Other resources

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Bord Failte's Heritage Towns

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Bord Failte's Heritage Towns

- Move Towards Heritage Towns
- Theme Town Concept
- Heritage Town Programme
- Results of Programme
- Case Study
- Future Direction

1976 National Development Plan

- Designated areas
- 81 Tourism planning Zones
- Areas with comprehensive sets of facilities

ITIC Tourism and the Environment ('86)

- Concern that speed and scale of change cam place historic urban fabric at great risk.
- Importance is in overall composition rather than individual buildings

Tourism Centres (BF – 1989-93)

- Towns with 100 bedrooms in all registered accommodations
- Avoids Dissipation
- Supports existing accommodation / facilities,
- Enabling expansion & create employment
- Marketing co-operation - synergetic effort
- Centres will benefit hinterlands

6 Essential Elements

- **Accommodation**
- **Food**
- **Activity & special interest facilities**
  - **Heritage - interpretation & enrichment**
- **Night entertainment**
- **Transport**
  - **Boat hire, bicycle hire, walking trails**
- **Visitor services**
  - **Tourist Office, genealogical**

Presence of elements

Provision of these six elements is the cornerstone of development of our tourist centres, for without them we fail. If any are weak or absent, a centre is not 'at first base' to become a viable centre which can be marketed to deliver tourism growth.
The beneficial effects of this policy in focusing and concentrating developmental and investment supports as a means to achieving rapid results are inescapable There is no better way (Bord Failte, 1988).

Theme Towns (BF 1989-93)

The Theme town is a new concept in Irish tourism where the town itself because of its preserved quality and presentation becomes a tourist attraction in its own right (1989).
Bord Failte and the RTOs will encourage and give focus and leadership . . . [they will] assist committed communities to obtain the economic benefits which such an approach can bring.

Involvement and participation by local authorities is vital.

Theme Towns (BF 1989-93)

To become part of this communities, business groups and local authorities asked to:

☑ Remove gaudy, plastic and other signs

☑ Preserve traditional shopfronts, streetscapes and street furniture

☑ Provide pedestrian areas and prevent traffic intrusion where appropriate

☑ Plan the conservation of all historic and architecturally important buildings - including where appropriate, suitable interpretation of local history / heritage

☑ Co-ordinate all new development with the conservation plan and in harmony with the character of the town.

Primary Theme Towns

z **Where 'the necessary willingness and required elements' were in place, more rapid development would be possible**

z **6 towns (1989) were:**
- Adare
- Carlingford
- Cobh
- Kilkenny City
- Kinsale
- Robertstown

Potential Theme Towns

- Theme Town status could be achieved (1989) by 15 more towns
- 'if they are willing to undertake the necessary development on a planned basis
   this would mean they could
- reap the benefits which would result'.

15 Potential Theme Towns

⌘ **Ardagh**
 Athenry
 Athy
 Birr
 Clondra
 Cong
 Drogheda
 Glendalough

⌘ **Malahide**
 Monasterevan
 Portarlington
 Ramelton
 Slane
 Sneem
 Strokestown

Other towns may be included if the necessary commitment and enthusiasm are present

1991 Heritage Town Programme

- **To transform a selection of Ireland's finest Historic towns into tourist attractions in their own right**
- **20 expected to be designated over 2 years.**

Investing in Ireland's Future ('91)

- **£11 million programme**
  - **£5 million from ERDF,**
  - **£5 million from private sources**
  - **£1 million from public sector.**
- **BF, RTOs, Local Authorities & Community**
- **30 towns and villages.**
- **Improvement to be completed over 1992/3**

Heritage Town Requirements

- Only designated when certain works have been achieved
- i.e. Critical mass of historic and architectural potential

Urban Landscape Requirements

- Conservation plan - historic buildings
- Programmes - use of restored buildings
- Landscaping
- Signposting
- Guide books & backup literature
- Traffic management programme
- High quality parking
- Visitor management programme
- Heritage Trails

Additional Requirements

- Suitable interpretation of local history and heritage
- Visitor centre
- Developments in harmony with conservation plan
- Urban renewal incentives in some places
- Promotion of investment - visitor facilities
- Range of attractions and accommodation

Themes

⌘ **Each town has focused its development programme around a particular theme or set of themes which exemplify the town's history and culture**

☐ **Canal Town**
☐ **Emigration Town**
☐ **Estate Town**
☐ **Fishing Town**
☐ **Georgian Town**
☐ **Market Town)**
☐ **Medieval Town**
☐ **Monastic Site**
☐ **Quaker Town**
☐ **Walled Town**

Partnership

- Community commitment to the highest environmental standards.
- Partnership between local authority, business interests and local community.

OPT I (1989-93)

- **Annual report for 1991:**
  - 20 towns expected to be designated over the next 2 years.
- **By end of OPT I (1993),**
  - BF & SFADCo - 15 heritage towns developed as tourist centres.

