

#### DISCLAIMER:

Every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this document.

The Blueway Partnership cannot however, accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, future editions will be amended accordingly.

The content in this toolkit provides an overview of best practice approach to Blueway development. It is not intended to address every aspect of Blueway development and developers are advised to undertake their own research and analysis and obtain their own professional advice. Examples and references contained within are for illustrative purposes only. No responsibility for loss occasioned to any person or body acting or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by The Blueway Partnership.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Design by Custodian.

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## **Introduction to Blueways**

## Blueways are the Ireland's best kept secret...

Experience fun and adventure on foot, by boat or bike along trails that meander the country's picturesque waters, enjoyed entirely at your own pace. Blueways offer waterscape experiences, in, on or near the water for locals and visitors, using lakes, canals, rivers and coastal environments to walk, cycle, kayak, SUP and engage with nature and heritage.

### **The Blueway Partnership**

The Blueway Partnership is the body responsible for the strategic oversight, accreditation and brand management of Blueways. The Partnership is an all-island body comprising Waterways Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland.

This toolkit has been developed by the Blueway Partnership to provide guidance and resources to support Blueway developers on the journey to developing a successful Blueway.





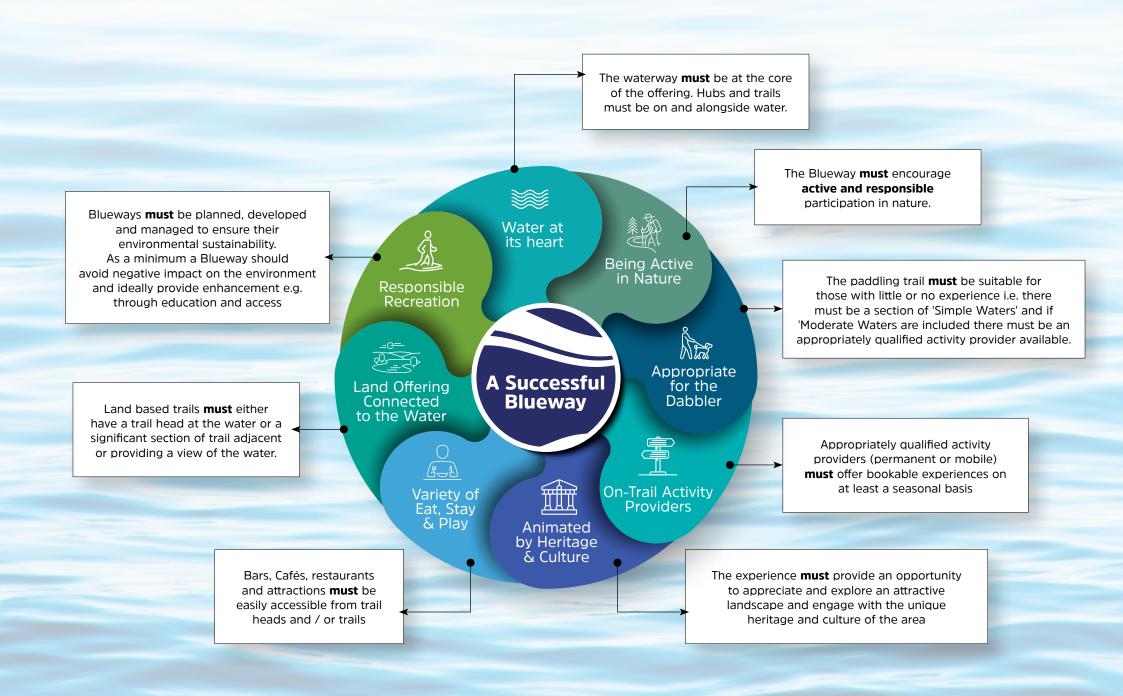


# What is a Blueway?

A Blueway is a network of approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites, based on, and closely linked with the water, together with providers facilitating access to activities and experiences.

## Key Principles of a Successful Blueway





## Key Stakeholders

Blueway Partnership

Blueway Accreditation Inspector

Key Stakeholders Blueway Developers and Managers

Blueway Coordinator and Blueway Development Advisor

## **Key Stakeholders**



### **Blueway Partnership**

The Blueway Partnership is the body responsible for the strategic oversight, accreditation and brand management of Blueways. The Partnership is an all-island body comprising Waterways Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland.

#### **Blueway Developers & Managers**

Organisations and partnerships who lead the planning, development, management and promotion of Blueways

### **Blueway Accreditation Inspector**

Undertakes Stage 2 Accreditation Inspections on behalf of the Blueway Partnership. Contracted by Sport Ireland.

### Blueway Coordinator and Blueway Development Advisor

#### Coordinator

- Secretariat and administration for The Blueway Partnership
- >> Coordination of the delivery of the Blueway Partnership Action Plan
- >> Delivery of communication, marketing and training

### **Development Advisor**

- Support /advice to potential Blueway developers or interested parties
- Ongoing support for existing Blueways and Blueways going through accreditation process
- >> Delivery of training

The Blueway Coordinator & Development Advisor is the first point of contact for Blueway Developers and Managers. These roles are currently being delivered by **Outscape**.

Outscape's contact details are: Telephone: +44 (0) 2890 306 940 Email: info@bluewaydevelopment.org



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why develop a Blueway?

Blueways open up the often-underused natural resources of rivers, canals, lakes and coastal areas. They have the potential to improve the quality of life of communities, support local economies and add value to existing destinations by uncovering hidden gems.

A Blueway bundles together water and land activities with local resources such as culture and heritage, activity providers and the hospitality sector.

### Who can develop a Blueway?

Blueway development is a long-term commitment, and it is strongly recommended that a statutory body e.g. a Local Authority/ Council should be the formal applicant to the Blueway accreditation process. However, in certain circumstances it may be appropriate for a non-statutory body such as Community Development Association to be the applicant especially where the Blueway crosses a range of jurisdictions.

### How do I develop a Blueway?

As each Blueway is unique, specific actions will vary. Guidance on Blueway development and accreditation is provided by the Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor. The stages and requirements of the accreditation process are outlined in Section 4 of this toolkit. Additional information is also available on **www.bluewaydevelopment.org** 

### Who do I contact about developing a Blueway?

Please contact the Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor – this role is currently provided by **Outscape**: Telephone: +44 (0) 2890 306 940 or email: **info@bluewaydevelopment.org** 

### Who will use the Blueway?

Blueways provide outdoor experience opportunities for participants to enjoy new destinations at their own pace. Blueways are **aimed at the 'dabbler'** i.e. those with little or experience in outdoor activities. They will attract visitors to the area and also provide a way for the local community to enjoy their blue environments and become regular Blueway users.

#### How long is a Blueway?

A Blueway encompasses water and land-based trails of varying distances but should be of sufficient scale (at least half a day) to offer users a range of opportunities to engage in physical activity both on land and water. Remember to focus on the needs of 'the dabbler' so often less is more. A Blueway water trail should have at least one water 'node' or focal point. At this node a water trail can be a 'stay and play' water experience, can include a short trail journey which returns you back to where you started or take you on a slightly longer journey.

### What is the role of clubs in Blueways?

Clubs provide sustainable pathways into long-term and inclusive participation for people of all ages and create a strong sense of community cohesion and social inclusion. A Blueway can support the development of vibrant and dynamic clubs via doorstep and local opportunities with activities such as canoeing, stand up paddle boarding, running or cycling, bringing great benefits at a community level.

