



SECTION 25A REPORT

REPORT DATE	PUBLIC BODY	PREPARED BY
Date 02-02-2024	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Name Jason Cleary

The purpose of the table below is to assist the public body in completing the Section 25A (1) report to the Southern Regional Assembly. This report will be used by the Regional Assembly to complete the Section 25A (2) Monitoring Report to be submitted to NOAC and which will focus on progress made in securing the overall objectives of the RSES.

It is intended that the Monitoring Report will be succinct, covering the 2-year period 2022-2024, and therefore we would ask that the response to the questions are as short as possible and for example we do not need the full detail of each policy or programme outlined.

For further information, please contact Brigh Ryan at bryan@southernassembly.ie or Claire Breen at cbreen@southernassembly.ie

Please return the report to this office by **Friday, 2nd February 2024**.

This can be submitted by email to: cbreen@southernassembly.ie

PLEASE OUTLINE ANY PROGRESS MADE IN SUPPORTING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RSES WHICH ARE RELEVANT TO YOUR DEPARTMENT-

In framing your response please provide a short overview of key public investment mechanisms and proposals by reference to:

1. Please provide an overview of progress made by the Department on the development of the tourism sector within the Southern Region, both in urban and rural areas, in relation to our three Cities and Metropolitan Areas of Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford and in relation to key

Regional Branding initiatives such as Ireland's Ancient East, Ireland's Hidden Heartland or the Wild Atlantic Way. Please provide a brief summary of any planned initiatives in support of tourism in the Region.

The Department is responsible for tourism policy, which is then implemented by the Tourism Agencies, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland. A description of relevant Tourism initiatives and activities are outlined below. These are:

1. Regional Tourism Development Strategies.
2. 2021 and 2022 Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme & Urban Animation Scheme.
3. 2022 and 2023 Destination Towns.
4. 2022 and 2023 Digital that Delivers.
5. 2023 and 2024 Destination and Experience Development Plans.
6. Festival Funding.
7. Employer Excellence Programme.
8. Platforms for Growth.
9. Memorandum of Understanding between Fáilte Ireland and Udárás na Gaeltachta.
10. Regional Cooperative Marketing Access Scheme.

1. Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027

Fáilte Ireland has launched (May 2023) four new Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027 for Ireland's Ancient East, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Dublin, which will provide a framework for sustainable tourism development across Ireland.

The Regional Tourism Development Strategies outline a vision for tourism which contain a five-year strategic framework for the sustainable development of Fáilte Ireland's regional brands. By capitalising on the uniqueness of each brand they set a clear path ahead for the development of new and enhanced visitor experiences, building greater capacity and capability into the industry, and provide a clear strategy for attracting visitors that will stay longer and spend more.

2. 2021 and 2022 Outdoor Dining Enhancement Scheme & Urban Animation Scheme

A €17m capital investment scheme for developing outdoor dining capacity nationwide, administered in two strands, was rolled out to upgrade and enhance streets and public spaces by implementing weather-proofing solutions, which has facilitated year-round outdoor dining.

Fáilte Ireland's Urban Animation Capital Investment Scheme, is a €5 million pilot capital grants scheme targeted specifically at local authorities and opened in April 2021. It was aimed at supporting sustainable tourism development through public realm and urban animation projects of scale that have the potential to transform and re-imagine urban centres for visitors. Projects funded under the scheme include a variety of large-scale outdoor performance spaces, public art, and light installations.

3. 2022 and 2023 Destination Towns

In 2019, Fáilte Ireland launched its Destination Towns Scheme to boost the attractiveness and tourism appeal of towns nationwide. The scheme is funded under the Government's Project Ireland 2040 strategy with the aim of driving sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector and higher revenue and job creation around Ireland. €15.5 million was allocated, with up to €500,000 available to each Local Authority. Projects will be completed between 2022 and 2024.

Examples of towns supported include:

- Carlow County Council – Carlow Town
- Clare County Council – Ennistymon
- Cork City Council – Cork City
- Cork County Council – Bantry
- Kerry County Council – Tralee

- Kilkenny County Council – Kilkenny
- Limerick City & County Council – LimerickCity
- Tipperary County Council – Cashel
- Waterford City & County Council – Waterford City
- Wexford County Council - New Ross

4. 2022 and 2023 Digital that Delivers

Digital that Delivers is an initiative from Fáilte Ireland designed to power a digital transformation of the visitor experience sector (visitor attractions, activity providers and day tours). Now in its third year, this programme has helped to transform the online presence of hundreds of visitor experiences, delivering a step change in their online sales, digital capability, and operational efficiency. A total of 243 businesses are active in the first intake of the programme:

- The total amount of grant-aid awarded from 2021 to year-to-date totals €5.6 million.
- The total amount of grant-aid awarded from 2021 plus projected grants to the end of 2023 is €6.9 million.

5. 2023 and 2024 Destination and Experience Development Plans

These local development plans are highly collaborative in nature, involving all local stakeholders and this is reflected in the agreed action plans where ownership is assigned among the various parties. Fáilte Ireland’s commitment is for every part of the country to have a detailed tourism development action plan created in partnership with local stakeholders.

6. Festival Funding

Fáilte Ireland designs and delivers a diverse portfolio of both Fáilte Ireland owned and co-created Festivals that are critical for developing tourism in rural areas. As part of their Strategically Funded Festivals, they support a diverse selection of Festivals and Events throughout the 26 counties.

7. Employer Excellence Programme

Fáilte Ireland launched the “Employer Excellence” programme in September 2022 to help participating businesses to improve their employer practices, and enhance their reputation as excellent employers. On 19 April 2023, Fáilte Ireland held the inaugural Employer Excellence Awards ceremony in the Guinness Storehouse, to showcase and celebrate the very best in class employers in the tourism sector. The on-going suite of targeted supports being provided by Fáilte Ireland to participating businesses is driving greater employee engagement in the sector, building the appeal of tourism workplaces and unlocking greater levels of business performance. The Employer Excellence Programme has been developed further to now include smaller businesses in tourism ensuring those with less than 20 employees can participate in the programme, gain insights into the development of employment practices, and benefit from the support available.

8. Platforms for Growth

Fáilte Ireland’s capital funding programme comprises a large grants scheme (Platforms for Growth investment programme), individual small grants schemes; strategic partnerships with other public bodies; and direct investment in experience brand infrastructure. Its objective is to optimise key assets for the benefit of tourism and sustainable economic development while also increasing the geographic spread of visitors, promoting season extension and supporting sustainable growth management.

