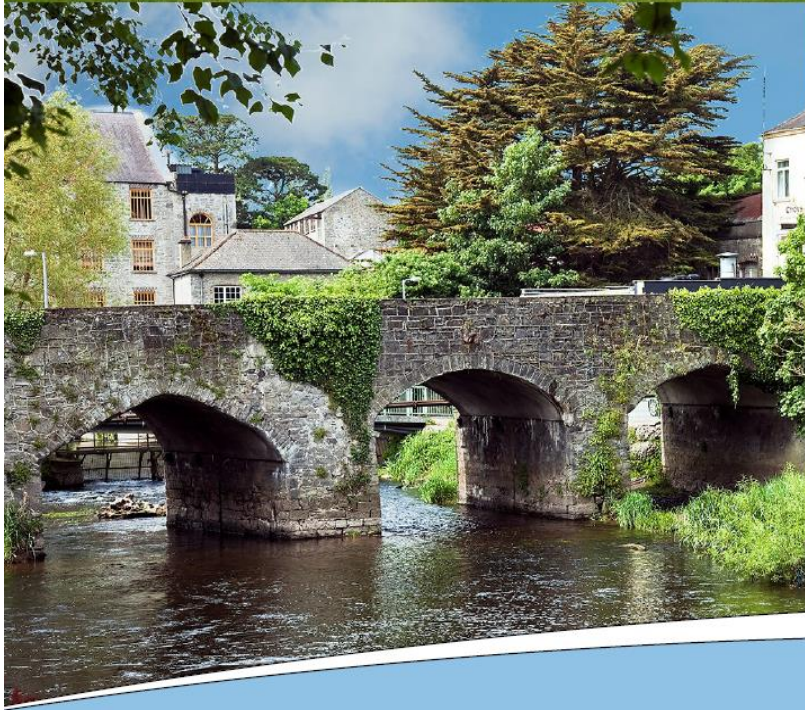


# CELBRIDGE GATEWAY TO IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

Tourism and Heritage Strategy  
2016 - 2020



Developed by ISP Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum 2015 - 2016

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## FOREWORD

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Tourism is a most important industry in Ireland, with its benefits reaching into many different sectors within the wider visitor economy. Sustainable growth in the visitor economy over the next few years is a prime objective of national policy to accelerate economy recovery, and to stabilise and grow employment and enterprise. Furthermore tourism disperses revenue and spend right across Ireland. Tourism in Ireland has shown strong resilience over the years of the economic recession. Following a strong performance in 2014, with overseas visitors up by 10%, the first quarter of 2015 recorded an increase of 15%. If this trend continues, 2016 could be a record year for overseas visitor numbers. Industry sentiment remains very positive with enquiries and bookings largely ahead of 2014/15, aided by new market propositions such as the Wild Atlantic Way and favourable sterling and dollar exchange rates.

Starting in 2014 the Integrated Services Programme<sup>1</sup> undertook research in the Celbridge area to pull together a plan for Celbridge that would bring together community, state agency and voluntary groups to work on areas of development for the town. Early on in the research it was recognised that tourism was a key area of development and the ISP established the Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum. The Forum was formed as a community/business stakeholder body to spearhead the development of the Heritage Tourism potential of Celbridge.

This framework strategy will act as guidance for private, community and public sector stakeholders to secure the developments required. Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum is committed to working in partnership towards this common goal. Therefore this Heritage Tourism Strategy reflects a commitment by all the stakeholders in Celbridge to support, promote and facilitate sustainable growth and development of the touristic potential of the heritage assets of Celbridge and the surrounding areas.

The strategy aims to build on the good work of the many individuals, businesses, public bodies and community organisations and aims to increase the economic impacts of tourism for Celbridge, thus providing more employment opportunities and supporting a more resilient and diverse local economy.

The economic outlook, while improving, is still challenging. Statutory and public bodies have significant commitments towards public and community infrastructure including tourism facilities which must be met out of constrained budgets. In addition, funding programmes such as LEADER have significantly reduced resources going forward.

As a result, Celbridge needs to be smart about how it prioritises projects and resources. A tight focus must be maintained on the precise results and impacts each project will achieve. Celbridge must demonstrate that a supportive and enabling approach that focuses on developing the key strengths of the area is in place, one that has the collective backing of all local, county and regional stakeholders. To achieve this plan it is recognised by Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum that partnerships and effective collaboration between the private, public and voluntary sectors must be in place and that relevant parties should act consistently in line with the strategy. Strategy and action to develop tourism

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<sup>1</sup> The Integrated Services Programme (ISP) was established by Kildare County Development Board (CDB) in 2010. It is now under the remit of the Local Community Development Committees (LCDC). The ISP brings together state agencies, local community, business representatives and elected members to develop and implement local plans based on evidence/research. The ISP works to prioritise actions across a broad spectrum which includes: community development, economic development, tourism, heritage and recreation.

in Celbridge must also align with national and regional tourism policy, particularly the Tourism Action Plans to be developed under the recently published Government Tourism Policy Statement and Fáilte Ireland's tourism brand 'Ireland's Ancient East'.

The successful development of Celbridge as a tourism destination can produce significant economic benefit and employment potential both directly through spending by visitors, and by generating further tourism-related investment; for example in restaurants, art/craft outlets, historical/cultural facilities and activities. The cumulative effect of the positive developments proposed, allied to the proximity of existing major high tech industry, a third level institution and a very advantageous location, can also help to attract significant external investment to an area offering a high quality of life. Moreover, action to promote tourism development, such as village enhancement projects, will further improve the quality of the area.

