million. Domestic tourism accounted for 455,000 visitors in 2013.

The success of the trails over the next five years could be partly measured by numbers of visitors to the county, revenue, and visitor numbers at the individual attractions.

# Appendices

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Wexford Walking Trail**  **Members** |
| 1 | Askamore – 3 upland forest/mountain looped trails |
| 2 | Ballymoney – Coastal Trail |
| 3 | Bunclody – Coolmeelagh & Kilbrannish – Mountain/forest looped trails |
| 4 | Carrickbyrne Hill – forest looped trail |
| 5 | Courtown - Forest /Parkland Looped Trail. |
| 6 | Enniscorthy – Riverside walk. |
| 7 | Ferns Village – Village historic Trail |
| 8 | Forth Mountain – mountainside/forest looped trail |
| 9 | Kilanerin - Village/Forest Trail |
| 10 | Kellys Wood, New Ross – woodland walk. |
| 11 | Lacken Hill, New Ross – Forest looped walk. |
| 12 | Oulart – road and track trail, forest upland trail |
| 13 | Raven Point Wood - Coastal/forest, looped trail |
| 14 | Rosslare Harbour to Carne & Village Trail – Coastal Trail. |
| 15 | Tintern Abbey – garden and forest trail |
| 16 | Kilmore Quay to Carne & Ballyteigue Burrow – Coastal Trail |
| 17 | Tara Hill, - Hill, looped trail. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Wexford Heritage Trail**  **Members** |
| 1 | Ballyhack Castle (OPW) |
| 2 | Ballymore Historical Features |
| 3 | Browne Clayton Monument |
| 4 | Colclough Walled Garden |
| 5 | Craanford Mill |
| 6 | Dunbrody Abbey |
| 7 | Dunbrody Famine Ship |
| 8 | Duncannon Fort |
| 9 | Enniscorthy Castle |
| 10 | Enniscorthy Town (to be confirmed) |
| 11 | Ferns Village Historic Trail |
| 12 | Ferns Castle (OPW) |
| 13 | Fr. Murphy Centre |
| 14 | Gorey Town |
| 15 | Hook Lighthouse & Hook Peninsula |
| 16 | Irish National Heritage Park |
| 17 | JFK Homestead |
| 18 | Johnstown Castle & Irish Ag. Museum |
| 19 | Kilmore Quay |
| 20 | Loftus Hall (to be confirmed) |
| 21 | Oulart Hill |
| 22 | Our Ladies Island (to be confirmed) |
| 23 | National 1798 Rebellion Centre |
| 24 | New Ross Town |
| 25 | Ros Tapestry |
| 26 | Tacumshane Windmill |
| 27 | Tintern Abbey (OPW) |
| 28 | Vinegar Hill Battlefield |
| 29 | Wells House |
| 30 | Wexford Town including: Selskar Abbey (to be confirmed) |
| 31 | Wexford Wildfowl Reserve |

**Craft**

**Trail membership to be inserted**

**Garden**

**Trail membership to be inserted**

## Appendix 2 Map of Wexford Trails

(to be inserted)