For example, the second platform (Platforms for Growth 2), launched in January 2020, and involved a targeted call for applications from local authorities. It aims to develop activity facility centres at waterside locations across Ireland. In April 2021, €19 million worth of investment was announced for this platform, to be used to develop world-class facility centres at 20 locations across the country where water-based activities are a key visitor attraction. These facilities, designed to serve as a hub in each locality from which multiple water-sports operators can base themselves, will provide hot showers, changing and toilet facilities, secure storage, induction spaces, equipment wash-down and orientation points. Examples in the Southern Region include:

Clare

- Ballycuggeran Sports Activity Facility – Killaloe.
- Kilkee Waterworld Activity Facilities – Kilkee.

Cork

- Claycastle Sports Activity Facility - Youghal.

Kerry

- Ballybunion Beach Shared Facilities Centre - Ballybunion.
- Fenit Beach Shared Facility Centre - Fenit.
- Magherabeg Shared Facilities Centre – Magherabeg Lower and Castlegregory.

Tipperary

- Dromineer Sports Activity Facility - Nenagh.

Waterford

- Ardmore Water-Sports Activity Facility Centre - Ardmore.
- Tramore Water-Sports Activity Facility Centre – Tramore.

9. Memorandum of Understanding between Fáilte Ireland and Udárás na Gaeltachta

In January 2022 Údarás na Gaeltachta signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Fáilte Ireland and this has enabled both organisations to develop key projects including capital support of strategic attractions, development of Saleable Experiences as Gaeilge, as well as implementing key objectives of the Wild Atlantic Way Destination experience plans for Cork and Kerry.

One of the key capital projects for 2024 is a visitor attraction on Oileán Chléire/Cape Clear, County Cork (with an approximate budget of €400,000) providing year around, all weather experience for visitors to the island. Seven businesses in Kerry, Waterford and Cork have actively engaged in the pilot programme as Gaeilge, and Fáilte Ireland has aimed at providing experiences bilingually and as Gaeilge for visitors. These will be launched in March 2024.

Údarás na Gaeltachta is actively participating with the implementation groups for Visitor Experience development plans for:

- The Skellig Coast.
- The Dingle Peninsula.
- The Beara Breifne Way (Hidden Heartlands).

Siúlóid na nGleannta, a 5km walk following an old traditional route uphill on an old road to the top of Mullach Bhéal, has been completed in co-operation with Kerry County Council.

10. Regional Cooperative Marketing Access Scheme

Tourism Ireland promotes regional air and sea access to Ireland in overseas tourism markets through initiatives such as the Regional Access Cooperative Marketing Access Scheme (also referred to as the Regional Cooperative Marketing Fund), which was established in 2016 and seeks to encourage new access and maximise the potential of existing services to the regions, including with matched funding from airlines, sea carriers, airports, ports and regional tourism stakeholders including Local Authorities.

€3 million was allocated to Tourism Ireland in 2022, 2023 and 2024 for the scheme to enable tactical partnerships and activities that will help drive increases in visitors to the regions, amplifying the Ireland message overseas and supporting direct access.

Tourism Ireland strongly promotes Ireland's regional airports (including Cork and Shannon) and ports (including Cork and Rosslare) through the scheme, which will continue to form a very important part of Tourism Ireland's plans in supporting direct access to our regions.

2. Progress on the promotion and investment in arts, culture and sport

There are a number of initiatives of relevance which have progressed. These are summarized below.

1. National Cultural Institutions Investment

The National Cultural Institutions Investment Programme accounts for the most significant amount of allocation requirements in this sector. There are also many important additional funding needs such as other cultural regional infrastructure schemes and continued investment in Screen Ireland, which supports the production of audio-visual content in Ireland. Screen Ireland supports national cinema and Irish independent film culture through investment in development, production and promotion; and it commits to supporting Irish companies and their workforce across Ireland.

The Crawford Art Gallery (CAG) is dedicated to the visual arts with over 3,000 works in its collection, ranging from 18th century Irish and European paintings and sculpture, to contemporary video installations. Aside from being a National Cultural Institution, the Gallery is a critical part of Munster and Cork's cultural and tourism infrastructure.

The redevelopment of CAG is included 'Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018-2027' which forms part of the National Development Plan - Project Ireland 2040 for the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

In March 2023 the project was granted planning permission. The detailed design supported by Cork City Council and other stakeholders will deliver a high-quality architectural intervention in that part of the city and will positively contribute to the development of a civic plaza and cultural quarter at Emmet Place. Additionally, the design will dramatically alter the CAG itself, reorienting and expanding its entrance, improving circulation and creating internal coherence between its public spaces, creating new public spaces for learning, participation and other activities, as well as addressing issues with the building fabric, and collections storage.

As the redevelopment progresses through tendering phases in 2024, it is envisaged that construction will begin before the end of 2024 / early 2025. It is estimated that it will take approximately two years to complete the main construction works in 2026. The total estimated project cost is expected to amount to under €50m.

2. Other Capital Infrastructure Investment

Other capital investment from the Department over the two years 2022 and 2023 was made towards the following projects:

- **Carlow:** Outdoor Public Space Scheme – The Carlow Exchange.
- **Clare:** Glór Theatre, Outdoor Public Space Scheme - Newmarket on Fergus and countywide, Irish Aerial Creation Centre (allocation*).
- **Cork City:** Crawford Art Gallery, Cork Opera House, Cyclone Rep, Firkin Crane, Outdoor Public Space Scheme - Elizabeth Fort, Cork Butter Museum, Cork Arts Theatre, Nano Nagle Place.
- **Cork County:** Briery Gap Theatre Mallow, Béal na Bláth Commemorations, Sirius Arts Centre, West Cork Arts Centre (allocation*), Outdoor Public Space Scheme – project in Youghal (allocation*).
- **Kerry:** Anam- Killarney Cultural Centre, Kerry Writers Museum, Outdoor Public Space Scheme – Island of Geese.
- **Kilkenny:** Butler Gallery (allocation*), Outdoor Public Space Scheme – project at Watergate Theatre (allocation*).
- **Limerick City:** Hunt Museum, Dance Limerick, LCC re Limerick Museum.
- **Limerick County:** Foynes Flying Boat & Maritime Museum.
- **Tipperary:** Thomas McDonagh Centre (Cloughjordan), TCC re Tipperary Museum of Hidden History, Outdoor Public Space Scheme- project in Clonmel (allocation*).
- **Waterford:** Garter Lane, Waterford Treasures Museums, Outdoor Public Space Scheme - countywide (allocation*).