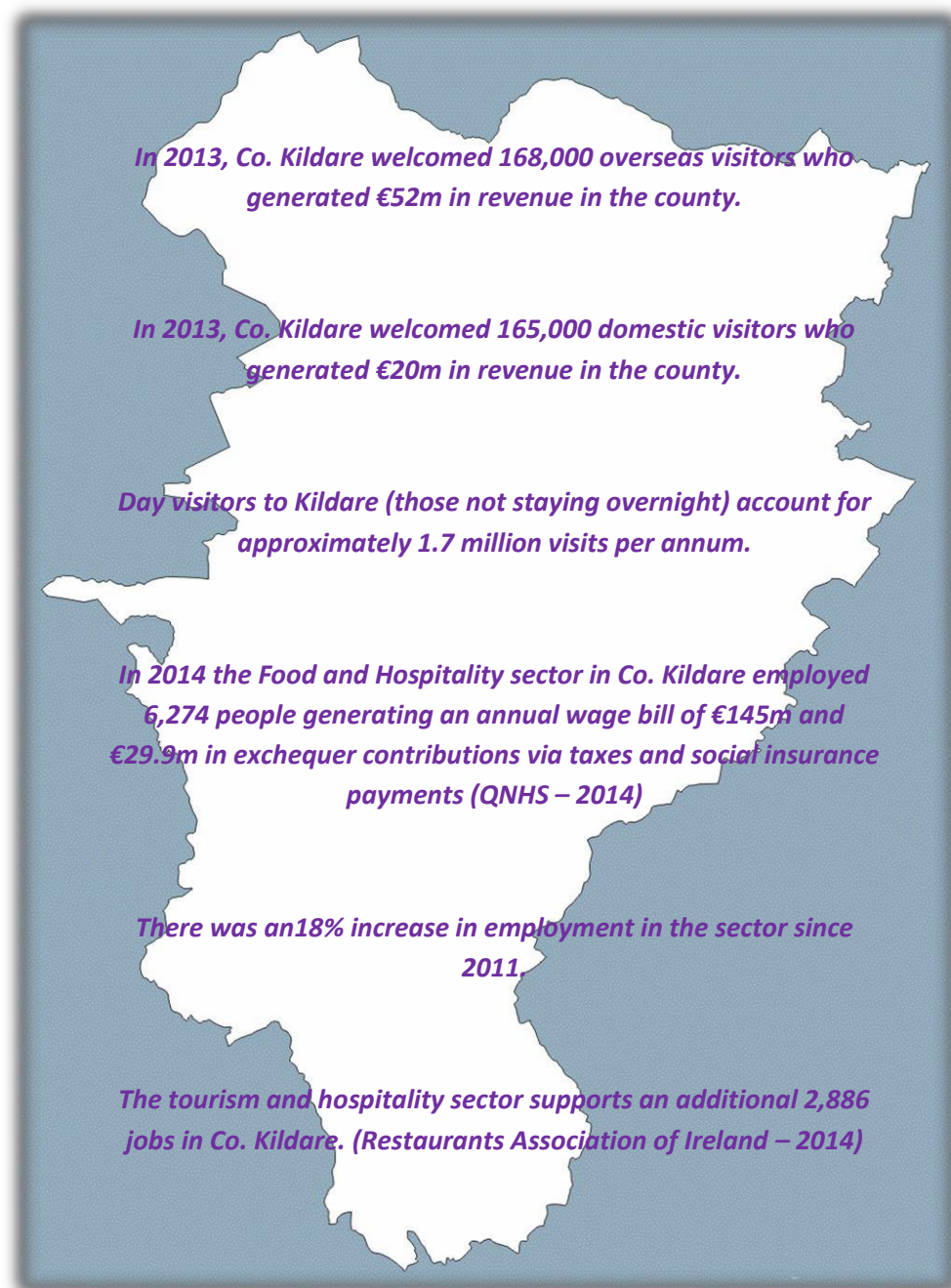




## Tourism Performance

While no specific data or statistics are available for tourism performance at sub-county level, an indication of some of the potential market to which Celbridge can aspire is provided by the extent of visitor numbers to Castletown House (approximately 300,000 visitors in 2015 – This is the total of ticketed visitors to the house and non-ticketed visitors to the park and grounds). It is also useful to look at the performance of tourism and its economic contribution to County Kildare. This can show the potential for the very positive impacts that building the industry in Celbridge, through a collaborative and cooperative approach, could bring about.

*Figure2: Co. Kildare Tourism Performance*





## Product and Experiences Overview

County Kildare is one of the most diverse counties in Ireland ranging from the highly populous north and east- a major part of the Dublin commuter belt - to the more rural and agricultural south and west of the county. In tourism terms Kildare has enormous potential, given its location close to Dublin, the principal international gateway to Ireland, and where there is a large domestic market. Kildare boasts a richness of natural and cultural assets as well as a great range of quality accommodation, visitor services and activities. It has a diverse visitor economy being a world renowned bloodstock and racing destination, a shopping destination and the location of many of Ireland's finest stately houses and gardens. Two of Europe's leading golf courses, including Ireland's only Ryder Cup venue, are within a few miles of Celbridge.

The natural environment has tourism potential with 3 major river systems, (Barrow, Liffey and Boyne), Donadea Forest Park in north Kildare, Pollardstown Fen and the Bog of Allen all being unique natural ecosystems. Both the Grand and the Royal canals traverse the county offering further potential in terms of "Greenway" type activities including cycling. The rivers and canals also offer significant sporting and leisure activities in the form of fishing, boating and canoeing.

Kildare offers a diverse range of experiences, however many are now not extensive enough to attract and retain visitors for more than a single day or half-day visit. As can be seen with the diversity of product around Celbridge there is a need to create bundles/clusters of existing attractors to extend market share and increase the length of time people stay in the area.

The major visitor attraction at Celbridge is Castletown House, one of Ireland's finest Palladian country houses built in 1722 for William Conolly, the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons. Celbridge is the birth place and is close to the resting place of Arthur Guinness, but stronger links and developments need to be made of this heritage. Given that the main motivation of over 60% of overseas visitors to Ireland is for a cultural and/or heritage type experience, Celbridge has enormous potential to greatly increase its offering and appeal directly to Ireland's core overseas markets. As over 80% of overseas visitors enter Ireland via Dublin, the proximity of Celbridge to Dublin city and airport, needs to be played up as a marketing factor. A varied range of cultural and heritage experiences can be developed from the product already in existence.

Recent initiatives also include the restoration of the Castletown parklands and the opening of the new visitor reception at Castletown together with on-going works to the house, farmyard and wider demesne.

What is relevant from a development context is that virtually every community in Kildare has one or more interesting attractions – Maynooth University, Castletown House etc. These attractions are critical to presenting the ambiance and variety of the county but increased cooperation between all would greatly enhance the overall visitor experience and create complementary and support experiences.

## Transport and Access

Being close to Dublin, Celbridge is well served by the road network and public transport. The Celbridge Interchange (Junctions 5 and 6 of the M4) connects the town to Dublin via the M4 motorway which also serves the Intel and Hewlett Packard plants in Leixlip. The town is served by Dublin Bus with a regular daily service linking Celbridge with the capital, and with Maynooth. There are also Bus Éireann services between Dublin and a number of midland towns. Iarnród Éireann runs commuter rail services between Dublin Heuston and the station at Hazelhatch, (3km from Celbridge village,) with further commuter links at Heuston. Hazelhatch station is located on one of the most important InterCity lines in the country, with services to Cork, Limerick and Galway, however these do not stop at Hazelhatch. Nearby Louisa Bridge station on the Dublin to Sligo line provides further commuter and mainline options.

There is potential to improve the transport options through the introduction of a regular shuttle bus service between Hazelhatch and Louisa Bridge.

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## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR HERITAGE TOURISM

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### Aims of the Strategic Plan

*The aim of this plan is to build a resilient, diverse tourism segment into the local Celbridge economy - one that retains and creates jobs, supports the growth of local businesses and improves the area's profile as a place to live work and visit.*

All communities require economic health and development in order to thrive. A resilient and diverse economy is one where community members have choices, access to good jobs, facilities and prospects over the long term. While Celbridge is close to large multinational employers such as Intel and Hewlett Packard, and to the commercial hubs of Dublin, there is a need to ensure that the local economy performs in all sectors, is adaptable to changing circumstances, and is responsive to a variety of economic opportunities. A diverse economic base provides greater scope for reducing the impact of external events such as economic crashes.

### Vision and Objectives

Celbridge, a town rich in history and heritage, both natural and built, can become an important centre of heritage-based tourism. In turn this can generate significant local economic activity and employment to the benefit of the wider hinterland and, in the process, improve the general quality and character of the area, making it a very desirable place to visit, live, work and do business.

This vision can be realised by capitalising on the area's considerable assets and resources, particularly the presence of an internationally important visitor attraction, unique historical associations and a highly advantageous location. To maximise this potential, the physical fabric and environment of the village centre must be improved, and related amenities, facilities and activities developed in order to enhance the attractiveness of the area to visitors and make it marketable for tourism.