1994 Review - 1

⌘ **Towns were selected :**

⌃ **as having a critical mass of historical and architectural potential and a community committed to the highest environmental standards . . . Visitor centre . . . guides, literature and distinctive signposting . . . partnership between local authority, business interests and the local community . . . features complemented by high-quality parking, planning control, pedestrianisation, amenity areas, shopping, pageantry and entertainment.**

1994 Review - 2

- The first phase has highlighted need for a much higher level of resources to exploit the full potential of existing and new centres.
- Will eventually encompass 32 designated Heritage Towns
- By 1994
  - 15 Heritage Towns   -   Full Members
  - 17 Towns   -   Associate Members
  - All under the heading 'Heritage Towns of Ireland

Introduction of variations:

- **Historic City**
  - **Urban core of Dublin, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and Cork - renewal in historic core,**
  - **complemented by more extensive facilities of bustling cities**
- **Traditional Village**
  - **Smaller than Heritage Town - boasting charm, intimacy and character**

OPT II (1994-99)

- Under 'Eligible Projects':
  - Towns designated 'heritage' status by Bord Failte
- 18 more towns designated for ERDF support
- Priority to:
  - Heritage town developments which will best meet the objectives of the Programme to attract overseas visitors and generate extra jobs

1993 commentary

- Bord Failte's most innovative and ambitious project in relation to the development of heritage in Ireland was the launching of the Heritage Towns programme in 1989. This outlined plans to develop between 23 and 30 of Ireland's most historic towns as heritage attractions. Each of the heritage towns has focused its development programme around a particular theme or set of themes, which exemplify the town's history and culture
- 1997 Revision - same publication
  - 23-30 towns had become 15

Results - 1

- 600 Towns initially applied
- 34 Designated Towns
- 24 Current paid-up members
- 1999 2-3 towns per week enquire about designation

Results - 2

- ⌘ **Catalyst for Activity**
- ⌘ **Marketing Function**
  - ⌃ **Restricted Budget**
  - ⌃ **difficult to identify a product**
  - ⌃ **Difficult to identify 'additionality'**

Results - 3

- **Community Involvement**
  - Mixed - Many are Public Authority driven
- **Conservation / Protection of Built Environment**
  - Tourism and conservation seem to remain separate issues
  - Limited resources
  - No functional link Heritage Towns & conservation
  - No coherent approach

Results - 4

⌘**Funding**

⌃**Ongoing support - difficult to secure**

⌃**Some towns in debt**

⌃**Local Authorities Main 'sustainer' - all have different policy**

Results - 5

- **Heritage Centres**
  - Integral parts of Heritage Towns
  - Most not viable
  - Small Numbers of visitors & Competition
  - Community operated unable to sustain losses

Killaloe/Ballina - 1

- **1988 Group came together**
  - Local business professionals, community interests,
- **Early task**
  - Preparing Killaloe/Ballina to be a major tourism region on Lough Derg. Developing the area for both locals and visitors.

Killaloe/Ballina - 2

- **Sought advice and help from State and Semi-State Bodies :**
  - ESB
  - Tipperary NR County Council
  - Clare County Council
  - FÁS
  - Shannon Development
  - OPW

Killaloe/Ballina - 3

- ⌘ **Company formed:**
  - ⌃ **Derg Canal Developments Ltd**
  - ⌃ **Umbrella group for the original group with representatives of the Semi-State bodies**

Killaloe/Ballina - 4

⌘ **Phase 1 - Visitor Centre**

⌃ **Negotiated for temporary Tourist Office**

⌃ **Secured funding to build new Interpretative Centre and Tourist Office**

⌃ **Initiated historical research**

Killaloe/Ballina - 4

- **Phase 2 - Theme Town Designation**
  - Commissioned Theme Town Proposal
  - Tree Planting / Street Furniture /
  - Established a Heritage Town Committee
- **Phase 3 - Walking Trails**
  - The Killaloe / Lough Derg Way
  - Killaloe/Ballina Heritage Walk

Killaloe/Ballina - 5

- **Spin offs**
  - **ESB Wires underground**
  - **New Moorings**
  - **New Car Parks**
  - **Footbridge**
  - **Community Council established**

The Future - 1

- Many towns cannot afford professional manager
- Many Towns in debt
- The economic climate of the late 1980s drove committees to develop Heritage Towns 'for their children'

The Future - 2

⌘ **Needs Strong Policy**

⌘ **Needs Strong Leadership**

⌃ **Bord Failte now marketing not development**

⌃ **Dept. of Environment not interested**

⌃ **Dept. of Arts & Culture not interested**

⌃ **Heritage Council not interested**

⌘ **Needs real partnership approach**

The Future - 3

- ⌘ **Major Potential**
  - ⌃ **French Model**
- ⌘ **Culture / Heritage needs to be understood**
- ⌘ **Money needs to be spent39**