### How long does it take to develop a Blueway?

While each Blueway is unique, one year of Blueway planning, developing, funding and realising is typically required. If significant Blueway infrastructure is required, this may result in a longer development period to secure funding and to complete any environmental and planning obligations.

## Introducing the Dabbler

A successful Blueway 'Combines and Creates' and provides a clear Blueway Promise to the novice or 'dabbler'.

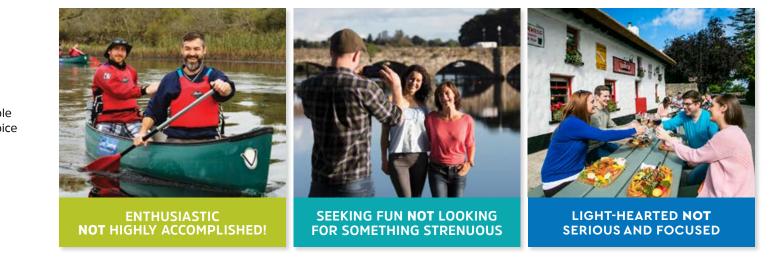
### Who is the target audience?

Blueways are ideally placed to provide great opportunities for locals and visitors alike.

- Dabblers are enthusiastic but they're not experts. They want fun and enjoyable experiences rather than challenging ones.
- The activity isn't the focus of their holiday. Instead, it's a means of experiencing and exploring the destination.
- >> The supporting experiences that are available play a much more significant role in the choice of destination than the activity alone.

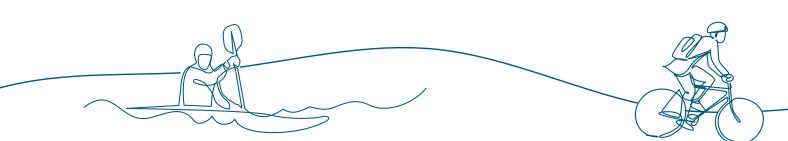
### A winning proposition must speak directly to the needs of Dabblers

When presenting activities to them, remember that Dabblers are:



### **Remember:**

Activities are an aspect of the holiday. It is important to ensure the social element is dialled up.



>> Blueways offer waterscape experiences, in, on or near the water for locals and visitors, using lakes, canals, rivers and coastal environments to walk, cycle, kayak, SUP and engage with nature and heritage <<</p>

### The User at the Heart of the Blueway

Whether a Blueway user is a member of the community enjoying their local waterway or a visitor exploring a new destination, it is essential the Blueway delivers a memorable experience. Memorable Blueway experiences ideally incorporate nature, heritage, activity and hospitality in scenic, well kept, easily accessed settings.



### Blueway Users Expect AWE

These are:

### Attractive locations:

- striking waterscape environments: especially important to attract visitors
- sheltered waters: not the force of the ocean or the surge of a rapid

### Water and land based activities:

- >> high safety and quality standards
- >>> geared towards entry or novice level
- >> guides and instructors to assist
- >> equipment available for hire
- >> opportunities for locals to sample and maintain their involvement

### Eclectic Experiences:

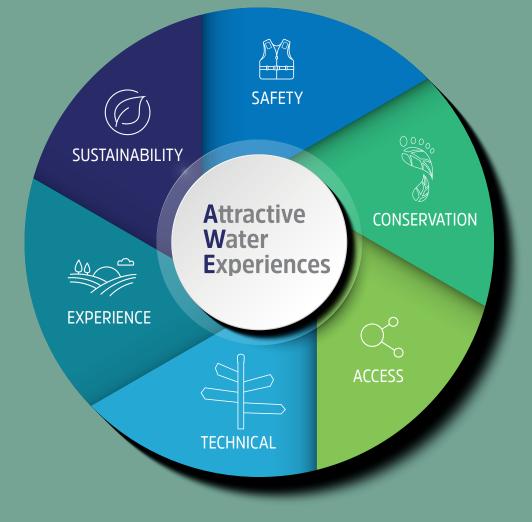
- >> historical, cultural experiences nearby
- >> seasonal programmes of activities and events
- >> local dining and accommodation
- >> activity and hospitality packages

### **Blueway Benefits**

Research continues to identify the benefits that outdoor recreation activities bring to individuals and the wider community beyond their market or economic value. A review of 133 studies in the **Benefits of Outdoor Sports for Society (BOSS)** report identified five key groups of social benefits which outdoors sports and Blueways can bring to a community;

- 1. Mental Health and Wellbeing: general mental health, quality of life, positive affective states, self-development and happy ageing.
- 2. Physical Health: combating lifestyle diseases, extended life expectancy, healthy ageing.
- **3.** Active Citizenship: Integration, inclusion and volunteerism.
- 4. Education and Lifelong Learning: intra and interpersonal development, environmental awareness and behaviour.
- 5. Reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour: increased pro-social behaviour, prevention and reduction in crime.

## **Blueway Accreditation Criteria**



### **The SCATES Model**

A Blueway will be assessed against the SCATES model criteria. These are;

- SAFETY: Is risk being appropriately managed?
- CONSERVATION / ENVIRONMENT:

As a minimum does the Blueway avoid any negative impact on the environment or ideally how does it add to or improve the environment e.g. through education and access?

- ACCESS: Will the Blueway be open for public use for at least ten years following accreditation?
- TECHNICAL: Does trail infrastructure and signage follow best practice?
- **EXPERIENCE**: Are the visitors' expectations met?
- SUSTAINABILITY: Are the management structures / partnerships, plans and processes in place to ensure the Blueway can continue to meet the required standard?

### **Attractive Water Experiences (AWE)**

Attractive locations - not simply just anywhere with water, but scenery unique to the Island of Ireland which visitors do not find closer to home

COASTAL LOCATIONS: attract visitors to sheltered waters i.e. not the force of the ocean

INLAND WATERWAYS: new discoveries and perspectives from calm water

2

## **Blueway Accreditation Criteria**

| Experience                                      |  |
|---|--|
| Engaging<br>Landscape /<br>Culture and Heritage | Offers an opportunity to appreciate and explore an attractive landscape and engage with the unique heritage and culture of the area. |
| Multi-activity                                  | Offers a combination of water and land-based trail (with connectivity to water) options.   |
| Capacity Building                               | A programme is in place to develop 'Eat/Stay/Go' and 'Activity/Experience' opportunities.  |
| Eat / Stay / Go                                 | Bars, Cafés, restaurants and attractions are easily accessible from trail heads and/or trails.                                       |
| Activity/Experience<br>Providers                | Guided activity experiences appropriate for 'dabblers' are available and can be booked in advance.                                   |
| Length of time                                  | Offers a minimum experience duration of between half a day to one day (see page 20).   |
| Visitor Information                             | The visitor can access information to allow them plan and enjoy their Blueway experience.  |

| Technical                      |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Walking Trails <sup>1</sup>    | Walking Trails are compliant with the relevant Walking Trails Criteria for Ireland  |
| Cycling Trails                 | Cycle Trails are compliant with the <b><u>Recreational Cycle</u></b><br><u>Trails Criteria for Ireland</u>  |
| Snorkel Trails                 | Snorkel Trails follow the guidelines of the <b>Water Trails Criteria for Ireland</b>  |
| Paddling Trails                | Paddling Trails follow the Water Trails Criteria for Ireland  |
| Sailing &<br>Windsurfing Sites | Sailing & Windsurfing Activities will be compliant with Irish Sailing and/or RYANI Accreditation standards.   |
| Signage                        | All signage follows with Blueway Brand & Signage Guidelines   |
| Trailhead Facilities           | Trail heads are clearly identified and offer<br>adequate parking.<br>Toilet and changing facilities are available within close<br>proximity of water based trail heads. |
| Managing user<br>conflict      | Consideration and identification of steps to mitigate against potential conflict with waterway / trail users has been undertaken  |
| Accessibility /<br>Inclusivity | Reasonable steps have been undertaken to provide disabled access  |