In addition to the inherent advantages of heritage and location the rationale for, and merits of, this proposal include the fact that -

- It encapsulates a range of linked sub-themes, with potential to produce significant spin-off benefits - economic, social, community, environmental, cultural, recreational and general quality of life.
- It would involve action that would bring about many other improvements in their own right such as village improvement/renewal, enhancement of physical character, appearance, attractiveness and quality of the area.
- It can take advantage of the current growth in visitor numbers to Ireland.
- It would build on recent initiatives such as 'Arthur's Way', the Arthur Guinness birthplace statue, Celbridge historical signage, Celbridge Guided Tours, and restoration of heritage sites such as Tea Lane Cemetery.

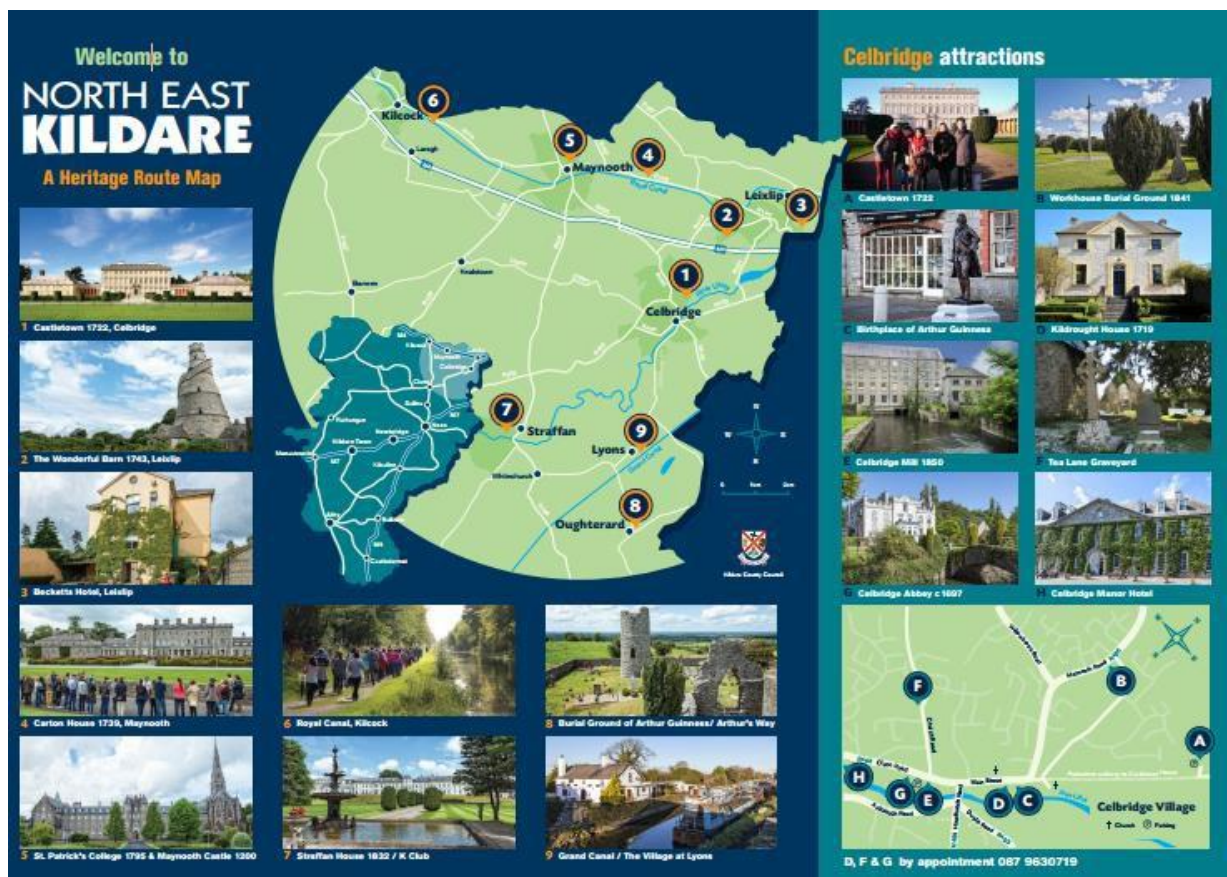
There is a considerable depth of resources in the community to support these initiatives including ideas, energy, commitment, experience and expertise.

The successful development of Celbridge as a tourism location can produce significant benefits:

- Employment

- New, tourism-related investment
- Increased business for local commercial outlets through visitor spend
- Increase the national and international profile of the area, thus increasing its attractiveness as a place to invest

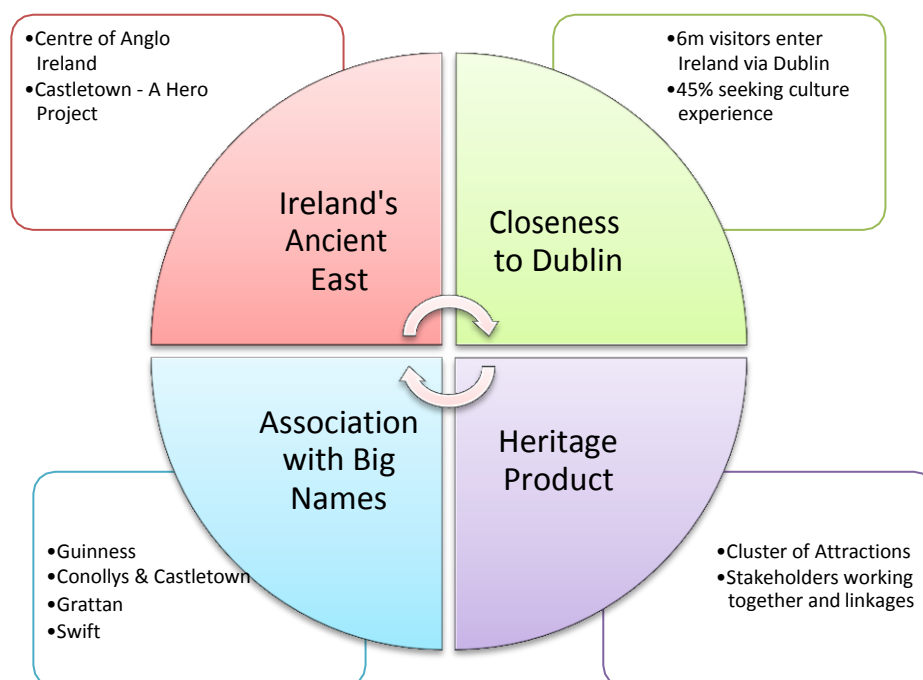
Figure 3: Example of a clear and well defined destination trail map



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## THE KEY DRIVERS

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### Closeness to Dublin

85% of overseas visitors to Ireland enter the country via Dublin and the capital city is on almost every overseas visitor's stop list. Given the large volume of visitors that pass through Dublin each year, it is imperative that Celbridge positions itself as a destination that can draw from this footfall. However to do so, it must:

- Offer compelling reasons to visit and memorable experiences;
- Understand the market segment it wishes to attract and be clear and precise in the marketing and sales message;
- Understand that it is competing for visitor footfall with Ireland's leading attractions such as the Guinness Storehouse and Trinity College, for example, but can also capitalise on common associations.