- **Wexford:** National Opera House, Wexford Arts Centre, Outdoor Public Space Scheme - project on the Quays in Wexford Town (allocation*).

* This refers to where an allocation of funding has been made to an organisations but they haven't drawn down the funding yet for various reasons i.e. the project may be in progression or not yet started.

3. Investment in Gaeltacht (Arts and Culture) through Údarás na Gaeltachta

During this period, Údarás na Gaeltachta has increased its investment in the arts (via its subsidiary Ealaín na Gaeltachta) from €500,000 to €600,000, as well as supporting arts and cultural development via its broader suite of grants and supports. This investment has leveraged further support of €1.9 million per annum to Ealaín na Gaeltachta in 2023 and 2024, up from €895,000 in 2021. This includes a €1.24 million per annum investment in the arts for young people from the Department of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media.

Key investments in the region include support for two arts venues, 15 festivals and 40 projects/events. These delivered diverse and high-quality engagement in the traditional and contemporary arts throughout the Gaeltacht communities. These engagements reached an estimated 37,724 people in 2022, and 41,515 in 2023.

91 individual artists at all stages of their careers - cultural ambassadors on the local, national and international stage – received direct supports, and the number of artist employments increased from 722 in 2022 to 1,009 in 2023.

Highlights during the period include internationally renowned dance theatre company Teac Daírsa relocating to the Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht with significant support from Údarás na Gaeltachta, as well as ongoing work to facilitate the development of arts infrastructure in the region.

Ealaín and Údarás contribute to growing the profile of the Gaeltacht arts via a range of partnerships with national and international bodies as well as dedicated advocacy campaigns via our media partners.

4. EU National Institutes of Culture

As part of Ireland's membership to *EUNIC* (EU National Institutes of Culture) through the local cluster *EUNIC Ireland*, the Department participates in the *EUNIC Ireland Short Shorts Film Festival*. This annual free film festival includes screenings in Cork and Limerick.

[\(1\) EUNIC Ireland - 🇪🇺 Short Shorts From Europe #Film #Festival is... | Facebook](#) [\(1\) EUNIC Ireland - 🇪🇺 Short Shorts From Europe #Film #Festival is... | Facebook](#)

5. Basic Income for the Arts Scheme

The Basic Income for the Arts Scheme is a pilot research programme which will inform future government policy on how best to support Ireland's artists and creative arts workers. The Minister allocated €25 million as part of Budget 2022 to provide for the launch of the pilot scheme.

Research arising from the Basic Income for the Arts pilot enables significant insights into the wider arts sector and will help inform future arts policy. This information will be of use to the Department, the Arts Council, Local Authorities and arts organisations.

6. Creative Ireland

The Creative Ireland Programme is an all-of-Government initiative led DTCAGSM that is designed to promote individual, community and national wellbeing. Its core proposition is that participation in cultural activity by everyone drives personal and collective creativity, with significant implications for individual and societal wellbeing and achievement.

The Creative Ireland Programme has invested in local communities, through a strategic partnership with local government. Creative Communities delivers across key policy areas such as climate action, enterprise, tourism, youth, urban, rural and community development, and community health and wellbeing. The impact of Creative Communities across these areas has enabled a shift in how creativity is valued within local authorities, and by communities, as a strategic support for broader societal issues.

3. Progress on the enhancement of the Region's Gaeltachtaí

The following information outlines the progress made in the Gaeltacht areas of the Southern Region.

A total of 1,959 employed in Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the southern region at the end of 2023

According to the results of the employment survey completed by Údarás na Gaeltachta client companies in the Southern Region, there has been an increase of 332 people in employment in the region i.e. up from 1,627 at the end of 2022 to 1,959 at the end of 2023.

50 full-time jobs and 14 part-time jobs were facilitated by Údarás in 2023

The Southern regional office of Údarás na Gaeltachta, covering parts of Kerry, Cork, and Waterford, dealt with many enterprise development proposals, job creation initiatives, and provided support for language-based strategic events during 2023. Údarás na Gaeltachta approved 44 new enterprise and community development projects which will create 50 full-time jobs together with 14 part-time jobs.

State funding of €1,631,020 approved for projects by Údarás in 2023

The assistance approved by Údarás in 2023 involves a state investment of approximately €1.6 million for employment, training, and development projects in the Southern Region.

Support totaling €808,900 provided to Seven Community Development Co-operatives in 2023

The area of social enterprise and community development is essential in the implementation of Údarás na Gaeltachta's development strategy in the Southern Region. Significant investment is being made in many areas of development in relation to the development and empowerment of local communities, increasing the facilities, services and community infrastructure that underpins the local development of these areas. This assistance is provided through the Administration Grants Scheme, Deontas Reáchtála, the various training schemes, the Community Enterprise Scheme, and the standard business development and investment schemes. In 2023, Administration grants worth €808,900 were approved for seven community organisations and co-operatives. These community organisations promote development, social and employment services in the areas where they operate.

Construction of a new Digital Hub, Getic @ Uíbh Ráthach (Uíbh Ráthaigh Taskforce)

In 2021, a grant of €2,039,091 (90%) was approved under CAFT (Category 1) for Gteic@Uíbh Ráthaigh, with co-financing of €226,566 approved by the Board of Údarás na Gaeltachta. Additional funding of €856,121 was made available for the project during Q4 2022. Work on the site commenced in February 2023 and the project is expected to be completed by Q3 2024.

Full planning permission obtained for the re-development of the Coláiste Íosagáin Campus in Cork

Progress was made on the Coláiste Íosagáin Campus project during 2023. Full planning permission was obtained in April 2023 to incorporate the new extension at the rear of the building. Development work continues in 2024, to secure sufficient funding for the development.

€780,000 invested annually in the language planning process in the Southern Region

Language plans are being implemented in two Language Planning Areas in Kerry i.e. West and South Kerry, and in the Gaeltacht Service Town of Dhaingean Uí Chúis. One position (Assistant Officer) in West Kerry was upgraded to Language Planning Officer which means that four Language Planning Officers are now employed in those regions, with an annual investment of €420,000.

