

Killarney TEIR One

Killarney Tourism Economic Impact Review

Prepared for

Killarney Chamber of Tourism & Commerce

Executive Summary

The Killarney TEIR One (Killarney Tourism Economic Impact Review) is an independent assessment of the value of tourism to Killarney. W2 Consulting were commissioned by Killarney Chamber of Tourism & Commerce to undertake a review of the value of tourism in Killarney and subsequent catalytic impacts across other parts of county Kerry.

Among the key objectives adopted to define the parameters of the study included;

- Quantify tourism expenditure in Killarney.
- Assess the role of Killarney in stimulating a dispersion of economic benefits across Kerry.
- Examine expenditure patterns among visitors to Killarney.
- Determine the volume of bed nights generated among the Killarney accommodation sector.
- Quantify the number of visits to Killarney based on overnight and day visits to the area by tourists.
- Estimate the scale of employment supported through the tourism sector.
- Prepare an analysis of the overall economic impact of tourism in Killarney.

The review was based on a programme of primary research to examine to total levels of occupancy, visitor behaviour patterns while in the destination and attitudes to Killarney as a visitor destination. The primary research phase examined the expenditure patterns of 500 visitors to Killarney as a sample group of visitors. This was combined with an analysis of the tourism industry's annual performance across a mix of accommodation categories. The primary data enabled an analysis of monthly tourism performance while the visitor expenditure data captured the yield for Killarney based on length of stay and type of accommodation used. The research was conducted in the August to October 2017 period.

Conclusions

- Killarney occupies a very significant place in Irish tourism. It has evolved from its historical association as one of Ireland's original tourism destinations to become an internationally recognised tourism hub. The tourism industry in Killarney has become the measurement 'yardstick' for annual tourism performance in Ireland. It is Ireland's tourism capital. The Killarney TEIR One review provides further evidence of the scale and impact of tourism in the town, and its tourism hinterland. In the absence of large scale multinational employment, comparable to other regions across the country, tourism is the economic lifeblood of Killarney.

- The international and national tourism market is performing at a level that is a major contributor to the current buoyancy of tourism in Killarney. However, a degree of caution must be adopted in terms of the future outlook. The following represent the key areas for consideration together with addressing the concerns raised throughout the research and the macro tourism environment. The areas to address include;
 - o Investment in the infrastructure required to increase the carrying capacity of Killarney i.e. ability to manage increasing traffic and visitor volumes.
 - o Ensuring Killarney continues as a catalyst for tourism dispersion and its role in attracting visitors to the South West.
 - o Supporting direct international access to the west coast to contribute to balanced economic development and the issue of regionality.
 - o Prepare for the Brexit challenge and build on Killarney's strong appeal within the North American and Mainland European markets to offset any potential risk in the UK marketplace.

- Enhance the product mix in the town to build the town's capacity to attract and retain visitors i.e. indoor visitor attractions, extended evening economy options.
 - Investment in key products or segments that will address the seasonality challenges faced by Killarney and the wider Kerry area
- In conclusion, the collective Killarney tourism industry approach to sector development, and its inherent ambition for growth, is yielding a very significant economic dividend for the town and Kerry. Killarney retains a position of national tourism importance and is accepted as an exemplar of best practice in many facets of tourism delivery. In order to preserve this positioning, and evolve to the next level, Killarney must continue on a programme of continuous improvement through strategic investment.
- The tourism industry must ensure the quality of the visitor experience is not compromised and commit to invest in the town's supporting infrastructure as a catalyst for tourism in the county. Equally, the private sector must ensure standards, service levels and product innovation remain to the forefront of all future planning. The issue of seasonality is faced by all destinations. However, the level of dependency on tourism in the area suggests that it must become a strategic prerogative for the area. An examination of new indoor attractors and investment in product areas to support the growth of segments such as business tourism to counteract the challenges of seasonality is required.
- The overall impact of such a strategic investment approach will result in a significant catalytic impact for the wider county destination. Adopting this approach through targeted investment and ensuring the appropriate infrastructure exists will be central to addressing the issues of regionality and seasonality. At the core of this should be Killarney. The evidence of the Killarney TEIR One review, and the projected tourism impact to 2025, demonstrates the need to develop from this base. Consideration is required in the product investment categories that will promote an extension of the season in Killarney and ensure the cycle of economic benefits continues to evolve, impacting the entire county and tourism product base.