There are a number of value propositions that Celbridge can build upon to develop and grow footfall from Dublin. These include:

- Creating a number of day itineraries around the local heritage that can be sold via day tour companies or to individual travellers.
- Working collaboratively with associated attractions in Dublin which have associations with Celbridge, e.g. Guinness Storehouse, St Patrick's Cathedral.
- Positioning the town as a base for Dublin (e.g. meetings, sporting events etc.) given that a quality hotel is now open. The value proposition can be built on 'Cost competitiveness vs Dublin city' and 'Easy transport links'.



## Ireland's Ancient East

In April 2015, Fáilte Ireland introduced a new umbrella destination brand, Ireland's Ancient East, to the tourism industry. Reflecting the rich and colourful history and diversity of the landscapes, the counties within the area fully embody the story of the brand. Primarily designed to appeal to the Culturally Curious and Great Escaper customer segments, the ambition of Ireland's Ancient East is to present this large geographical area with a brand promise that will create:

- A destination that is easy and enjoyable to explore.
- A destination where stories unfold through exploration of our history and heritage.
- A destination where the storytellers at each heritage site encourage further exploration of other historical eras, building up to an unforgettable journey through 5,000 years of time.
- A destination set against the lush, green, pastoral landscapes of Ireland.

Fáilte Ireland has developed an umbrella destination brand that offers visitors a compelling reason to visit the East of the Country. This umbrella brand is called '**Ireland's Ancient East**' and will ensure that the area is presented in a cohesive and unified manner. It is the key emotional pull and is the reason visitors will travel to this part of the country. 'Ireland's Ancient East' presents 5000 years of European history in a compact area. Fáilte Ireland is developing a number of "Signature Experiences". The aim is to persuade a consumer to spend longer in the area- at least one night.

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Maritime Getaway        | 6. Castles & Conquests       |
| 2. Vikings                 | 7. Sacred Ireland            |
| 3. Big Houses and Hardship | 8. The History of the Horse  |
| 4. High Kings and Heroes   | 9. Ireland's Ancient Highway |
| 5. Ancient Ireland         |                              |

These experiences are the placeholders for the building of stories and experiences that will attract visitors. Celbridge is well placed to link into the development of Ireland's Ancient East.

## The Heritage Product

Celbridge is a town rich in history and heritage, both natural and built, and associated with many famous figures from Ireland's industrial, political and literary past.

If Dublin is the Georgian capital of Ireland, Celbridge has justifiable claim to being its country seat. Castletown House is the centrepiece, but the area's built heritage in the beautiful Liffey valley boasts an unrivalled collection of 'big houses' including Killadoon, Celbridge Abbey, Oakley Park, Donaghcumper, St. Wolstan's, and nearby Carton, Lyons and Straffan House.

Other features of interest include: Celbridge Mill, Kildrough House, the former Workhouse, Tea Lane and Donaghcumper cemeteries, and in the neighbourhood, Maynooth Castle and College, the Wonderful Barn, Taghadoo Round Tower and Oughterard Churchyard and Round Tower. To these physical assets can be added the area's close links with a range of major historical and literary figures such as Arthur Guinness, Dean Swift, the Grattans, the Conollys and Samuel Beckett. Such a rich resource of heritage and history offers obvious tourism potential and the strategic location of Celbridge should facilitate its realisation.

This strategy can be realised by capitalising on the area's considerable assets and resources. Specific actions will have to focus on:

- Improving the physical fabric and environment of the village centre
- Developing related amenities, such as public places and playgrounds and improving the entry and exit routes
- Improving access to, and interpretation facilities at, the many local heritage sites and linking these together both physically and in story form

## Association with Big Names

Castletown House, a major national and international visitor attraction, offers a large, ready-made tourist market and a unique platform for developing the tourism potential of the wider hinterland. While retaining the amenity value of the avenue and the general environment it will be important to continue to work towards improving the access and links between Celbridge and Castletown that will further encourage Castletown visitors to the village.

Celbridge has strong family and business associations with many famous Irish figures:

**Arthur Guinness** was born in Celbridge in 1725 and started his first brewery in nearby Leixlip, before moving to St James's Gate. Guinness's grave can be found at nearby Oughterard Graveyard, a significant heritage site with an ancient round tower at a scenic, peaceful hillside location a few miles from Celbridge. However there is evidence and a local understanding that Guinness did initially commence brewing at Celbridge.

Castletown House is one of Ireland's finest Palladian country houses. Built by **William Conolly** (1662–1729), Speaker of the Irish House of Commons. Conolly rose to become Ireland's wealthiest and most powerful politician.

**Henry Grattan** (1746-1821), renowned 18<sup>th</sup> century Irish patriot politician, lived with his uncle Colonel Thomas Marlay at Celbridge Abbey between 1777 and 1780.

Celbridge Abbey was built by Bartholomew Van Homrigh who served as Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1697. The beautiful grounds of the Abbey provided the courting place for his eldest daughter, Esther, and **Dean Jonathan Swift**.

These names feature strongly in Ireland's cultural and heritage tourism product offering, appealing particularly to overseas visitors. The Guinness Storehouse in Dublin, which tells the story of Guinness and its heritage, attracts 1.2m visitors per annum. Dean Jonathan Swift, renowned writer, was dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, another famous visitor landmark.

Celbridge can gain by building experiential product that links with these great names and through this association enhance the visitor experience. This will appeal to anyone interested in these aspects of Irish heritage, and result in additional tourism for Celbridge.

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## SWOT ANALYSIS

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### **S** TRENGTHS

- Proximity to Dublin
- Wealth of Heritage Assets
- Castletown House Committed Community
- Accommodation Base
- Ease of Access

### **W** EAKNESSES

- Linkages between Castletown and Town Centre
- Little marketplace standout
- Brand Proposition

### **O** PPORTUNITIES

- Links to Big Names
- Competitive base
- Irelands Ancient East
- Develop Collaborative Experiential Offerings

### **T** HREATS

- Overshadowed by Dublin
- Unable to link strongly with Castletown House

## Celbridge's Strengths

- The Celbridge region is a great place to live, visit and do business. There are smart, talented, passionate people; diverse, strong communities and a varied and spectacular range of environments. There is a good mix of quality of life and economic strength.
- There is good potential to enhance the village and its riverside setting. Timing is also good as tourist growth is positive and various strategies/programmes are being formulated by agencies.
- Diverse and vibrant enterprise exists in Celbridge: traditional family owned shops, professional services, a range of restaurants, a modern hotel and many large retail chains.
- Celbridge, located close to Dublin, has excellent road, rail and bus transport links, connecting many areas of the capital city on a high frequency basis daily.
- Celbridge is a key town in the north Kildare necklace of Maynooth, Leixlip and Celbridge which has the potential to become a mini destination with linked product. The historic Maynooth University and 'Arthur's Way' are key features of the product.

No single factor makes Celbridge remarkable; it is the combination of all the attractions in such close proximity that makes the region potentially a leading Irish Heritage Tourism destination.