Language plans are also being implemented in the two Language Planning Areas in County Cork, Múscraí and Cléire, with an investment of €240,000 a year.

A new Language Planning Officer was established in LPT na Déise, Waterford, in July 2023 and that language plan will continue to be implemented with an investment of €120,000 a year.

Language Planning agreed with 24 Client Companies

Language plans were agreed with about 24 client companies in the Southern Region and language support was given to five applicants for the Online Trading Scheme in 2023.

Sustainability – An Ghaeltacht Ghlas - Oileán Chléire, Cork, secure a place on the European project, Clean Energy for EU islands

The Clean energy for EU islands secretariat supports Europe's islands in their journey with technical support, capacity-building activities, and networking opportunities. As part of this scheme, 30 islands have been selected from all over Europe and support is being provided to them to establish a renewable energy system. Údarás na Gaeltachta is participating as a regional partner in this project.

Phase two development of additional Irish language student facilities in Baile an Fheirtéaraigh, Trá Lí Co. Chiarraí

A design team was appointed by CFCD Teo. and Údarás to develop plans for additional educational facilities, Irish language student accommodation, a community hall and other community facilities as part of the proposed phase 2 development. Funding has been approved to complete the design phase through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. A planning application was recently (January 2024) submitted to Kerry County Council for this development.

4. Please outline any progress made by agencies that operate under the aegis of your Department, in supporting the objectives of the RSES which are relevant to that agency

As well as the initiatives undertaken by Department Agencies (e.g. Fáilte Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta) outlined in previous questions, a number of other activities or further explanations are outlined below.

1. Údarás na Gaeltachta

An Ghaeltacht Ghlas, West Kerry Tourism and Hospitality Sustainable Energy Community

An energy community was formed in 2023 on the Dingle peninsula involving Údarás na Gaeltachta, Mol Teic (Dingle Hub) and Fáilte Ireland. This is the first sustainable energy community developed in the country aimed at the hospitality and tourism industry. The aim of the project is to identify ways to be more energy efficient and use more renewable energy in the tourism industry.

West Kerry Gaeltacht Delegation visit to Springfield and the Big E (an annual fair in West Springfield, Massachusetts)

A delegation of business and public representatives visited the Springfield area in the autumn of 2023. It is intended that a delegation from the Springfield area will visit Corca Dhuibhne in May 2024 and there will be an opportunity during the visits to strengthen the joint relationship between both regions.

2. Fáilte Ireland

Destination Development

In May 2023 Fáilte Ireland and launched [regional strategies](#) 2023-2027 for four Brands, including three brands in the Southern Region: Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and Irelands Ancient East. These roadmaps for the tourism industry and all stakeholders involved in tourism in the regions will help navigate the current challenges and steer a course towards a sustainable recovery and continued success. The plans set out a strategic approach to unlocking the commercial potential of Ireland's Ancient East and the Wild Atlantic Way, as well as Irelands Hidden Heartlands. They will ensure focus on tourism development is sustainable and regenerative and that the benefits accrue to local communities and to nature.

Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDP)

These are 5-year sustainable tourism development plans for a destination, which bring public and private sector organisations together to prioritise tourism development projects and maximise their chance for success. All DEDPs follow the VICE (Visitors, Industry, Community, Environment) model and aim to create sustainable tourism destinations by extending the tourism season and spreading business across all parts of a region.

The following is a list of Destination and Experience Development Plans in destinations across Ireland:

- Burren DEDP.
- Limerick City Gateway DEDP.
- Cliff Coast DEDP.
- Dingle Peninsula DEDP.
- Killarney DEDP.
- Skelligs Coast DEDP.
- West Cork & Kenmare DEDP.
- Kildare and Tipperary (Thoroughbred Country) (2021).
- Monaghan (2021).
- Cork – (Cork City, Harbour and East Cork).
- Waterford.
- Wexford.
- Kilkenny.
- South Tipperary.
- Carlow.
- Lough Derg (East Galway, East Clare, North-West Tipperary) (launched April 2021).

3. The Arts Council

The Arts Council fund a number of arts centres (core and programming) throughout the country with a link of the map of these centres on its website here: <https://www.arts council.ie/Arts-in-Ireland/Arts-Centres/Arts-Centres-Map/>

- **Cork City:** Triskel Arts Centre, Tobin St, Cork Opera House Emmet Place, The Everyman, McCurtain St.
- **Cork County:** West Cork Arts Centre -Skibbereen Sirius Arts Centre- Cobh.
- **Kerry:** Siamsa Tire, Tralee and St Johns Theatre Listowel.
- **Clare:** Glór Theatre.
- **Limerick City:** Lime Tree Theatre- Mary Immaculate College. The Belltable- O'Connell Street.
- **Limerick County:** Friars Gate Theatre.
- **Tipperary:** Excel Heritage Co Ltd Carrownreddy, The Source Arts Centre Thurles, South Tipperary Arts Centre –Clonmel.
- **Waterford City:** Garter Lane Arts Centre and Theatre Royal Waterford.
- **Kilkenny:** Watergate Theatre.
- **Carlow:** VISUAL Centre for Contemporary Art.
- **Wexford:** Wexford Arts Centre.

The Arts Council also fund [festivals](#) throughout the country. For example, see 2023 [here](#) and 2022 [here](#), as well as a more recent initiative Creative Places e.g. Creative Places Shannon, West Cork Islands, Tipperary Town, Enniscorthy, Bagenalstown which can be found at <https://www.arts council.ie/Arts-in-Ireland/Strategic-development/Creative-Places/>

4. Screen Ireland

Fís Éireann/Screen Ireland is the development agency for the Irish film, television and animation industry. Screen Ireland's website provides information about development, production and distribution funding for writers, directors and production companies across the film, television and animation sector. <https://www.screenireland.ie/funding>

5. Sport Ireland

Re – RPO 198:

Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) were established in 2001 to help people get active and remove barriers to participation in sport and physical activity. Each LSPs is linked to or housed within the Local Authorities across the country and they continue to progress key objectives under National Sports Policy, National Physical Activity Plan, Sports Action Plan and Sports Capital Policies. LSPs also work closely with local authorities, clubs and community groups to support strategic plans around infrastructure, equipment and active spaces. Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media funding for the nine southern region LSPs in 2023 was €3.4m in total (See breakdown on Page 11 [here](#)). The nine southern region LSPs also received Dormant Accounts (Department of Rural and Community Development) funding of €1.5m in total in 2023.

