



Cork Chamber
Fitzgerald House
Summerhill North
Cork
T23 TD90
5th June 2020

Re: Tourism - Special Committee on Covid-19 Response

Sir/Madam

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members employing 100,000 people and is the largest business organisation in the southern region. We seek at every opportunity to promote a sustainable and resilient Cork that is the best place for business, driven by a thriving and influential membership.

Tourism, hospitality, aviation, leisure and retail are among the worst effected sectors in the current pandemic. The impact is also felt in interrelated sectors in transport, services and food. Often summarised as the first sector to enter the crisis and considered to be the last sector to fully recover, it is clear that the challenges are immense and unique.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic over 179,000 people were employed in the sector representing 8% of total employment. Tourism Revenue is alone is projected to fall by €5bn in 2020 compared to 2019. In Cork air passenger number are down almost 100%, cruise business is not expected to occur this year, and ferry travel is highly unlikely given current quarantine restrictions. You will not be short of statistics, but it is important to mark the scale of the issue to contextualise the urgency and scale of what will be required as a solution.

A line from the DBEI *Considerations for Reinstating Economic Activity Report* in May clearly acknowledges that for many, the current pandemic will not be a temporary inconvenience, it will be a permanent impact:

*"... sectors, such as tourism and aviation, may have longer term challenges in terms of the levels of demand needed to sustain their business model and some potential permanent loss of activity."*¹

The Chamber would strongly encourage that the following items be urgently considered by Government and stakeholders:

¹ <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Economic-Considerations-for-Reinstating-Economic-Activity.pdf>

1. Selective lifting of quarantine on travel to & from to safe countries with converged epidemiological conditions on a phased basis starting as soon as possible and appropriate
2. Reduction of social distancing guideline from 2m to 1m as soon as possible and appropriate
3. Government support for wearing of facial coverings on public transport and other workable, sensible measures to ensure that confidence is assured in spaces such as planes, ferries, trains etc where social distancing renders service provision wholly unviable.
4. A significant stimulus package to reboot aviation & inbound tourism
5. A significant capital expenditure programme to enhance and deepen our tourism infrastructure with a focus on greenways, blueways, natural and heritage sites.
6. Extension of supports for tourism, transport & hospitality for a period that extends beyond other sectors and that tapers gradually at the point of completion.
7. Widening of the qualification for the rates waiver to mirror the wage subsidy scheme, with extension of scheme for tourism, transport & hospitality
8. A comprehensive indigenous tourism campaign commencing this summer and lasting a minimum of 12 months. We note the success of the \$20million Australian tourism campaign in the wake of the bushfires.
9. We need to be mindful of the larger impact that lack of tourist revenues will have on rural Ireland and consider domestic tourism incentives in the short term – e.g. staycation voucher to be used by each household.
10. A comprehensive international tourism campaign commencing in 2021 and lasting a minimum of 12 months.
11. Focus on sustainable tourism development with a larger spread demographically as we are overly dependent on UK and US markets.

12. Review of green tourism initiatives – New Zealand are using this time as an opportunity to introduce sustainable tourism grants for accommodation providers to introduce green energy/water harvesting and storage and more eco-friendly waste treatment as well as training and development opportunities in Green tourism initiatives

We believe that these suggestions are practical and will have immediate benefits, in tandem with medium term security and long-term legacy.

Yours sincerely



CEO
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