MD

## Blueway Accreditation Criteria continued

| Access                                |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Landowner /<br>Authority<br>Agreement | Access is permitted by all landowners and relevant<br>authorities – public and private for a minimum period<br>of 10 years.                            |  |
| Insurance                             | Public liability insurance is in place providing indemnity<br>for all infrastructure, land-based trails and water trails'<br>access and egress points. |  |

| Safety                              |   | Litter           |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Suitability                         | The experience is suitable for the 'dabbler' with little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities | Sustainabi       |
| Responsibility                      | Visitors are not exposed to hidden dangers.<br>Visitors should be aware of the risks they will face, and that                 | Management Gr    |
|                                     | safety is a shared responsibility between the visitor and the<br>Blueway Developer / Responsible Authority.                   | Management Pla   |
| Activity Providers /<br>Experiences | A programme is in place for activity providers to demonstrate their safety credentials  | Visitor Feedbacl |

### **Conservation and the Environment**

| Statutory Approval                | Evidence of consultation and approval with appropriate statutory bodies can be demonstrated       |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Biosecurity &<br>Invasive Species | Proactive measures are in place to stop the spread of invasive species and harmful pathogens      |
| Environmental<br>Education        | Site specific environmental sensitivities and<br>Leave No Trace Principles have been incorporated |
| Litter                            | The Blueway is free from litter and fly-tipped waste  |

### oility

|                  | Management Group | A Blueway Management Group is in place –<br>led by a Local Authority or State Agency |  |
|------------------|------------------|--|--|
|                  | Management Plan  | A Blueway Management Plan is in place  |  |
| Visitor Feedback |                  | A formal process is in place to monitor visitor feedback                             |  |

### Attractive Locations

not simply just anywhere with water, but scenery unique to the Island of Ireland which visitors do not find closer to home



## **Experiences**

Experiential tourism is travel that is motivated by the desire to connect with a place, its culture and people. Research shows that today's visitor is less concerned with simply seeing or doing things; what they really want is to immerse themselves in the locale, interact with people, engage the senses, and learn the history and stories that are unique to a place.

Developing authentic experiences is all about combining natural landscape assets, tourism products, customer service, and engaging stories to create compelling consumer offerings or 'experiences' that immerse the visitor. When the visitor is immersed in a place or activity and a range of their senses are involved, challenged, delighted or surprised this triggers engagement, a deep experience and lasting memories.



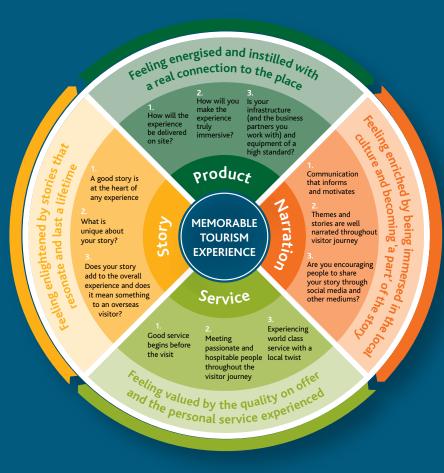
>> Remember to ensure your Blueway Experiences are also aligned to your tourism destination brand; ROI – Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East or Dublin

NI - Embrace a Giant Spirit <<



>> A memorable tourism experience is what a visitor gains from the combination of the place, its attractions, activities, the people they meet along the way and the stories they share. Experiences help visitors remember the visit as being special and ensure that they talk about it afterwards <<





The Experience Wheel captures the components that contribute to deliver a memorable Tourism Experience

### The Experience Wheel

The experience wheel captures the components that, when combined, deliver a memorable tourism experience.

The centre layer contains the four components of a memorable tourism experience:

**1. Product:** 'the hardware' at the core of the experience i.e. your Blueway

**2. Service:** 'the software' i.e. looking after visitor needs with ancillary infrastructure

**3. Story:** the stories unique to your Blueway, its heritage, history, characters

**4. Narration:** how you tell your local stories, pre, during and post the Blueway.

The next layer in the wheel details how you can deliver on expectations for each component. For example:

- **1. Product:** the Blueway experience is truly immersive, most if not all senses are engaged
- **2. Service:** meeting passionate and hospitable people along the Blueway
- **3. Story:** drawing on interpretation tools to bring local stories and characters to life

 A. Narration: communication that both informs and motivates visitors

The outermost layer summarises the type of emotions that arise when the experience is positive. So, the aim is to have your visitor feeling energised, enriched, valued or enlightened.

Positive emotions lead to good memories which can lead to recommendations and plans for returns trips, thus putting your Blueway firmly on the map.

### **Combine and Create**

A successful Blueway combines complementary experiences into a compelling reason to visit and should act as a catalyst for local participation initiatives e.g. through schools, youth organisations, clubs and local sports partnerships.

This requires cooperation across a network of local businesses – food and beverage providers, attractions, accommodation and activity operators all working together to make their Blueway an exciting and attractive destination for visitors.

A location's history, culture, food, accommodation and night-time economy all have a part to play. By combining these, visitor itineraries including maps to help visitors visualise the experience and packages can be created which increase dwell time and offer something for everyone.

### Length of Time

As participants are dabblers, activities are the means of exploring or uncovering a destination.

The average length of time people will spend on various activities is outlined below. Activity operators need to know this when planning trips and creating visitor itineraries and packages.

| MODE                  | AVERAGE TRAVEL SPEED                           | HALF DAY EXPERIENCE |  |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------|--|
| Canoeing              | 3 kilometres per hour                          | 3-6 kilometres      |  |
| Walking               | 5 kilometres per hour                          | 5-10 kilometres     |  |
| Cycling               | 10-15 kilometres per hour                      | 10-15 kilometres    |  |
| Sailing & Windsurfing | Introductory sessions typically last 2-3 hours |                     |  |



### **Suitability and Safety**

The Blueway visitor must be made aware of the risks of engaging with on-water activity and provided with sufficient information to enable informed decision-making about what is suitable to their personal level of competence.

The Blueway visitor offering must include on-water experiences that are suitable to the needs of the 'dabbler' i.e. those with little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities.

Dabblers must be strongly recommended to join a local club or book an experience with a competent activity provider. Details of competent activity providers as well as detailed information about the conditions along each section of the trail, and their suitability for different levels of expertise, should be provided to the Blueway user.