Limerick, Cork and Waterford LSPs continue to deliver the Active Cities initiative which develops local physical activity strategies and plans in the most disadvantaged communities. Under the Dormant Accounts funded initiative, Limerick received €140,000, Waterford received €100,000 and Cork received €165,000 (Total = €405,000) in 2023.

Re RPO 201: The aim of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027 is to support a more coordinated, cohesive approach to outdoor recreation at county level to support increased participation in outdoor recreation. The implementation of the strategy is led by Sport Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development (D/RCD). Outdoor Recreation Officer Pilot Roles are part of the strategy implementation and have been rolled out to 6 counties including Clare and Waterford, fully funded by D/RCD.

Re RPO 201: The Get Ireland Active National Database [here](#), which was launched in October 2023, is Ireland's interactive activity, sport and recreation hub. It is a central registry bringing together the collective resources of Government, Sport Ireland, local authorities, state agencies, and the national governing bodies of sport to capture all sports facilities and places for people to be active in Ireland. Work with Fáilte Ireland Local Development Companies, Local Authorities and many other government departments as well as the sport sector, has been integral to the development of the system, funded by D/RCD, Healthy Ireland and Sport Ireland.

5. Please provide details of any policy initiatives/developments that have been finalised or are in preparatory stages that support the objectives of the RSES

1. Sustainable Tourism Development Policy

The Programme for Government committed to developing a Sustainable Tourism Policy document and in advance of this, an interim action plan. The Department is progressing the development of a new national tourism policy framework that will mainstream sustainability – environmental, economic and societal – across the entire tourism sector. The framework will shape how our tourism industry develops in the period to 2030. In this regard, while it will aim to grow the tourism sector, the objective will be to do so in a manner that is consistent with our broader sustainability targets and ensure that Ireland will be a brand leader in sustainable tourism.

The new tourism policy framework will seek to establish Ireland as a leading tourism destination, excelling in sustainable development practices that deliver better economic, social and environmental outcomes for all. The EU Just Transition Fund (EUJTF), co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union is set up to assist the territories most affected by the transition to a climate neutral economy. In Ireland, whilst this focuses on the wider Midlands region, it includes the municipal districts of Carrick-on-Suir and Thurles (Co. Tipperary), where there have been direct impacts from the move away from peat production and electricity generation from peat. There is a need to establish sustainable ways to support the livelihoods of the communities around Ireland's raised bogs, while helping these unique natural habitats to recover and thrive. The EU Just Transition Fund aims to address employment, economic, social and environmental changes that come with the shift away from carbon-intense activities. This scheme is in line with the Programme for Government commitment for the development of a Sustainable Tourism Policy which will support sustainable economic development and job creation.

In May 2023 Fáilte Ireland launched four new Regional Tourism Development Strategies 2023-2027 which will provide a framework for sustainable tourism development across Ireland. These strategies have been activated across every region through a series of local area action plans know as Destination and Experience Development Plans (DEDP's).

2. Provision of Artist's Workspaces

The Programme for Government (PfG) contains an action to support measures to increase the provision of affordable workspaces for artists and creative practitioners. The Department is hoping to put a scheme towards the provision of artists' workspaces in 2024 in consultation with the local authorities particularly in city locations.

3. Night Time Economy

The Night-time Economy is an important driver of Tourism as it contributes to our economy and our cultural and creative sectors. A vibrant Night-Time Economy should include a range of activities to suit all ages and interests and be a welcoming and flexible environment to do business and be creative. The Night-Time Economy Taskforce was established in 2020 as one of the priority actions for the Department and in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government. The [Report of the Night-Time Economy \(NTE\) Taskforce](#) which was subsequently published by Minister Catherine Martin T.D. in September 2021, aims to create a more inclusive and diverse Night-Time Economy. The Report contains 36 practical recommendations in the area of regulation, licensing, planning, transport, safety and increasing the diversity of activities as part of the night-time offering.

An Implementation Group which is chaired by the Department, was established in 2022 to ensure that the recommendations contained within the Report are progressed and implemented in full. The delivery of the recommendations is a whole of Government responsibility and the Department continues to work with partners in Government Departments, Agencies and other key stakeholders. There are a number of actions in the Taskforce Report that the Department has overall responsibility for, which specifically focuses on supporting cultural activities that can attract a more diverse community to our cities and towns later in the evening and night. The Department continues to develop new initiatives in conjunction with Agencies and Stakeholders in the Night-Time Economy with the aim of diversifying our cultural offering at night.

4. Digital Creative Industries Roadmap 2024-2026

In January 2024 a [Digital Creative Industries Roadmap](#) was published. Developed by the Creative Ireland Programme within DTCAGSM and DETE, the Roadmap responds to the Programme for Government commitment by seeking to leverage the clear potential of digital creative sectors for sustainable and resilient employment, export growth and regional development.

The Roadmap will focus on three specific digital creative industry sectors:

- Commercial design sectors (including industrial design, product design, visual communications, Ui/Ux and interaction design, service design and strategic design).
- Digital Games.
- Content creation (including advertising and branding, commercial social media content, multimedia content for mobile applications and content for emerging immersive technologies).

5. Culture and Creativity Strategies 2023-2027 for each of the local authorities

In establishing *Creative Communities* as a key pillar of the Creative Ireland Programme, the overarching goal by DTCAGSM is to work collaboratively; engage creativity as a strategy for wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic development; and place creativity at the centre of public policy. Each local authority has published a Culture and Creativity Strategy 2023-2027 aligned with the national ambition of the Creative Ireland Programme and *Culture 2025*. However, they are also unique to each local authority, reflecting the breadth of cultural and creative work being undertaken in each area, the vision and values of each local authority, and their strategic priorities.

6. Re – RPO 198:

Action 8 of the National Sports Policy tasks each Local Authority with developing a Local Sports Plan to review needs and develop a locally led approach to improving participating in physical activity, recreation and sport. These plans will be developed and implemented in cooperation with LSPs, clubs, communities and partners within and beyond sport. Local Sports Plans will consider all forms of physical activity whether the emphasis is on exercise and fitness, volunteering, coaching, team sports, walking...etc. or whether the emphasis is on structured participation through schools and clubs. Four local authorities in Ireland (Clare, Cavan, Carlow and Laois) are currently being supported by Sport Ireland in developing plans as part of a pilot which will inform a national framework and templates

for all remaining Local Authorities to access for implementation. Plans will be completed and adopted by all Local Authorities by the end of 2024. The consultancy tender for the national framework project was procured at €150,000 (ex VAT), which will be on a split 60/40 basis with the Local Authorities contributing €90K & Sport Ireland contributing €60K.