## Celbridge's Challenges and Opportunities

The limiting factor in addressing many of the challenges faced in Celbridge is resources, particularly financial. Good community and human capacity and commitment are present, waiting to be matched with the relevant financial and investment resources. Key challenges include:

- Making the most of the area's inherent assets and advantages, particularly its rich resource of heritage and historical associations; notably, but not exclusively, the internationally significant Castletown House, and adjacent amenities. This includes improving connectivity between Castletown and Celbridge Village and other sites of visitor interest.
- Capitalising on Celbridge's strategic location as a potential base for Dublin city visitors and as a gateway to the West and South, providing literally a 'bridge' between city and countryside and a central entry point to 'Ireland's Ancient East'.
- Protecting and conserving its built heritage and historic sites and improving access to them.
- Significantly upgrading the physical appearance, fabric and streetscape of Celbridge Village, capitalising much more on its riverside location and addressing the signage problem.
- Other challenges include: lack of parking facilities, currently limited tourist-focussed hospitality and other services, limited civic space, delay in improving village streetscape, lack of action against inappropriate and excessive signage, risk of renewed development pressure and risk of funding not being secured.

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## OPPORTUNITIES MATRIX

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In 2014, Ireland received:  
7.3 million overseas visitors  
6.8 million domestic visitors

85% of International  
visitors entered via Dublin  
45% come mainly for a  
heritage/cultural  
experience

Main segments are: Families  
and Culturally Curious  
Short stays are popular

### Celbridge

(Castletown House 244,000 visitors per  
annum)



#### Key Drivers

Gateway to Ireland's Ancient East  
Closeness to Dublin  
Heritage Product  
Association with Big Names (Guinness, Swift, Grattan)



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## FOCUS AREAS

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The plan is centred on four focus areas. Combined, they set out what Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum and its partners propose to do in order to develop Celbridge as a leading base for heritage-based tourism activities in Ireland. With limited resources it makes sense to focus on strategic interventions and leadership that will give the best long-term results, rather than on stand-alone projects that may seem to generate best results in the near-term. There needs to be a clear link between every initiative and achieving the aims of the strategy.

Efforts should support areas where Celbridge and its surrounds have an inherent advantage.

The focus areas of this strategic plan are:

***Focus Area 1: Commercialisation of the Heritage Product***

***Focus area 2: Building Collaboration***

***Focus area 3: Open for Business***

***Focus area 4: Mechanisms for Growth***

Actions are included under each of the four focus areas, designed to make Celbridge a leading Heritage Tourism destination. They also address the key challenges such as funding for implementation of the strategy. This will require the implementing body of the plan to engage with key funders in the county including Kildare LEADER Partnership, Kildare County Council and Fáilte Ireland.

This strategic plan sets out an overarching framework. It does not replace or eliminate the need for each project undertaken to be properly scoped out and researched, especially if being presented to funding bodies. The value in this strategic plan is that it shows how each individual project links to the overall strategy and is a part of the bigger picture.

## FOCUS AREA 1: COMMERCIALISATION OF THE HERITAGE PRODUCT

*With a focus on business-led development this involves supporting stakeholders, communities and businesses to work together and develop market responsive products, experiences and packages.*

Tourism is widely recognised as a key driver of economic performance. Products and experiences in successful tourism destinations do not exist in isolation. Operators have made the choice to work together to create experiences and bundles of product that appeal to the chosen target markets. Celbridge has a wealth of physical and soft heritage-based attractions from historic buildings and sites and associations with some of Ireland's most famous characters. There exists a lot of standalone product, however more can be done to open up other heritage experiences and link the entire product .

<i>Commercialisation of the Heritage Product</i>					
No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost (€)
1	<b>Ireland's Ancient East</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with Fáilte Ireland, Kildare County Council and other relevant bodies to ensure that the Celbridge offering aligns with the 'Ireland's Ancient East' proposition</li> <li>2. Ensure that all marketing collateral, products and experiences align with the 'Ireland's Ancient East' proposition.</li> <li>3. All tourism operators to familiarise with the 'Ireland's Ancient East' proposition. Consideration to be given to adopting/developing a brand proposition for Celbridge.</li> </ol>	ISP CTHF Private Business Community Groups	One familiarisation seminar on Ireland's Ancient East in 2016	500
2	<b>Engagement with Castletown House</b>	Work more collaboratively with Castletown House to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cross promote and market product, services and experiences that visitors to Castletown can avail of.</li> <li>2. Develop a series of linked product that will be appealing to the Castletown Visitor so as to entice them to visit the</li> </ol>	ISP CTHF OPW in the short term	Cross-selling of Celbridge Walking Trail via Castletown by July 2016  2 additional experiences to be	

## *Commercialisation of the Heritage Product*

No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost (€)
		<p>town and stay longer. This can be a series of heritage trails and walks, visits to other sites of interest such as the Mill, the birthplace and burial place of Arthur Guinness and Celbridge Abbey.</p> <p>3. Work with the OPW to provide easy access and movement between Castletown House and Celbridge. While opening the main avenue to Castletown for vehicular traffic looks unlikely in the short term, continue to explore other options such as novelty transport and improved signage.</p> <p>4. Work towards developing and signing a riverside/nature walk between Castletown House and the Village including a possible access point in the vicinity of “the Slip”.</p> <p>5. In conjunction with the OPW and Kildare County Council, develop parking facilities to facilitate access by visitors to the village and relevant sites.</p>		<p>cross-sold in 2016</p> <p>Improved signage between town and Castletown</p>	
3	<b>Guinness Connection</b>	<p>1. Continue to work with the project promoters to promote and develop ‘Arthur’s Way’. (On-going activity)</p> <p>2. ISP CTHF to create a Celbridge-specific story of Guinness and his legacy. Use this history to intertwine with the overall experiential offering available in Celbridge.</p> <p>3. Improve signage and interpretation at Guinness birthplace, burial place and site of first brewery.</p> <p>4. Work with Guinness Storehouse to improve showcasing of Celbridge link at the Storehouse and cross-sell of products. (On-going action)</p> <p>5. Identify and promote opportunities for local business to take advantage of the ‘Arthur’s Way’ walking/cycling route ie bike hire, ponchos, packed lunch drop-</p>	ISP CTHF Kildare Co Council Guinness Storehouse	<p>Signage and interpretation plan in place by June 2016</p> <p>Guinness stories completed by November 2016</p>	Signs 2,000

## *Commercialisation of the Heritage Product*

No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost (€)
		off/collection facility).			
4	<b>New Product Development Pipeline</b>	<p>To develop a pipeline of projects that is suitable and ready for investment funding and also market-ready. The rationale is that this basket of investment-ready projects can then be submitted to any available funding streams/calls/competitions as they become available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access and opening times to sites (Mill, Abbey etc.)</li> <li>• Work at Tea Lane cemetery under the Conservation Management Plan 2014.</li> <li>• Open or improve access to places of historical interest, notably Celbridge Abbey, home of Swift's 'Vanessa'</li> <li>• Develop a visitor heritage centre to showcase features of heritage and historical interest, making them more accessible, visible and 'alive'. This would add value generally to the visitor experience and could possibly incorporate other services, e.g. an internet site and genealogy facility. It may be possible to combine the development of such a centre with the restoration of a currently unused building, for example at the Mill, in conjunction with other cultural and economic activities, with consequential improvement of the adjacent streetscape. The scope for innovation and use of cutting edge technology should be explored in the development of such a facility and it would be desirable to mobilise support of locally-based IT firms in this regard. It would seem desirable that the Local Authority should consider this in partnership with relevant interests such as Celbridge Community Council/Community Centre, for example. This could be done within the framework of the Celbridge Local Area Plan from the perspective of physical enhancement as well as heritage and tourism promotion.</li> </ul>	CHTR Kildare Co Co		