Using colour coding of trails consistent with Sport Ireland's **Water Trails Criteria for Ireland** is a useful visualisation of the recognised grading system. See also Appendix 1: Technical Suitability of Trails.



|  | GRADE       | BEGINNER:<br>Simple Waters  | INTERMEDIATE:<br>Moderate Waters  | ADVANCED:<br>Challenging Waters   |
|--|-------------|---|---|---|
|  | Suitability | Ability to swim essential   | Ability to swim essential   | Ability to swim essential   |
|  |             | For a Beginner/Novice, prior<br>training with a club, or<br>booking with a competent<br>activity provider, is highly<br>recommended | Ability to undertake basic<br>paddling strokes, self-rescue<br>and navigate confidently<br>using a map. Booking with a<br>competent activity provider,<br>is essential. | Ability to undertake<br>advanced paddling strokes,<br>self-rescue and navigate<br>confidently using a map.<br>Practical experience of<br>moving water – eddies,<br>standing waves, stoppers<br>and route selection. |
|  | Conditions  | Very slow-moving rivers/<br>canals. Small lakes which do<br>not become rough when<br>conditions change.                             | Slow moving rivers without<br>obstruction. Lakes which can<br>become Challenging Waters<br>in windy conditions.   | Rivers with simple<br>obstructions and places<br>where the flow accelerates.<br>Stoppers and small drops<br>can be present. Lakes<br>which become rough in<br>windy conditions.                                     |

While visitors must be made aware of the risks they will face, that safety is a shared responsibility between the visitor and the Blueway Developer. As outlined by the **Visitor Safety Group**;



>>Visitors should be aware of the risks they will face. They also need to understand that although they have the right to appropriate protection they also have a responsibility to behave sensibly and take reasonable care for their own safety and the safety of others. Safety is a shared responsibility between the visitor and the land owner/manager <<

To demonstrate the shared responsibility between the visitor and the Blueway Developer see Appendix 2: Responsibility Statement which provides a useful basis for adaptation by Blueway Developers.

### **Activity Providers Experience**

To ensure the safety of the Blueway experiences that are delivered by activity providers, it is critical that these providers operate to recognised industry standards in terms of training and safety provision and that they have the appropriate health and safety policies and checks in place. The easiest way to ensure this is to support or promote the services of a provider on your Blueway that has gone through an appropriate accreditation scheme.

- In the case of sailing, dingy, keel boat or windsurfing activity providers should be a recognised Teaching Centre under the Royal Yachting Association or a Training Centre under the Irish Sailing accreditation system.
- In the case of paddle sports activities, such as kayaking or Stand-Up Paddle Boarding, these can be provided by either a Canoeing Ireland Registered Provider or an Adventuremark holder (who has paddling recognised as one of their activities).
- In the case of snorkelling, snorkelling activities should be provided by either an Diving Ireland – Approved Snorkelling Centre or an Adventuremark holder (who has snorkelling recognised as one of their activities)".

External and 3rd party independent accreditation provides assurance that as a minimum the activity provider has been checked and verified in terms of:

- >> Relevant Technical Qualifications
- >> First Aid Qualifications
- >> Public Liability Insurance
- >> Risk Assessment and Dynamic Management
- >> Ratios for activities
- >> Emergency Response Plan

In addition, Blueway developers may wish activity providers to engage in the wider Blueway animation concept including:

SONG

- >> Attendance at capacity building workshops
- Knowledge of the culture and heritage of the area
- >> Customer Service Experience

### The Blueway Promise

>> Blueways are Ireland's best kept secret: trails on and alongside Ireland's scenic waterways. Experience fun and adventure on foot, by boat or bike along trails that meander the country's picturesque waters, enjoyed entirely at your own pace.

If you're new to Blueways our experienced guides are here to help you make the most of nature's playground. Stretch yourself or take it easy. Glide along the water on a stand-up paddle board, exploring the beauty of Ireland's rivers and canals from a fresh perspective. Lose yourself in a lazy canoe ride, with the tranquil waters as your guiding force. Or try kayaking, walking or cycling the short trip to the nearest town for a tasty lunch.

As you explore, discover the captivating myths and legends woven into the fabric of these waters, gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage that shapes the landscape. Then, after the day's activities, relax, swap stories, and laugh at the day's escapades over a well-earned meal in the warmth of a cosy restaurant. Enjoy lively conservation and cheerful entertainment, with the promise of a new adventure the following day. <<

Your Blueways, Your Pace.

## 'Combine and Create'

Inspire visits to your Blueway by creating an itinerary which gives a sense of the range of experiences to be enjoyed. Here are some sample itineraries to help you craft your own.

## Lough Derg SAMPLE ITINERARY 1

Discover the great outdoors Lough Derg style with a three-day Blueway Adventure Getaway. This three-day itinerary features just a few of the great attractions you can visit around this majestic 32,000 acres body of water. Discover the 179km of an indented shoreline by kayak, bike, or by foot while you savour idyllic views of tree-lined shores, island-dotted bays, mountain top views, tranquil quays, colourful villages and marvellous wildlife on Ireland's third-largest lake.

### **DAY ONE:**

The first day of your itinerary will take you to the northern gateway town on the lake, Portumna. Here grab a bike from **Dick's Bike hire** in the centre

of the town and head to the forest park. Choose one of the **3 Blueway bike trails**; we suggest the **Bonaveen trail**, at just over 10km; it is the longest trail and covers the western / lake-facing side of the park. The long section around the lakeshore has some of the most attractive landscape in the park and great views out over the expanse of Lough Derg.





You will have worked up a thirst for some culture and heritage at this stage, so why not pop into **Portumna Castle and Gardens** It's just a quick bike ride away. Here you can visit the CatoCa café at the Castle and savour the lemon cheesecake which it is renowned for. Across the bridge grab lunch in the **Ferry Inn** before heading off on foot for an afternoon taster of the **Hymany Way**. This multi-day hike traverses the most beautiful and least explored areas of Irelands Hidden Heartlands. Along

this Blueway trail, will travel alongside the **Shannon Callows** famous for it's birdlife. Top-tip don't forget to look up for the chance to see the White-Tailed–Sea-Eagles circling overhead.



Some Accommodation options: **River Run House & Cottages** in Terryglass, **Fuchsia Lane Farm** offers award-winning Holiday Rental Cottages situated close to Terryglass; they are the perfect base for touring the Lough Derg region. **Portumna House, Oak Lodge** - Bed & Breakfasts who offer a guaranteed warm welcome upon arrival. If it's a bit of craic you're after, then **PodUmna** is for you! Located in the heart of Portumna, this quirky campsite offers three glamping options – a shepherd's hut, pods and a bell tent, and bike hire!

### DAY TWO:

Start the day with a refreshing dip in the lake at **Portumna's blue flag beach**. For experienced paddlers, this area is also the trailhead for three **Blueway water trails**. For beginners, head across to Tipperary to the lovely little quay of Kilgarvan. Here, Lough Derg Water Sports will bring you on a guided trail around Foot's island. Find your water legs as you meander through the harbour and take a peek out into open water.



The villages along the Eastern shore of Lough Derg offer many delicious options for lunch, **Whiskey Still** in

Dromineer, Larkins in Garrykennedy, Paddy's Bar in Terryglass are three options. Alternatively, stop off at the bustling market town of Nenagh and grab a bite in County Choice or The Pantry.



Next up, take a step (or 101) into the 13th century at Nenagh Castle and explore this castle, with its fortified stone walls and a whopping 101 step spiral staircase leading all the way to the top, the reward stunning views! The castle boasts the finest cylindrical keep in Ireland and features four storeys.

In the afternoon, head off on the **Graves of the Leinstermen looped trail**, just a short drive from Nenagh. This 6km walking starts on minor roads through pleasant countryside, it then leaves the road turning into the Arra Mountains. The trail

ascends to Tountinna (459m), where breathtaking views of Lough Derg await! Whatever the weather, this loop walk never fails to impress.



### **DAY THREE:**

Spend your third morning travelling along the eastern shore to the twin towns of Killaloe and Ballina. Stop off on route and take the must-have Instagram photo at **The Lookout**, as the name suggest the backdrop to your selfie will lookout across the entire lake. Onwards to Ballina-Killaloe where, **My Next Adventure** has the perfect crew to take you on a **Blueway paddling trail** of the historical town of Killaloe.