6. Please provide a summary of the funding programmes administered by your Department (or agency under the aegis of your Department), over the last two years, which have been awarded within the Southern Region with the following details requested:¹

- **Funding Programme**
- **County Project Name and Description**
- **Amount Awarded (€)**
- **Stage of Project**

1. Sport

- The Sports Capital Equipment Programme (SCEP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities, and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment, throughout Ireland. There is a commitment to continuing the SCEP in the Programme for Government and in the National Sports Policy. The 2020 round of the SCEP closed for applications in March 2021, and there was a total allocation of €166.6m for this round.

Please see the accompanying excel file (Sport – SCEP Funding) with a schedule of all Sports Capital and Equipment Programme grants awarded to the relevant counties from 01 January 2022 to date. A new Round of the Programme was launched in 2023 and the first allocations will be made later in 2024.

- The Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund (LSSIF) provides support for larger sports projects, where the level of exchequer support is greater than that available under the SCEP. The first allocations under LSSIF were announced in January 2020 with €86.4 million subsequently awarded to 33 different projects. Additional grant funding of €37.6 was awarded to existing LSSIF projects in December 2023, with 27 individual projects benefitting, bringing the total awarded to date to Large Scale Sport Infrastructure funded projects to €124 million. The following projects in the southern region have been allocated LSSIF funding:
 - **Cork:** (1) Athletics Ireland & MTU Community Sport Project; (2) Munster Centre of Excellence – FAI. (3) National Rowing Centre (4) Munster Rugby Centre of Excellence.
 - **Limerick:** (1) Limerick Regional Athletics Hub – Newcastle West and (2) Askeaton Pool
 - **Tipperary:** Regional Sports Campus - Thurles
 - **Waterford:** Walsh Park County Ground - GAA.
 - **Kilkenny:** The Watershed Development.
 - **Wexford:** Enniscorthy Sports Hub.

2. Gaeltacht

In 2022 Udárás na Gaeltachta accepted applications from Community groups for funding to employ tourism officers in new projects and visitor attractions. The grant was awarded based on clear deliverables over a two year period. Five projects in Kerry and Cork were awarded funding of €60,000 each over two years, in the first year, €150,000 was paid (2023). All projects (listed below) are halfway through completion.

County Kerry

- An Díseart Ionad Spioradáltachta agus Cultúir Ghaelaigh, an Daingean (€30,000).
- Comhaontas Turasóireachta Chorca Dhuibhne (€30,000).
- Comhchoiste Ghaeltachtaí Chiarraí Theas CTR (€30,000).
- Mol Cruithaitheachta agus Nuálaíochta Daingean Uí Chúis (Dingle Hub) (€30,000).

¹ Southern Region comprises 10 local authorities: Cork City, Cork County, Clare, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford.

County Cork

- Comharchumann Forbartha Mhúscraí Teo (€30,000).

3. Arts and Culture – Investment Scheme

Please see attached excel file (Arts and Culture Scheme Funding) for a list of scheme funding in the Southern Region. In addition, supports for the night-time economy are outlined below.

The Night-Time Economy Support Scheme

This scheme supported licensed premises (including hotels) and unlicensed premises such as cafés and other suitable alcohol free venues, to trial new events, activities and initiatives at night, with a particular focus on off-peak times, to encourage an increased variety of night-time entertainment offerings, increase footfall in our towns and cities in the evenings and create employment for artists/performers. The scheme closed in 2022. Details of funding were as follows:

County	Amount Awarded
Carlow	38,006.50
Clare	57,385.96
Cork	184,835.00
Kerry	137,486.00
Kilkenny	34,722.53
Limerick	107,020.40
Tipperary	33,268.75
Waterford	85,142.46
Wexford	63,337
Totals:	741,204.60

Later Openings at National Cultural Institutions 2022 - Crawford Art Gallery Cork City

In support of actions in the Taskforce Report which recommended opening our National Cultural Institutions later into the evening and night, €8,440.00 was awarded to Crawford open later evenings in 2022.

After Hours at the Museum Scheme 2023

This scheme supported museums and galleries to open their doors later by hosting innovative events to encourage people to enjoy a more diverse nightlife in our towns and cities across the country. The scheme closed in 2023. Details of funding were as follows:

County	Amount Awarded
Clare	1,258
Cork	60,170
Kerry	29,540
Kilkenny	9,895
Limerick	20,000
Tipperary	17,450
Waterford	14,200
Wexford	10,000
Total	162,513

Samhain Night Processions in partnership with Fáilte Ireland 2023

The Department co-funded a series of Samhain night processions in partnership with Fáilte Ireland which took place in Waterford, Limerick and Longford across the October Bank Holiday weekend in 2023. The Fire and Shadows Processions Pilot Scheme was launched in 2023 to enhance and raise the profile of existing Samhain or authentic Halloween festivals and events. This initiative aims to strengthen Ireland's position as the 'Home of Halloween', to attract more visitors and creating new economic opportunities within destinations and to support a more vibrant and diverse Night-Time Economy. The scheme closed for applications in 2023. The Department awarded a total of €66,666 to counties in the Southern Region, namely Waterford and Limerick.

4. Creative Ireland Programme

The all-of-Government initiative, **the Creative Ireland Programme in DTCAGSM** and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage jointly invested to enable the implementation of Culture and Creativity Strategies across local authorities. This included initiatives under the following pillars of Creative Ireland – Creative Youth, Creative Communities, Creative Health and Wellbeing and Creative Industries and Creative Climate Action. A breakdown of funding support between 2022 and 2024 is set out below.