## *Commercialisation of the Heritage Product*

No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost (€)
5	<b>Access</b>	To work with stakeholders to improve people flows to and from sites of interest including Castletown House. (On-going activity). Ensure that consideration is given to two-way flow i.e. Castletown to Celbridge and vice versa.	OPW ISP CTHF Kildare CoCo		
6	<b>Public Realm</b>	In keeping with the Celbridge Local Area Plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support development of Public Realm infrastructure to ensure Celbridge is as attractive as possible to visit, thus adding to the overall visitor experience.</li> <li>• Prioritise on an annual basis the investments for Public Realm infrastructure at areas of high visitor footfall.</li> <li>• Support Celbridge Tidy Towns and other groups in their annual work programmes.</li> <li>• Investment in interpretation signage within the town to develop a co-ordinated approach to promotion of heritage tourism product.</li> </ul>	Kildare CoCo ISP CTHF Tidy Towns	Secure €60,000 investment per annum in public realm works	60,000 per annum
7	<b>Calendar of Activities – Planned Updates</b>	<p><b>Annual Event</b> An annual event, or events, based around heritage and history, in effect a 'Celbridge Heritage Festival' or "Convention". These events would need to cater for a wide range of visitor types and interests.</p> <p><b>Planned Updates</b> Tweak experiences developed by the industry by creating a plan for the year using the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Year's refresh/detox</li> <li>• St Valentine's Day</li> <li>• St Patrick's Day</li> <li>• Easter hunt for children</li> <li>• Mother's day</li> </ul>	ISP CTHF Private Business Kildare Fáilte	3 new seasonal events per annum created	



## *Commercialisation of the Heritage Product*

No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost (€)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Father's day challenge</li> <li>Back to school special</li> <li>Ghost trail for Halloween</li> </ul> <p>For example: a typical outdoor adventure offer becomes 'Father's Day Challenge' etc.</p>			
8	<b>Experience Development</b>	<p>Develop experiences that increase revenue and lengthen season. This may involve training for business / community groups and individuals involved in tourism in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What the markets are looking for and what mainstream agencies are targeting</li> <li>A speed networking session for business to aid familiarisation and working together</li> <li>Developing familiarisation trips/ sessions with pubs, hotels, shops on what to do and see in Celbridge and the surrounding area.</li> </ul>	ISP CTHF	5 new experiences developed for 2016 season	1,000
9	<b>Other Heritage Stories</b>	<p>The Conolly story can be developed and used as a way of linking key sites in the town (Castletown House - Celbridge as a town developed in response to the big house: Conolly Folly, Wonderful Barn, Tea Lane Graveyard, Celbridge Manor - old Charter School, for example. The Conolly story would unify the story of the village and hinterland.</p> <p>The Landmark Trust has three properties within the Castletown Estate: the Batty Langley Lodge, the Round House and the Gate House. Two of these structures are close to the Celbridge gates and afford an opportunity to attract tourists down the town. All three are open to the public for one weekend during Heritage Week but there could be other opportunities during the year. Potential opportunities should be explored with the Irish Landmark Trust.</p>			

## FOCUS AREA 2: BUILDING COLLABORATION

*This is about attracting attention to Celbridge and what it has to offer, making more of existing networks and ensuring businesses are in a position to capitalise on trends and benefit through collaboration with others.*

Successful tourism destinations and products do not exist in isolation. They combine to build better visitor experiences and give visitors more choice so that they stay within a region longer, thus spending more and leaving satisfied with a very positive impression of their visit. This leads to word of mouth referrals and additional business in the future.

<i>Building Collaboration</i>					
No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost
1	<b>Community Engagement</b>	Continue to provide opportunities for engagement by communities in provision of tourism products and services so as to enhance the overall well-being and quality of life for businesses and residents alike. To this end, host an annual 'Pride of Place' seminar with customer service excellence training	ISP CTHF Private Business Community Groups	One annual 'Pride of Place' seminar	1,000
2	<b>Tour Business Development</b>	To create and sell packaged offers of single day heritage based tours to Celbridge and North Kildare and have these adopted by Dublin based tour operators	ISP CTHF Businesses	Creation and sale of two, single day tour packages to Celbridge for 2016, working with 3 tour operators Marketing material available across 40 Dublin Hotels and sites	
3	<b>North Kildare Network</b>	To build relationships and develop linkages between heritage based product across north Kildare, especially in Maynooth,	ISP CTHF Other regional	Agreement on a North Kildare Trail including the Guinness	

## *Building Collaboration*

No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost
		Leixlip and Kilcock so as to create more engaging and longer stay propositions for visitors. (On going activity)	tourism stakeholders	trail and combined marketing	
4	<b>Celbridge as a base for Dublin and East Coast Visitors</b>	In conjunction with Celbridge Manor Hotel, develop a marketing proposition for Celbridge as a value for money and active base for visitors who wish to visit Dublin and surrounding areas/attractions in the East	ISP CTHF Celbridge Manor Hotel Other businesses	2 competitive offerings developed with stakeholders in Celbridge in 2016	
5	<b>Links to Dublin attractions</b>	Set in place a process of working with Guinness Storehouse and St Patrick's Cathedral (Swift connection) to develop stories that extend the visitor interest, and thereby footfall, to the Celbridge connections. Such product to be marketed and sold via various channels	ISP CTHF St Patrick's Cathedral Guinness Storehouse	2 stories and experiential offerings developed for Spring 2016	
6	<b>Linking with Kildare Fáilte</b>	There are several opportunities for closer cooperation and working arrangements with Kildare Fáilte, which will not only benefit tourism in Celbridge but add to the appeal of Kildare as a county destination as well. These include: Participating in the County Foodscape and Food Tourism initiatives Working with the Kildare Business Tourism Forum Appointing a nominee from Celbridge to be the link and liaison person with Kildare Fáilte and its initiatives Appointing a Celbridge representative to join the Kildare Heritage Forum	ISP CTHF Kildare Fáilte	Representative on the Food Tourism initiative, the Kildare Business Tourism Forum and Heritage Forum by June 2016	

## FOCUS AREA 3: OPEN FOR BUSINESS

*Being open for business is about the businesses, communities and people of Celbridge delivering services and products to visitors with a 'can do' attitude and exceeding expectations.*

This area of focus will equip all businesses and those engaged in tourism with the knowledge to allow them to provide for, and exceed, visitors' expectations and to understand the various tourism market segments that visit Celbridge and the visitor motivations. In doing so, this will contribute to the overall high quality visitor experience that is expected. It will also extend the message that 'Celbridge is Open for Business' to Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland.

An attractive Village centre is paramount to enable Celbridge to benefit economically from visitors to nearby heritage sites. The most immediate requirement is to complete undergrounding of the electricity and telecom cables which will transform both the town's appearance and the public's perception of it. This must be followed immediately by provision of high-quality street furniture and sensitive streetscape upgrading throughout the village. Other relevant projects which should be undertaken include: the enhancement of the Slip and Mill areas, measures to bring the river into greater focus, action to improve and upgrade certain buildings and concerted action to address signage 'blight'.