Your journey will take you under the 13 arched bridge that links the two towns, down the majestic River Shannon and back up the peaceful canal. The experienced guides will let you know the stories of this once upon a time capital of Ireland and point out the kingfishers as you glide along, while also teaching you the skills of kayaking.

The towns have a wide selection of lunch options, galleries, craft shops and an historical trail; how you explore is up to you. From coffee on **Flannagan's** lakefront garden and watch the world go by as you rest up before the next big adventure or take a trip up to Birdhill for lunch at **Matt the Thresher Inn** or for a coffee at the **Old Barracks Coffee Roastery** 

and Coffeebar...adults only.

The afternoon has options galore; head up **Moylussa** via the Crag Wood Walk; it's a challenging 3.5-hour climb to Clare's highest point; time flies by, though, as you will be mesmerised by the views, and there is a reviving dip at the **blue flag beach in Ballycuggeran/** Two Mile Gate to look forward to. Alternatively, if you want one more paddling experience try the **blue flag beach at Mountshannon** or head to **Derg Isle** Adventure Centre just outside the village of Scarriff.



Here you can learn to paddleboard along some purpose-built reed channels before heading out on the lake. You can also pack in an archery lesson or a zip lining experience while you are there.

Experience **Wilde Irish Chocolates** for some handmade quality Irish Chocolate and a factory tour or visit **McKiernan Woollen Mills** a family run scarf weaving business who specialise in woven and knitted scarves, with factory tours available. The **Garden Café** in Scarriff is another experience - they grow the majority of their food in the community garden, with everything else being sourced locally. They have a wide selection of herbal teas, fair trade and organic coffee, and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming. Pop in and fuel up for the trip home!

## 'Combine and Create'

### **River Bann** SAMPLE ITINERARY 2

Discover the largest river in Northern Ireland - the mighty River Bann with a three-day Blueway Adventure Getaway.

This three-day itinerary highlights some of the great attractions you can visit around this mighty river. The name of the Bann comes from an old Irish word "An Bhanna" which means the Goddess.

Discover the 64km river by canoe, paddle board, bike, or by foot and enjoy the tranquillity of wooded banks, the beauty of Lough Beg, amazing heritage, easy landings at quays, great food and drink, engaging villages and fantastic wildlife on Northern Ireland's largest river. We'll follow the river from Lough Neagh – the largest inland lake in the British Isles right to where it meets the Atlantic Ocean.



### DAY ONE:

The first day of your itinerary will start where the River Bann enters Lough Neagh at **Toome**. It's always good to start the day with great coffee so head to the **Lock-Keeper's Cottage**, **Tea Room and Heritage Centre**. Here you can also arrange a packed lunch and join a group guided tour with **Mid Ulster Canoe & Kayak Club** (Pre-Booking essential). This is a very easy sheltered section of canal to try out a range of paddle sports.

### DAY TWO:

On day two we travel North along the Bann Valley to Portglenone. A great start to the day is a wake up walk through the bluebells in the ancient woodland of **Portglenone Forest**. The bluebell show begins at the start of May and this is one of the best places to see them in Northern Ireland. There are also lots of wild ramsons (garlic) and this will truly awaken your senses on a morning walk in May. This can be combined with a serene walk around the grounds of the abbey and a coffee in the café there.

Our next part of the adventure is to experience fly fishing for the **Dollaghan trout** on a small tributary of the Bann – the Agivey River. The Dollaghan is a wild brown trout that migrates from

Lough Neagh into the side rivers to spawn. **Cressabelle Fisheries** will provide you a top-notch lunch and a guide to show you where this amazing species of wild brown trout can be found.

Back to Portglenone for a meal in the **Wild Duck Inn** before a well-earned rest.



### **DAY THREE:**

Our final day starts to the north at **Hutchinson's Quay** near Kilrea and the opportunity to take a guided canoe trip down this beautiful wooded section of river with one of our local guides at **Causeway Adventures** or **Xplore Outdoors**.

This is a beautiful section of river with kingfishers and herons galore. If you are very fortunate you may even spot an otter in this stretch. At **Portna** you can see how they make the lock gates in Ireland out of native Irish oak with designs that have remained unchanged since Leonardo Da Vinci invented them.

We'll finish our 3-day adventure on the Bann with, a more sedate heritage boat tour with **White River Charters** which can be enjoyed at **Mountsandel Fort** which is older than the pyramids in Egypt and is one of the earliest known human settlements in Ireland dating back to around 7600BC.







## Telling Your Blueway Story





Blueways are part of a community's heritage and they are valuable social and recreation venues and environmental gems. Blueways provide access for visitors to experience the community and the local environment. As such Blueways should tell the stories of the people, places and environment through which they pass. Information presents facts; Interpretation unveils the local stories unique to your Blueway.

In planning your Blueway, what are the stories you need to interpret? What makes your Blueway different? How will we tell our stories?

Interpretation tools that bring stories to life could include:

- Suided interpretation (with personal local guides or via self-guided trails)
- >> Printed/graphic material (leaflets, panels, plaques, displays)
- Digital tools (websites, audio posts, apps and podcasts)
- >> Onsite installations using natural materials indigenous to the area (seating, picnic benches, stiles, boardwalks, sculptures or other artistic installations

While budget will help you identify which of these tools you can afford, an interpretation plan will ensure your money is wisely spent.

Your **interpretation plan** should address issues such as:

- >> Who is the Blueway for?
- >> What are our key stories?
- >> How will we interpret the stories?
- >> Through what format will we story-tell?
- >> Are there different local, domestic and international visitor interpretation needs?



### What Stories do you want to tell?

- >> What features, qualities and stories make your Blueway special and memorable?
- >> Are there specific elements that will be of more interest to international visitors than to locals or domestic visitors? If so, what is the best way to highlight them?
- >> Who are the characters associated with the local area and how can you bring them to life?

### Creating a Sense of Place

- >> How can you create a sense of place around your Blueway to achieve memorable stand-out?
- >> Does your Blueway feature built and/or natural heritage assets that could become iconic photo opportunities?
- >> How can you use your Blueway to signpost other local attractions and activities that will add value to the overall experience for users?

### Animating your Blueway

- >> Can you schedule events at different times of year to animate the Blueway for locals as well as for visitors? These could be run exclusively by the developer, by third parties or a combination of both
- >> Do seasonal variations of changing landscapes or changing wildlife offer opportunities that can be maximised with pop-up or temporary interpretation.

### Rule of thumb for all forms of interpretation....

- >> Keep the language simple, informal, short and sweet
- >> Use more images and less text

For inspiration on animation and identifying and telling your story through interpretation see:

> Bored of Boards The Heritage Council

<u>Getting Active in Ireland's Ancient East –</u> <u>A Toolkit for Activity Providers</u> Fáilte Ireland

> Interpretation Toolkit Woodland Trust (UK)

Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns Fáilte Ireland

Embrace a Giant Spirit -Experience Development Toolkit Tourism NI

## **Accreditation and Development Process**

The stages of developing a Blueway to accredited status are as follows:

### **STAGE 1: PLANNING & PRE-DEVELOPMENT**

The Blueway Developer with guidance from the Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor scopes and refines their proposed Blueway Concept in line with the Blueway Accreditation Criteria. A **Stage 1** -**Preliminary Accreditation Application** is made by the Blueway Developer and if successful the project will progress to Stage 2.