Local Authority	2022	2023	2024
Cork City Council	€295,624.75	€279,330	€207,419
Cork County Council	€319,025.38	€229,290.10	€207,419
Clare County Council	€283,014.01	€206,290.10	€207,419
Kerry County Council	€235,334.22	€240,290.10	€207,419
Limerick City & County Council	€389,007.50	€244,840.10	€207,419
Tipperary County Council	€168,432	€197,930.10	€207,419
Waterford City & County Council	€424,414.00	€231,290.10	€207,419
Carlow County Council	€272,748	€257,466.50	€207,419
Kilkenny County Council	€245,148.36	€245,290.10	€207,419
Wexford County Council	€238,091.00	€206,190.10	€207,419
Total	€2,870,839.22	€2,338,207	€2,074,190

5. Tourism

Digital That Delivers

Digital that Delivers is an initiative from Fáilte Ireland designed to power a digital transformation of the visitor experience sector (visitor attractions, activity providers and day tours). Now in its third year, this programme has helped to transform the online presence of hundreds of visitor experiences, delivering a step change in their online sales, digital capability, and operational efficiency.

Digital that Delivers secures the sustainable growth of Ireland's regional destinations and the digital development of our tourism industry. This support programme ensures Irish tourism busiáilte Ireland nesses maximise sales from online channels, increase reach and bookings through connected distribution. Fáilte Ireland assistance powers online excellence by increasing digital capability, streamlining processes, delivering efficiencies, and capturing attention in a competitive global marketplace.

In September 2023, a second intake of 270 businesses commenced their digital transformation journey. Running across a two-year period, the programme provides participating businesses with training, expert advice, and financial supports to launch key digital projects, develop digital skills and drive more sales via connected online distribution. In early 2024 a cohort of up to 200 businesses will be welcomed into the third and final intake of the programme which is due to conclude by end 2026.

To date Fáilte Ireland has approved €6 million to tourism businesses under this scheme. Fáilte Ireland anticipate this investment will result in additional economic activity of €408 million over a 10-year period, creating 11,000 sustainable jobs. This represents a €9 return for every €1 invested or €2 in tax returns for every €1 of public investment. To date (Jan 2024) €3,684,717.55 funding was awarded to many counties in the Southern Region.

Platforms for Growth - Shared Water Facilities

€19 million worth of investment was announced for the second platform, Platforms for Growth 2, to be used to develop world-class facility centres at 22 locations across the country where water-based activities are a key visitor attraction. This investment scheme was developed in partnership between Fáilte Ireland and local authorities and to support the local economy. These best-in-class facilities include changing facilities, showers, toilets, secure storage and enclosed spaces for inductions to take place. These facilities provide for a hub in each locality from which multiple water sport operators can base themselves. The following areas will benefit from this initiative and are currently in progress:

- **Cork:** Claycastle Co. Cork (IAE).
- **Tipperary:** Dromineer (IHH).
- **Clare:** Kilkee (WAW) and Ballycuggeran (IHH).
- **Kerry:** Ballyunion, Fenit, Maherabeg, Dingle Peninsula (WAW).
- **Limerick:** (IHH).
- **Waterford:** (IAE).
- **Carlow:** (IAE).
- **Kilkenny:** Kilkenny City (IAE).
- **Wexford:** (IAE).

Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme

To stimulate the development of unique gala dinner venues of scale, Fáilte Ireland launched a Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme in 2022. This capital investment scheme, is an intervention that was launched to address the lack of ‘wow’ unique gala dinner venues of scale in Ireland’s Business Events hubs, and offers investment grants of up to 100% of eligible project costs to a maximum of €200,000 per project.

The scheme aims to support the development of ‘wow’ gala dinner venues of scale in the environs of Ireland’s premier business tourism hubs. Targeting this gap in the Business Events segment will ensure recovery and growth of revenue which is central to Fáilte Ireland’s sustainable growth agenda. Currently, evaluations have been completed for Stage 3 (Compliance) of the scheme, which is the final evaluation stage, and it is expected that awardees will be officially notified of outcomes in early 2024 and that successful awardees will include venues in the Southern Region.

Destination Town’s

Every county in Ireland was allocated funding through Fáilte Ireland’s €15.5m ‘Destination Town’ initiative which launched in 2019 with the aim of boosting the attractiveness and tourism appeal of towns nationwide. Up to €500,000 was allocated per local authority.

Urban Animation

The €5 million Urban Animation Capital Investment Scheme will fund urban animation projects in Cork, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick, Louth, Waterford and Dublin. The stories, culture, history and heritage of these locations will be brought to life through a variety of large-scale outdoor performance spaces, public art and light installations.

- The Urban Animation Pilot Capital Investment Scheme was a response to the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on tourism. The key aims of this Scheme is to:(i) Re-imagine and re-invigorate urban public spaces.(ii) Develop projects that enhance the “sense of place” for the visitor and connection with the unique culture, history, heritage and stories of the destination in new and innovative ways, (iii) Improve connectivity between public realm and outdoor areas, creating a sense of discovery, playfulness and adventure.(iv) Demonstrate potential to attract footfall to support local businesses and increase dwell time.(v) Complement existing public realm strategies for the destination in the context of urban regeneration, destination development and place-making.

The following counties in the Southern Region were allocated funding:

- Cork City Council.
- Kilkenny County Council.
- Limerick City and County Council.
- Waterford City and County Council.

The Blueway Partnership

This is an all-island body comprising Fáilte Ireland, Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, Waterways Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland. Fáilte Ireland will explore further opportunities to work with businesses and stakeholders to grow awareness of this amenity, and will continue to further support the development and activation of the Blueway in order to inspire existing businesses to work closer together to create cross selling opportunities.

Greenways - Southeast Greenway

The Southeast Greenway (incorporating the Kilkenny Greenway) is a spectacular 24km off-road cycling and walking trail on the old railway line from the quays of Ireland's oldest city to the Norman town of New Ross along the banks of the river Barrow, through the scenic countryside of South Kilkenny. The three Local Authorities of Kilkenny, Waterford, and Wexford collaborated to deliver the Greenway. Funding had been secured under the National Greenway Fund. The rail and sleeper lifting and the detailed design for the main construction works, which included the surfacing of the Greenway, undertaking the accommodation works and structures, etc. along the route is finalised. Phase 1 of the Greenway opened in July 2023.

6. Audiovisual Sector

A key objective of Screen Ireland's strategic plan Building for a Creative Future 2024, is to champion industry development that is national and sustainable, supporting Irish companies, a competitive fiscal offering and an expanded workforce. Screen Ireland has a number of initiatives that target development in the Southern Region, including:

- **National Talent Academy for Film & TV Crew South:** The National Talent Academies network includes three regional Crew Academies, one of which is based in the Southern Region and is currently managed by Film in Limerick. The network has been established to develop a highly skilled, diverse talent and crew base throughout the country, including in the southern region, offering a wide range of activities for the Irish screen industry, including courses, programmes and career opportunities.

