



**CHAMBERS  
IRELAND**  
IN BUSINESS FOR BUSINESS

## **Submission to Tourism Policy Review 2013/2014**

**July 2014**

In November 2013 Chambers Ireland made a submission to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's consultation on tourism policy.

In that submission we recognised the efforts made by Government, both local and national, in this area. Initiatives such as The Gathering illustrate an understanding of the crucial contribution of tourism to local economies. Furthermore, we pointed out how the interaction between local authorities and the private sector in the development of Gathering projects shows the positive impact such collaboration can have.

However, we also highlighted flaws in Ireland's tourism policy. From a regional perspective, there is a concerning lack of clarity around the role of the national state agencies, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. This lack of clarity is centred on the absence of clear and coherent regional strategies relating to marketing and promotional activities, and the requisite funding to carry them out.

We welcome the publication of the draft National Tourism Policy and the opportunity to comment further.

Many of the recommendations made by Chambers Ireland are included in the draft Policy; however, we wish to reiterate the value that local Chambers can have with regard to tourism policy in two distinct ways:

1. Identifying the needs of specific regions and localities; and
2. Providing services for tourists.

### **Identifying the needs of regions and localities**

It is vital that Ireland's Tourism Policy is balanced, benefits all areas of the country, and supports regional development. To this end, close collaboration between Chambers, the businesses they represent, and local and national government can be of considerable value. Local people and local businesses understand the needs of their areas and can identify gaps in tourism services and potential opportunities for investment.

### **Tourism service provision**

There is an opportunity for Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourism Board to leverage the Chamber Network as a means of addressing any gaps in local and regional service provision. The Irish Chamber Network comprises forty seven Chambers, and eight Regional Chambers, and its members maintain close links with their counterparts in Northern Ireland. The

Chamber Network has extensive experience in both business to business and business to consumer communication and service provision. Each Chamber has an in-depth knowledge of their local area and the business and tourism services available. Building on this existing capacity and reach, the Chamber Network could provide a very cost effective means of supplementing the centralised agency structure and coordinating national strategy. Several Chambers have already built successful partnerships with their local tourist offices.<sup>1</sup> This has allowed several localities to maintain a high quality tourist information service that may not otherwise have been feasible. We believe there is a significant opportunity to build on this model in other areas.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Cobh and Harbour: <http://cobharbourchamber.ie/the-chamber/cobh-tourist-office/>