

**Tourism Ireland briefing note for the Committee for the Economy**  
**Subject: Tourism in the Fermanagh Lakelands**  
**(Session one)**  
**4<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

**About Tourism Ireland**

Tourism Ireland is the organisation with responsibility for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a compelling holiday and Business Events destination. Tourism Ireland was established as one of the 'six areas of co-operation' under the framework of the Belfast Agreement of Good Friday 1998. Its principal objectives are to increase tourism to the island of Ireland and to support Northern Ireland in achieving its tourism potential. Tourism Ireland is active in 13+ key markets across Great Britain, North America, Mainland Europe and Australia.

**Value of overseas tourism**

At the time of writing, the most recent year for which we have official NISRA (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency) data is 2023. Tourism NI's survey of local tourism businesses for 2024 shows that over 80% experienced stable or increased performance.

In 2023, spend by overseas visitors to Northern Ireland reached £672 million, demonstrating recovery compared to pre-COVID-19 (+15%). The majority of tourism spend in Northern Ireland is sourced from incoming, overseas visitors (56%). Of the 300,000 tourism jobs across the island of Ireland, >70,000 in Northern Ireland, around 6/10 depend on overseas tourism. Tourism is one of the largest shared indigenous industries across the island.

**Tourism Ireland's vision**

Tourism Ireland is targeting +6.5% revenue growth in Northern Ireland on average each year to 2030 – growing revenue to around £1.3 billion per year by 2035 i.e., around 2X the

revenue generated by overseas tourism in 2023 (contributing towards the overall goal for tourism expenditure from overnight visitors to exceed £2 billion by 2035, outlined in the Tourism Vision & Action Plan).

Tourism Ireland grows overseas tourism by inspiring overseas visitors and strengthening strategic partnerships. Tourism Ireland's message is that the island of Ireland has so much to offer across regions and seasons. The Tourism Ireland team is proud to support and grow the contribution that overseas tourism makes to the Fermanagh Lakelands.

### **Inspiring visitors**

#### **International publicity for the Fermanagh Lakelands**

Working with influential travel, lifestyle and special interest media is an important element of Tourism Ireland's overseas promotional programme. The organisation also co-produces long-form shows viewed by millions around the world, to inspire travel. In 2024, we generated positive publicity in international media outlets for Fermanagh with a reach of over 109 million.

Some highlights of this activity include:

A crew from ARTE, a European TV channel that focuses on culture, filmed here last year at various locations including the Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark and the Marble Arch Caves. The episode filmed here will air at the end of May in Germany and France as part of a programme called *ARTE Découverte*. The programme focuses on discovering different countries and landscapes by highlighting the culture and history of destinations. Each episode has around 800,000 viewers and is also available on the ARTE streaming service, reaching a further 300,000 online viewers.

In the US, Fermanagh featured in a travel series created by Emmy-winning host, director and writer Joseph Rosendo. *Joseph Rosendo's Steppin' Out* is available to millions of households across the US on PBS (public TV network). His journey along the Shannon/Erne waterway began in Enniskillen. Other Fermanagh highlights included Headhunters Barber Shop and Railway Museum and the Marble Arch Caves.

In April, Tourism Ireland invited Swedish presenter Lina Skandevall to visit Fermanagh and Donegal. She then shared her slow travel journey here – which included a forest dining experience, an astrotourism experience and an overnight stay at Finn Lough Bubble Domes – in a ten-minute segment on one of Sweden's most-watched morning news and talk shows, *Nyhetsmorgon*, which airs on TV4 (Swedish TV network). The broadcast delivered 1.4 million opportunities to see and Lina also shared 66 posts about her trip on her social channels, reaching almost 150,000.

Five Spanish journalists, representing a magazine and various newspapers, with a combined reach of over 300,000 readers, as well as millions of readers online, visited in early April to explore our literary heritage, as this year marks the 125th anniversary of the death of Oscar Wilde. In Fermanagh, the journalists learned more about the Oscar Wilde-inspired 'In Our Dreams' festival, which takes place in October, and explored the deep connections to the writer in the town of Enniskillen – by enjoying the 'Follow the Swallow' trail and taking a boat tour with Erne Water Taxi. One online article alone resulting from this visit was syndicated in 18 regional newspapers across Spain. A similar visit took place in May, with five Italian journalists (combined reach of over 900,000 readers) also visiting Enniskillen.