#### **STAGE 2: DEVELOPMENT**

The Blueway Developer with guidance from the Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor develops the Blueway on the ground. Once complete, the developer should submit a **Stage 2 - Final Accreditation Application**. A Blueway Inspector will then assess the application and undertake a physical inspection to ensure the development work undertaken meets the criteria. If successful, the Blueway becomes accredited.

#### **STAGE 3: OPERATION**

Once Stage 2 accreditation has been achieved, the developer's role become one of launching, promoting, managing, and maintaining the Blueway.

The process is further outlined on the following pages.

### STAGE 1

### PLANNING & PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- >> Develop a high-level concept map based discussion document show key trails, water access / egress sites and ancillary services.
- >> Engage with Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor to gauge suitability proposed concept
- Form The Blueway Management Group (See Page 36)
- >> Scope and Scale (See Page 36)
- >> Undertake The Technical Feasibility study (See Page 36)
- >> Undertake initial landowner engagement
- Engage with community and local businesses as first step in capacity building
- >> Scope funding sources
- >> Develop and submit Stage 1 Preliminary Accreditation Application with guidance from Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor

SUCCESSFUL STAGE 1 PRELIMINARY ACCREDITATION APPLICATIONS MOVE TO STAGE 2 >>

### STAGE 2

### DEVELOPMENT

- >> Secure funding
- >> Conduct required environmental assessments
- Apply to the appropriate planning consent process
- >> Develop the Blueway visitor experience, e.g. development of an interpretive framework
- >> Develop infrastructure to the defined Blueway standards
- >> Design and erect trailhead/directional signage and visitor information
- >> Prepare a marketing plan
- >> Network and engage with activation and animation partners
- >> Develop a maintenance plan to ensure high standards of infrastructure
- Develop and submit Stage 2 Final Accreditation Application with guidance from Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor

SUCCESSFUL STAGE 2 FINAL ACCREDITATION APPLICATIONS RESULT IN ACCREDITED STATUES AND MOVE TO OPERATION >>

### ACCREDITED BLUEWAY

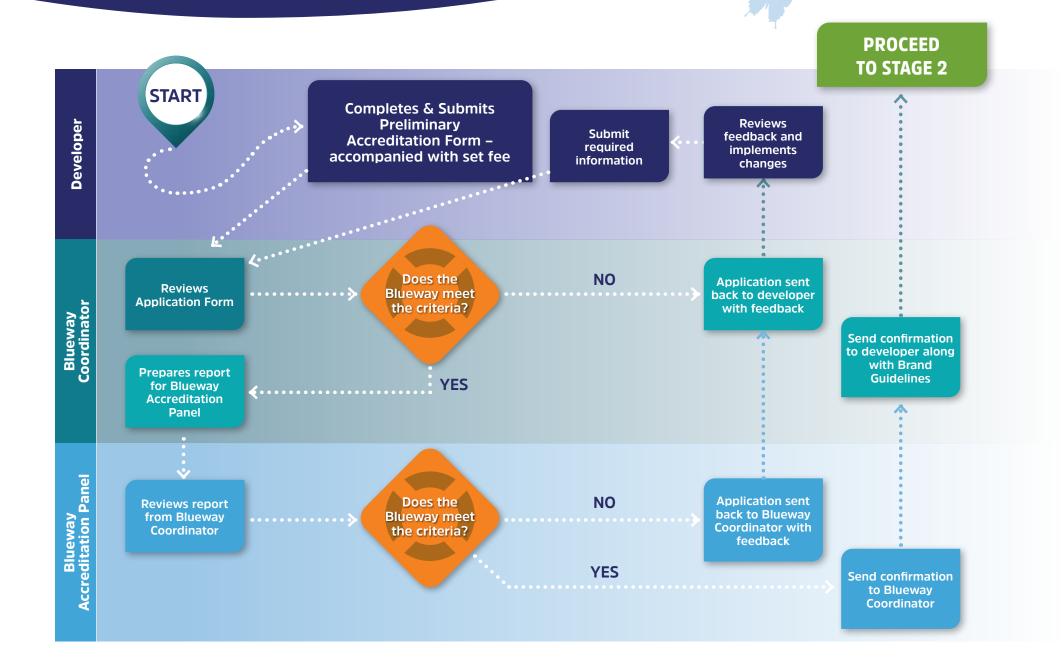
- >> Accreditation awarded
- >> Formally launch the Blueway
- >> Become operational with a robust operational plan in place at Management Group level

**OPERATION** 

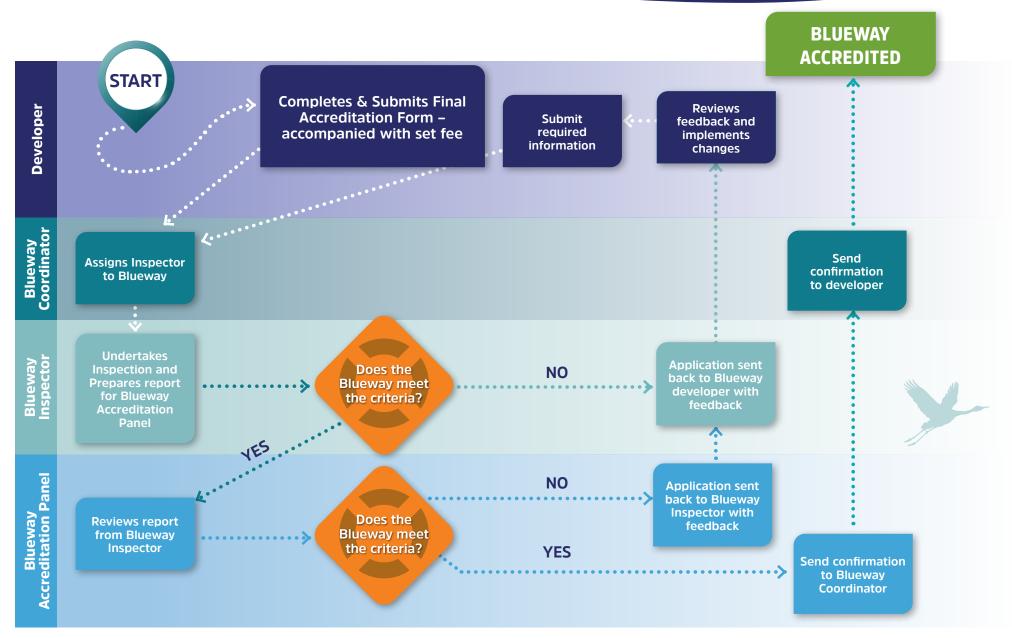
- >> Implement a maintenance plan to ensure high standards of infrastructure
- >> Avail of business supports from Tourism Agencies and where on their waters, Waterways Ireland
- Implement marketing & promotional activities, with support from Tourism Agencies and where on their waters, Waterways Ireland

It is important to note that the awarding of Blueway Accreditation does not pass liability onto the Blueway Partnership, Blueways Coordinator and Development Advisor or Blueway Inspector. It will remain the responsibility of the Developer to ensure the Blueway is managed in accordance to operating procedures and standards as inspected.

## Stage 1: Preliminary Accreditation



## Stage 2: Final Accreditation



## Blueway Coordinator and Blueway Developer Resource

Blueway Developers are encouraged to proactively engage with the Blueway Coordinator and Developer from the outset and through their process. The Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor's resource is finite therefore the following framework provide an indication of the level of support which can be provided

The Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor (currently provided by Outscape) are in place to support and advise Blueway Developers throughout the planning, development and accreditation process.