<i>Open for Business</i>					
No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost
1	<b>Village Improvements</b>	<p>Working in conjunction with Kildare County Council, a series of village enhancements is required to make the town more attractive and appealing. Those most immediately identified include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undergrounding of cables in town centre.</li> <li>2. Developing an element of civic/public space at the Castletown Gates/Slip area ideally with linkage to the riverside walk through Castletown demesne, and possibly the incorporation of a heritage facility in this area; (or in a suitable alternative location such as the Mill.)</li> <li>3. Consider scope for developing further civic space at other locations, e.g. the Welcome Stone site at</li> </ol>	Kildare County Council Kildare LEADER ISP CTHF Private Sector OPW	2 of the identified projects completed each year	

<i>Open for Business</i>					
No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost
		<p>Maynooth Road town entrance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Sensitive action to enhance the amenity value of the river</li> <li>5. Landscape improvement works to the Mill precincts facing the Liffey bridge</li> <li>6. Tea Lane Cemetery</li> <li>7. Implementation of a consistent signage plan in the village and addressing the blight of inappropriate/excessive/illegal signage</li> <li>8. Installing cantilevered footways to exterior of the Liffey bridge, which would also facilitate possible removal of the pedestrian bridge leaving an unobstructed view of the Mill</li> <li>9. Restoring/conserving the Mill buildings, walls and roofs adjoining the Main Street</li> <li>10. Physical/environmental improvements at outer locations e.g. among others, the retail area near Aghards Road/Maynooth junction (currently a litter black spot) the former Schneider site, the area surrounding the stone welcome sign at the Maynooth Road entrance to the town</li> <li>11. Introduction of an incentive scheme to encourage improvement in shop fronts in the Village.</li> </ol>			
2	<b>Skills Development</b>	<p>To put in place needs-led training courses for tourism businesses. Some specific topics that should be addressed first include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ B &amp; B cooperation and developing shared or bundled offers among tourism related businesses</li> <li>◆ Familiarisation of the tourism product and markets</li> <li>◆ Customer service and 'know your area' training for all front line staff (including those not working directly in</li> </ul>	ISP CTHF Private business Community groups	2 training seminars in 2016 with 150 attendees	2,000



## *Open for Business*

No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost
		<p>tourism)</p> <p>Other needs to be identified and addressed as required</p>			
3	<b>Updating of Publicity Teams</b>	On-going updates to Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland publicity teams on any new Celbridge offerings. Tourism Ireland coordinates press releases and bulletins (22,000 media contacts worldwide), media visits and press receptions and also the 'Have you a story to tell' initiative.	ISP CTHF	2 updates per annum to Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland published	
4	<b>Tourism Ireland Sales Channels</b>	Tourism Ireland is always on the lookout for experiential offers to put on <a href="http://www.ireland.com">www.ireland.com</a> . This is the website that sells Ireland all over the world. The opportunity is free. Tourism Ireland translates and localises the offer for European language sites. Uploading the offer is simple, see <a href="http://www.tourismireland.com">www.tourismireland.com</a> for more.	ISP CTHF	5 offers per year published	
5	<b>Familiarisation Visits</b>	A free overnight visit to Celbridge should be offered for all those with the potential to increase business in the area. These include Tourism Ireland, tour operators, online travel agents and the media	ISP CTHF Celbridge Manor Hotel	5 familiarisation visits per annum	
6	<b>Discover Ireland Visit Kildare</b>	Fáilte Ireland is continuously on the lookout for prizes for their 'Discover Ireland' campaigns. Having designed a range of experiences (see earlier actions) ensure that Celbridge prizes are readily available e.g. weekend of activities with accommodation; festival tickets with accommodation etc.	ISP CTHF Celbridge Manor Hotel Other Businesses	10 offers per annum published on 'Discover Ireland' and 'Into Kildare' websites	
7	<b>Calendar of Activities</b>	Develop a calendar of activities to lengthen typical stay. Develop a calendar of activities that particularly targets the off -season –	ISP CTHF		

<i>Open for Business</i>					
No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost
		e.g. every Thursday - local food tasting; every Friday - guided walk etc. The calendar will coordinate the dates of various events and festivals in Celbridge/North Kildare			
8	<b>Kildare Tourism online Portal</b>	<p>Through the appointment of a dedicated small sub-group of the Celbridge Heritage Tourism Forum, provide up to date data and information for publication on the <a href="http://www.intokildare">www.intokildare</a> website. This to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accommodation, product and service offering</li> <li>• Information on Celbridge as a destination</li> <li>• Things to do and see</li> <li>• Special offers and events</li> </ul>	ISP CTHF Kildare Failte	3 updates per annum	

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## FOCUS AREA 4: MECHANISMS FOR GROWTH

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*This is about putting in place the best management and leadership structure to drive the implementation of this strategic plan and the actions arising from it. It also involves putting in place the various investment funds and resources to finance these actions.*

In order to grow business in the form of tourist traffic, a marketing programme is required. The timing of marketing programmes needs to be such that it does not prematurely bring to the market an offering that cannot be met in Celbridge. Therefore marketing must be consistent with the product and experiences in place and the identity of the destination at that point in time. For this to happen effectively the strategy should be taken forward primarily through engagement with relevant public agencies to ensure it is reflected in their strategies and programmes, and subsequently on a wider and more public basis.

Marketing should be based around the key assets of heritage and history, but should also highlight the availability of nearby amenities, natural, recreational and sporting. The impact of a marketing programme could be enhanced by suitable 'branding' which should seek to forge a strong mental association with the key heritage assets of the area. The tourism agencies and the local authority will be important partners and will need to take a lead role in marketing, working with relevant local businesses and organisations. Specific elements of a marketing strategy might include: securing support from well-known figures (ideally with some connection to Celbridge) to 'champion' the area as a heritage tourism destination, targeting the Dublin visitor market (especially the Guinness interest), and reaching to people abroad with Celbridge/Kildare connections, possibly from the genealogy perspective.

<i>Mechanisms for Growth</i>					
No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost
1	<b>Coordination</b>	Enable coordination between all stakeholders on the rollout and implementation of agreed actions from this plan through facilitation provided by Kildare ISP. A high-level steering group to be established to lead / manage the process.	Kildare ISP	By September 2016	
2	<b>Working Groups</b>	Establish working groups to drive each of the objectives and actions of this plan as needed. Working groups report to the	Kildare ISP	As the plan progresses working groups are established to	

### ***Mechanisms for Growth***

No	Title	Actions	Stakeholders	Targets	Cost
		steering committee		spread the work load, ensure ownership and efficiently achieve results.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Annual Marketing Fund</b>	Target to raise an annual dedicated marketing fund of €40,000 per annum from public and private sources, including businesses in Celbridge. Aim to have private subscriptions matched equally with public funds	ISP CTHF Private business Kildare CoCo Kildare LEADER	€40,000 per annum raised, starting in 2016 from both private and public sources	
<b>4</b>	<b>Marketing</b>	Initiate actions to put Celbridge and its businesses as a priority and 'must visit' destination among those seeking a heritage experience in Ireland. Marketing to include web, digital, print, and collaborative initiatives as described elsewhere in this plan.	ISP CTHF Private business Kildare Fáilte Fáilte Ireland	20,000 additional visitors by 2016, rising by 15% per year thereafter	

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## IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

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Conscious of the need for advancement, a number of projects have been selected as priority actions to be implemented over 2016 and 2017. These were chosen because:

- They will give quick wins and improvements to the overall tourism product  
They will demonstrate to all stakeholders, businesses, residents and community organisations of Celbridge that positive change is happening and will encourage further business and community engagement in the initiative.