The overarching aim of the National Talent Academies is to address and support current educational skills gaps in the screen sector. Retaining the diversity and inclusion focus present across all Academy initiatives, its ambition is to drive more Irish talent from all backgrounds and disciplines into the sector and develop greater awareness of the sector as a career path. Screen Ireland has provided €600,000 in capital funding to support the Crew Academy South to date.

- **Nationwide Additional Production Fund:** Screen Ireland continues its support of productions across the country with the "Nationwide Additional Production Fund", established in 2023. This additional production loan is for projects (live-action and animated feature film and television and short films) that are carrying out production in areas of Ireland outside a radius of 65km from the Dublin GPO. Three projects that filmed in the Southern Region were awarded this additional funding in 2023 to the value of €580,000.
- **Production Funding:** Over the two-year period 2022-2024, Screen Ireland invested €4.9m in productions that filmed either partially or fully in the Southern Region. This investment was across 10 productions, 7 of which filmed exclusively in the Region. Screen Ireland also provided production funding to the Irish language feature film *Tarrac* as part of Cine4, a partnership between Screen Ireland, Coimisiún na Meán and TG4 to develop feature films in the Irish language. *Tarrac* was filmed and set in the Kerry Gaeltacht.
- **Festival Funding - Irish Film Festivals:** Screen Ireland provides funding to some national Irish film festivals and film markets focused on Irish film, television, animation, documentaries and shorts with strong industry engagement. Over the period 2022 – 2024 Screen Ireland provided this support to a number of Southern Region film festivals, including the Cork Film Festival, Animation Dingle, Fastnet Film Festival, Kerry Film Festival and Catalyst Film Festival, to a total value of almost €200,000.

Please provide any other comments that you would like to make with respect to your Department (including any agencies under the aegis of your Department) in implementing the RSES and addressing the issue of balanced regional growth, to fully realise the ambition and targets set out for the Southern Region under *Project Ireland 2040- National Planning Framework* and the RSES. This may include any recommendations that you consider would improve the implementation process and provide a greater focus on addressing regional imbalance.

Tourism Development

Tourism contributes to essential employment in all counties, especially in regional locations outside of the main cities where other employment opportunities are limited. Fáilte Ireland's capital investment programme, Platforms for Growth (worth €150 million) ran from 2019 to 2022. The programme, which falls under Project Ireland 2040, and unlike any other Fáilte Ireland project, explicitly targets 'platforms' or project types that have the greatest potential to grow tourism across Ireland.

To date, funding has been available via Platforms for Growth in the form of three initiatives:

- The Immersive Heritage and Cultural Attractions 2019 Scheme.
- The Shared Facilities for Activity Providers 2020.
- The Gala Dinner Venues Investment Scheme 2022.

The first Platform for Growth was launched in May 2019 and focused on developing immersive heritage and cultural attractions. Through this platform, Fáilte Ireland invested in heritage and cultural attractions of scale that motivate visitors to travel, either to and-or within Ireland, but without displacing the existing attractions of a destination or disturbing the competitiveness already in mature destinations. The overall objective of this platform was to deliver brilliant experiences that allow visitors to connect with Ireland and bring the national and local culture, heritage and people to life, while also delivering greater regional and seasonal spread of tourism.

In April 2021, €19 million worth of investment was announced for the second platform, Platforms for Growth 2, to develop world-class water sports facility centres at 22 locations across the country where water-based activities are a key visitor attraction. This investment scheme was developed in partnership between Fáilte Ireland and local authorities and to support the local economy.

EU Just Transition Fund

Under the EU Just Transition Fund, Fáilte Ireland has been tasked with the administration of €68 million for a Regenerative Tourism and Place-making Scheme 2023-2026. Through this scheme Fáilte Ireland will invest in the sustainable development of tourism in the Midlands*(see illustration below) with the aim of diversifying the regional economy by creating jobs, supporting habitats and biodiversity and sustaining communities.

<https://www.failteireland.ie/Identify-Available-Funding/Just-Transition-Fund/About-EU-JTF.aspx>

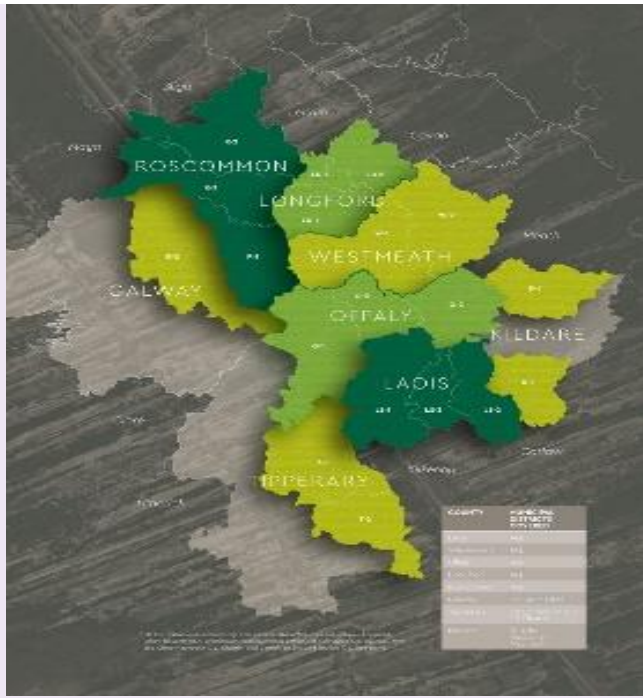
There are two main elements to the overall scheme:

- €38m towards the diversification of the regional economy through the sustainable development of tourism.
- €30m towards the regeneration and repurposing of peatlands through the development of a network of trails.

The overall scheme will be delivered through a range of funding programmes, which will run in parallel between now and the end of 2026, as follows:

- A: Trail Network Development Scheme (delivered primarily through Bord na Mona).
- B: Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for SMEs.
- C & D: Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Local Authorities and certain State Agencies.
- E: Appointment of County Tourism Activators to Local Authorities.
- F: Enterprise Supports Scheme.

*



PLEASE PROVIDE A CONTACT POINT IN THE EVENT THAT WE NEED TO CONTACT YOU ABOUT THIS FORM.

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