Blueway Developers are encouraged to proactively engage with the Blueway Coordinator and Developer from the outset and through their process.

The Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor's resource is finite therefore the following framework provides an indication of the level of support which can be provided.





To complete the development stages of the accreditation process you should consider the following.

### Scope and Scale

Possibly the most important step in the initial development of a Blueway is the Scope and Scale. This document supported by a high-level map should succinctly outline:

- >> The Proposition: the size of the Blueway and its corridor, what land trails and activities are included and any project phases, who the Blueway is for?
- >> Aims and Objectives: the main reason why the project is taking place, and the steps that are required to achieve this aim.
- >> Roles and responsibilities: who is involved, what are the leadership and delivery responsibilities?

After developing the initial Scope and Scale you should be comfortable sharing it with the general public. You should also update it as the ambition progresses.

## The Technical Feasibility Study

This study allows your Blueway Development Group to check the Blueway concept against the SCATES Model (page 14). In most cases outside assistance is required to complete this and this assistance is likely to come from:

- >> Local Authority staff with knowledge of the waterway and existing outdoor recreation infrastructure.
- >> National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of Sport for paddlesports, walking, cycling, sailing and snorkelling.
- >> Local Sports Partnerships in Ireland and in Outscape in Northern Ireland for their knowledge of existing outdoor recreation infrastructure, service providers and assistance in the identification of other potential key stakeholders.
- >> Consultants who can identify the infrastructure needs and the recreation value of the Blueway. These consultants may also undertake the consultation process on your behalf and assist you in preparing your branding and promotions brief.
- Specialist agencies and organisations such as Leave No Trace and Active Disability Ireland regarding environmental sustainability and accessibility on the Blueway.

### **The Blueway Management Group**

It takes a team to develop a Blueway and while each Blueway is different most management groups include:

- >> A local authority or other statutory agency representatives who can guide the development process and assist in securing practical supports for its realisation.
- Specialists in the areas of recreation and tourism will have excellent insights regarding what locals and tourists want from Blueways. They will also be able to advise on the Blueway route design, ancillary infrastructure, the needs of activity providers and effective approaches to public engagement. Specialists typically include the county Tourism Officer, the Local Sports Partnership Coordinator, the Rural Recreation Officer, and external consultants.



#### A management group may also include or liaise with:

- A community liaison contact on the ground who has good interpersonal and communication skills is key to maintaining relationships with the community, agencies and local interests\*. A dedicated central point of contact can also direct specific enquiries, opportunities and concerns to others who may be best suited to addressing them in a timely and comprehensive manner.
  - > Engineers and Environmental specialists.

Engineers may be required for the design and maintenance of infrastructure such as water access/egress points and trailheads. Muddy riverbanks ad difficult car parking should not be part of the Blueway experience. Specialist advice may be required regarding environmental education and biosecurity.

 Existing Trail Development Groups.
 Blueways should incorporate existing nearby land trails (walking, cycling). To do this, contact should be made with the development or management groups for these trails to encourage their involvement and to ensure that these trails meet the <u>Sport Ireland National Trails Register</u> requirements and/or are included on WalkNI / OutmoreNI as appropriate.

- Expertise regarding knowledge and information of funding sources and procedures is important for the ongoing maintenance and new developments as well as the initial construction.
- Local Councillors perform a role in determining the policy of the Council as well as representing the needs of the electorate of the county.
- Local authority engagement with Smarter Travel policy in ROI or the Greenway strategy in Northern Ireland may be important where land trails adjacent to the Blueway, such as towpaths have the potential to form part of a local Smarter Travel initiative.

\*For example community organisations, community champions, local outdoor sports clubs, local business representatives.

## The Lough Derg Blueway

The local authorities and Waterways Ireland recognise the important role of their multi-skilled team, when they were developing the Lough Derg Blueway. The team's experience in community, tourism, enterprise and sport development was crucial to oversee and implement the important task of community and business engagement.

In addition to the on-thegroundwork of the tourism and Council staff, a consultant was employed to manage the consultation process and to generate the trail routes and promotional maps for the Lough Derg Blueway.

At a later stage in the development of the Lough Derg Blueway, photographers and videographers were commissioned to supply visual resources to help in the promotion of the Blueway.

## Think about the user when designing the Blueway



Events and Programmes: to encourage participation on the Blueway a seasonal timetable of activity events and programmes are required. This timetable should ideally include some form of 'introductory and developing' programme of activities (swimming, kayaking, sailing etc), leading to an event such as a fun race, tour or skills challenge. See Section 11 - Seasonal Activity & Events Calendar



Nearby Trails: cycling, walking, foraging, heritage and environmental trails that are within the Blueway corridor should be integrated and highlighted as part of the Blueway. Users like choice, they want to experience the various layers of the Blueway, let them know and make it easy.

**Itineraries and Bundles:** Blueway users should be informed about the half day, one day and multi day itineraries of things to do along the Blueway corridor. For example, the activity (land and water), heritage, events or retail offerings.

Signage for nearby attractions/amenities. Blueway information panels and online materials should recommend visitor attractions and experiences in the local area.

Linkages: Blueway water and land trails should link to towns, village centres and enterprises with supporting services and other activities. Provide safe trail access and egress at these links and include space to temporarily store equipment or where possible the provision of additional activities, activity instruction or equipment hire. Highlight links with public transport so that Blueway logistics are low stress and low carbon.

The **Environment** it is essential Blueways comply with the requirements of UK, Irish and European Law, including, but not limited to, Appropriate Assessment (AA) under the Habitats Directive and Environmental Impact Assessment.

Ancillary infrastructure: facilities that enhance the experience for users: e.g. trailheads, rest and shelter facilities, mapping/route orientation. furniture and aesthetic or sculptural additions. The range of facilities should be appropriate to the anticipated volume of users and type of likely demand.



## Points to Remember

2

1 A Blueway is about multiple water and land activities closely linked with the water, combined with culture and hospitality that target the 'dabbler'.

In order to ensure your Blueway meets the needs of the end user, the Blueway development should provide AWE - Attractive Water Experiences and be checked against the SCATES model (see page 14).

Developers are advised to include the input of residents, agencies and specialist expertise so that they can integrate the resources along the Blueway and provide attractive programmes and events that are attractive to locals and visitors.

Remember, trying to retro fit a better user experience on your Blueway is usually expensive and time consuming, so it's advisable to take your time at the beginning, ensure you have an holistic team onboard and put yourself in the end user's shoes! As part of their quality and accessibility promise, Blueways require well designed and appropriate facilities and infrastructure for all abilities. Effective signage, well located trailheads, good water access points, appropriate land trail surfaces and toilet facilities (where appropriate), are part of this promise. See Section 7. 'Accessibility', for further information,

3

4

A National Trails Register is maintained by Sport Ireland for Ireland and Blueway land and water trails must be on this register. While in Northern Ireland there is no such trail register, **Outscape** manages a website of trails **WalkNI** / **OutmoreNI**. These contain excellent interactive maps and details of trails across Northern Ireland and it is imperative that any land based trails are provided to Outscape for inclusion. The **standards for trail development** set by Sport Ireland have been adopted by the Blueways Partnership and as such should be used for the trail development in Northern Ireland.

# Public Consultation, Community & Business Engagement





The Blueway Management Group should consult with members of the local resident and business community throughout the development process. Nurturing a genuine two-way relationship with local stakeholders, who are interested in collaborating with the developer on the creation and delivery of a joint vision is key to the long-term sustainability of the Blueway. A project liaison officer may be required to engage with all stakeholders and to act as the official point of contact between the project promoters, landowners and members of the public.