The specific chosen actions are:

- To engage in a stronger manner with Kildare Fáilte to promote the product and offering that exists in Celbridge
- To work with Fáilte Ireland and Kildare Co Council to ensure the Celbridge offering aligns with the 'Ireland's Ancient East' proposition
- In respect of working with Castletown House:
  - Complete signage between Celbridge Village and Castletown
  - Work towards developing a simple packaged offering taking in Castletown and some other attractions around Celbridge
- Continue to work with the project promoters to promote and develop the North Kildare Guinness Trail, especially trying to get the section between Castletown and the Wonderful Barn completed
- To have in place for 2016, a Celbridge day tour being actively sold by 2 tour operators
- To engage in a stronger manner the North Kildare Tourism network with the aim of developing a stronger linked North Kildare Tourism product
- Creation of an events calendar for 2016
- To roll out the North-East Kildare Heritage Route Map recently produced by Celbridge Guided Tours
- To develop an Audio Guide for Celbridge
- To develop links with marketing experts to promote Celbridge and the AudioGuide.

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## RELATED STRATEGIES AND AGENCIES

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The implementation of this plan and its actions will take cognisance of other related plans and the work of other agencies which, it is hoped, would also take account of, and prioritise as appropriate, proposals in this strategy. It will, in so far as possible, complement their work and seek to achieve best value for money in this way. Relevant plans include:

### **Kildare Fáilte Strategy 2012 – 2017**

Kildare Fáilte is the county-wide tourism body that promotes and markets Kildare both nationally and overseas. In addition it facilitates product development and works closely with other agencies and stakeholders. It operates as a public/private sector partnership with a board of directors drawn from these stakeholders across the county. Its strategic plan 2012 – 2017 sets out actions and mechanisms to develop Kildare's most promising tourism assets and has a strong heritage theme within it.

### **Celbridge Local Area Plan**

Local Area Plans provide for the orderly development of towns and villages. They set out the key issues and provide an overall framework for development and planning in terms of economic, social and community infrastructure. In 2015, Kildare County Council started the consultation process to develop the next Celbridge LAP. The Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum made a comprehensive submission regarding the plan and how Heritage Tourism priorities and actions can be addressed. Local Area Plans complement and help to address the objectives of the main County Development Plan.

The formulation of the LAP would appear to present a suitable opportunity to advance some relatively large projects referenced in this strategy, particularly where partnership between public authorities, private investors/property owners and community interest would be involved. Notable examples are the possibility of developing a heritage/cultural/commercial centre at the Mill in conjunction with building/streetscape improvement and possible enhancement/redevelopment of the commercial area at the Aghards Road/Castle Village and Maynooth Road junction.

### **Kildare Rural Development Plan**

In 2015, the Department of the Environment issued a call for submissions on the drawing-up of a Rural Development Plan for each county in Ireland. This plan will form the basis for investments under the EU LEADER Rural Development Programme. €5.26m has been awarded under this programme to Kildare for the period up to 2020. There is a significant measure to fund tourism and heritage related measures within the rural development programme. Consultations with Kildare Leader Partnership have indicated a strong willingness to work with and support the work of the Celbridge Heritage Forum.

### **Ireland's Ancient East**

This new international marketing and product designation by Fáilte Ireland is the main marketing and positioning definition that will be used by Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland to market and promote the East of Ireland overseas. It is based on thorough and detailed research on the motivations of overseas visitors to Ireland and is designed to appeal to the market segments that are Ireland's best prospects. Celbridge Heritage Tourism Forum's plan sits very well within the Ireland Ancient East designation.

## **People, Place and Policy, Growing Tourism to 2017.**

This is the Government Strategy to grow tourism to 2025, with ambitious aims to grow overseas revenue to over €5bn, employment to 250,000 and to attract 10 million annual overseas visitors. Initiatives such as those proposed in the Celbridge Heritage Tourism Strategy dovetail well into the policy and strategic measures proposed in this major Government strategy.

Specifically:

- People and place will remain the biggest assets in terms of attracting visitors. There will be a clear and coherent framework for the development of human capital in the industry.
- Heritage assets will be protected as key drivers and as visitor attractions.
- An enhanced role for Local Authorities and recognition of the contribution of communities to tourism.



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## IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS

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It is important that a strong lead body is charged with the implementation of this strategy. Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum has already made strong inroads and developed a good track record in bringing together all of the key private, community and public stakeholders into a cohesive body. The support provided to date from the Integrated Services Programme has been invaluable in terms of providing facilitation and direction for the group.

It is proposed that Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum continue to act as the lead implementer for this plan. To this end the members will commit to:

1. Developing and adopting terms of reference to govern their operation and scope of activities in conjunction with the Integrated Services Programme
2. Adding to their membership from time to time other stakeholders who are necessary and relevant to their work
3. Establishing a system of small project work groups to take charge of the management and implementation of projects as required. These working groups will have a finite life for the duration of the project and report to the main forum.
4. Working and engaging with other private and statutory bodies to progress and implement this plan.

Given that the actions and work of the Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum are mainly voluntary, it is important that member burnout is avoided. To prevent this it is proposed that:

- A number of small, smart actions from this plan will be selected based on their potential to achieve quick wins and results. When achieved they will give confidence to members that progress can be made and demonstrate that the Forum is an effective, functioning body.
- All members share in the workload through their participation in project working groups
- The members work towards securing investment finance, from sources such as LEADER, in the early stages of the programme when funds are most available. This will allow progression of some of the medium-term objectives early on in the plan's lifetime. There are a number of projects at an advanced stage of planning: streetscape works, the restoration of Tea Lane Cemetery and improvements to the Mill precincts can proceed in the short to medium term, if finance becomes available.

The Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum has given considerable thought to planning this Heritage Strategy Framework. The members recognise that its implementation and achievement of goals is a long-term process that will require substantial commitment of resources and effort from many stakeholders. The Forum is dedicated to developing Celbridge as a leading tourist destination in County Kildare.

This Strategy was kindly sponsored by Kildare County Council and Kildare Integrated Services Programme.

The Strategy was developed by Enda Candon, First Western Consultants.

The ISP Celbridge Tourism and Heritage Forum membership includes:

Bill Nicholson - Christ Church, Church of Ireland

Breda Konstantin - Celbridge Guided Tours (Chairperson, 2015-2016)

Damian Brady - Celbridge Business Association

David Rubino - Celbridge Business Association

Denis Conlan - Celbridge Tidy Towns

Honor Griffin - Integrated Services Programme

Jartlath Daly - Celbridge Tidy Towns

Jeanne Meldon - Castletown Foundation; Celbridge Historical Society

John McLoughlin - Celbridge Community Council

June Stuart - Historic house owner; Castletown Foundation

Pat Byrne - Celbridge Business Association

Stephen Johnston - Celbridge Community Council

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