### **Ireland Unrushed: new Slow Tourism campaign**

Tourism Ireland has just launched a new Slow Tourism campaign called 'Ireland Unrushed'. The campaign, which features a suite of videos, including Fermanagh, is highlighting the breadth of sustainable transport and tourism experiences across the island of Ireland, inviting visitors to experience the destination at a gentler pace. For the month of June, Slow Tourism messages are being prioritised on Tourism Ireland's channels, with a key focus on inspirational journeys that encourage greater dwell time in communities and nature. The campaign is running on leading video platforms in key markets and also includes visits by media and content creator to experience Ireland Unrushed at first-hand and then share with their readers and followers, as well as in-market activations.

### **Promoting Fermanagh on social media**

Tourism Ireland regularly highlights Fermanagh to its 7+ million followers on social media, sharing compelling content (stunning images and video) on platforms including Instagram, Facebook and TikTok.

### **Strengthening partnerships**

Tourism Ireland creates global events and platforms, so that tourism businesses from around the island can connect with international tour operators, to agree commercial deals that bring visitors at scale. In 2025, Tourism Ireland will support 250 distinct local businesses selling Northern Ireland to win commercial meeting with overseas trade partners, through sales missions and high profile B2B events.

### **B2B platforms for Fermanagh businesses to promote overseas**

Nobody sells Fermanagh better than Fermanagh people and Tourism Ireland provides important platforms for local tourism businesses overseas. For example: Belleek Pottery joined Tourism Ireland's sales mission to the United States at the end of April, which visited Cleveland, Cincinnati, Minneapolis-Saint Paul and Chicago. Last summer, Lough Erne Resort joined Tourism Ireland on the 'Meet in Ireland' stand at The Meetings Show in London, a leading exhibition for Business Events. Lough Erne Resort also attended IGTM (International Golf Travel Market) in Lisbon last autumn. The Boatyard Distillery and Lough Erne Resort attended Tourism Ireland's 'Flavours of Ireland' workshop in London in October, – connecting with leading global inbound tour operators who bring visitors at scale to the island of Ireland. Last November, Finn Lough took part in Tourism Ireland's 'Ireland meets the West End' B2B event in London, which aims to grow business events i.e., corporate meetings, events and incentive travel business from Britain to the island of Ireland.

### **Co-operative campaigns with airlines and ferry operators**

Tourism Ireland supports demand for routes to our airports and ferry ports, including Larne, Belfast City Airport and City of Derry. Through co-operative marketing with air and sea carriers that serve Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland promotes and stimulates demand for routes. For example, in Q2 2025 Tourism Ireland undertook a co-operative

campaign with P&O Ferries to promote its Cairnryan to Larne service. This campaign ran on multiple channels, including radio and Social (Meta, TikTok and YouTube). We will also undertake co-op campaigns with easyJet Holidays and British Airways Holidays, to their tour packages that focus on flights to Northern Ireland, in Q3 and Q4 of this year.

In 2024, Tourism Ireland invested in the following co-operative campaigns, which delivered a return on Investment of 34:1:

➤ City of Derry Airport

- Q1 2024: promotions with Loganair, highlighting its London Heathrow to City of Derry service. Channels included radio, digital and Connected TV.
- Q1 2024: activity with Ryanair, promoting its Manchester to City of Derry service, through digital display ads and targeting repeat visitors on the Ryanair database.
- Q3 2024: activity with easyJet, promoting new services from Edinburgh and Liverpool to City of Derry. Channels were social media and radio.

➤ Belfast City Airport

- Q1 2024: promotions with Loganair, highlighting its Inverness and Aberdeen services to Belfast City Airport. Channels included digital display and social media.
- Q1 2024: activity with British Airways, which included a partnership with the *Daily Mail* in print and digital.
- Q1 2024: activity with easyJet that included a partnership with *The Times* (print and digital), radio campaign (broadcast and digital), as well as ads on social and working with a popular travel content creator, highlighting ease of access on six different routes to Belfast City Airport.

➤ Belfast International Airport

- Q1 2024: co-operative activity with easyJet that included a partnership with *The Times* (print and digital), radio campaign (broadcast and digital), as well as ads on social and working with a travel content creator (That Travel Couple travelled to Northern Ireland with easyJet), highlighting ease of access on 14 different routes to Belfast International.

- Q1 2024: co-op with Ryanair promoting its services from Manchester, Edinburgh and London. Channels were digital display and also targeting repeat visitors on Ryanair database.

In addition, Tourism Ireland's campaign with Skyscanner targeted GB holidaymakers researching for inspiration about great short breaks destinations, promoting ease of access to all Northern Ireland airports, to influence them to choose Northern Ireland.

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