Best practice is that the public consultation process should be personable in every aspect and should integrate a variety of local resources into the development. For example, development staff working on the project should be accessible, empathetic and understanding of the issues raised. Local heritage, arts, outdoor, club and enterprise resources should be acknowledged and where possible included within the Blueway experience.

5

A public consultation process should inform the public about the Blueway concept and route. There should then be an opportunity for the local community and business interests to identify the local stories that are uniquely associated with the Blueway route and local assets, for example existing land trails local natural or built heritage, dining and the arts, which might be integrated within the Blueway. This process also provides an opportunity for the community to highlight aspects of concern, which typically centre around:

- >> Anti-social behaviour
- >> Littering
- >> Facilitating unauthorised access to private land
- >> Insurance claims
- >> Unsanctioned camping
- >> Water safety

## The Blue Economy

Blueways provide 'Eat / Stay / Play' activity experience opportunities for participants to enjoy new destinations at their own pace. Capacity building the business sector both increases the range of Blueway services and helps to grow the local economy.

Engagement with local business owners can help to identify opportunities to enhance existing visitor services in the area. This could range from simply extending opening hours in the local shop, to adding a Blueway service dimension that complements the current business offering, bundling services such as activity instruction and accommodation, or to the development of completely new businesses that will encourage visitors to stay longer in the area.

Think about your public consultation invitation as a sales pitch. Ensure it generates excitement and interest amongst the local community and reassures them that by engaging in the process, a joint vision that works for everybody is achievable.





#### Landowner Engagement

A key part of the Blueway development process involves engaging with landowners and with the community.

Blueway waterways typically require access to land for trailheads, and water access infrastructure. Often these facilities are located in the public realms of villages, towns and cities and are under the remit of the Local Authority/Council. A Blueway Management group should include a Local Authority/Council representative who can advise on the use and development of such public spaces.

Private land can also be used for Blueway trailhead and water access infrastructure and in this event early and open engagement with the landowner is essential.

Where the use of private land is required for a Blueway a formal access agreement or lease is required with the landowner.

#### Landowner Courtesy

It is important that the landowner is made aware of any proposed development on, or beside their property as early as possible in the Blueway planning process.

Consultation should also be undertaken to ensure that Blueway parking and water access facilities do not affect the operation of nearby farms or enterprises.

#### Liability

Blueway developers and landowners will expect participants of recreational land and water-based activities to take particular care.

However, each managed facility/Blueway must undertake its own risk assessment and risk control exercise. All Blueways developers should obtain independent legal/insurance advice in relation to their own developments.

The following 'Advisories' provide additional information;

#### Blueway Developers Liability (Republic of Ireland)

**Blueway Developers Liability (Northern Ireland)** 



## **The Blueway Environment**

Blueways provide a unique way to engage with natural and built heritage assets. It is therefore essential that as a minimum, Blueway development and management avoids any negative impact on the environment.

Fundamentally, the maintenance of a high level of water quality is vital to the success of a Blueway. In addition, the Blueway can add to or improve the environment e.g. through education and appropriate access, and increased biodiversity through supporting the right mixture of habitats that attract the greatest diversity of wildlife (native species planting).

In Ireland the internationally recognised tourism VICE model is used as a method to recognise interactions within a destination. The model highlights; Visitors; the Industry that serves them; the Community that hosts them; and their collective impact on, and response to the Environment where it all takes place.



It is the ambition that the Island of Ireland will be amongst the worldleaders in sustainable tourism practices.

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) are a mechanism to take account of tourism's sustainable economic growth and the sustainable use of waterbodies and associated water resources on land, the oceans and seas. The UNWTO highlights particularly;





#### **The Blueway Environment**

Sustainability is core to establishing successful Blueway systems. The benefits of Blueways are multifaceted. They encourage physical exercise. local engagement in the outdoors and pride of place. Blueways generate local economic activity, provide businesses development opportunities and sustainable employment while valuing the natural environment.

Environmental education should be provided to all users regarding the particular ecological sensitivities at each blueway site e.g. users may be directed to avoid smaller islands, rocks and shallow reed areas with potential to hold nesting and roosting birds sensitive to disturbance so as to avoid abandonment of their eggs at an early stage.

#### **Blueway Sustainability Opportunities**

- >> Are there opportunities for regeneration and reuse of underutilised assets along the Blueway and within the towns and villages surrounding it, to improve the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the area?
- Can you promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through the Leave no Trace Principles?
- >> Are there opportunities for the community to improve awareness, water quality and habitat resources of the Blueway?

#### **Biodiversity**

Most Blueways will have a minimum impact on their natural surroundings, however where construction or new infrastructure is required at trailheads, water access points, signage placements and portages, these locations should be developed to support the right mixture of habitats that attract the greatest diversity of wildlife.

Connectivity is as crucial for wildlife as it is for Blueway users. The Blueway can also support the All Ireland Pollinator Plan by addressing pollinator decline and protecting pollination services. Some Blueway land trails may require 'wildlife corridors' to allow the passage of wildlife.

High maintenance, overly manicured green spaces are becoming a thing of the past. Balancing the needs of wildlife, people and the environment requires a different approach. Therefore, biodiversity must be considered and incorporated from the outset.

Ensure your Blueway Management Plan prioritises a minimum impact on the host environment and promotes local biodiversity (native plants and animals), protecting, and showcasing local features. By delivering tree, hedgerow and wildflower planting at Blueway development locations the range of habitats and species can be diversified. Together with other planting improvements these can help create wildlife hubs.

Improve wildlife knowledge by engaging the local community and schools to volunteer to undertake dedicated survey work. Many of these Blueway water access, trailheads and land trails will become community green spaces and fostering a sense of ownership through community involvement is essential.

#### **Blueways and Invasive Species**

Blueways bring people out into nature and increase their appreciation and See info box below; respect for these settings. However, participants need to be aware of their responsibility and informed as to how to avoid carrying an invasive species to, or from, a waterway through Check Clean Dry public information.

Invasive non-native plant and animal species are the second greatest threat to biodiversity worldwide after habitat destruction. They can negatively impact on native species, can transform habitats and threaten whole ecosystems causing serious problems to the environment and the economy.

Blueways managers must advise participants through signage and advice on how to prevent invasive species and where appropriate include wash-down facilities for small water-craft to prevent the transfer of invasive species.



#### **Biosecurity Guidance and Practical Tools**

Blueway trails are encouraging the recreational use of waterways by new users, using either their own equipment or participating through activity providers and clubs. There is a low level of awareness about the implications of increased paddling activity, moving equipment between waterways and about the need for invasive species control. A study was undertaken in 2022 to bring a focus to this new Blueway market and to consider the measures that will help prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species associated with self-powered water-based activity on existing and future Blueways. Guidance and practical tools from this study can be found below;

Blueways -

**Biosecurity Plan** 

Development

Summary

#### Sustainable & Accessible Visitor Facilities

The Island of Ireland's temperate climate means that we have the potential to offer high-quality outdoor visitor experiences for a minimum of nine months of the year. For Ireland to become a best-in-class outdoor activity destination, we need to ensure that the visitor experience supports the development of high-quality infrastructure.

All-weather changing facilities are essential to elevating the visitor experience for outdoor activity tourists, particularly where water-based activities are involved. Blueway developers should consider the provision of changing, hot shower and toilet facilities. Using sustainable building practices such facilities could deliver best in class sustainable facilities for visitors.



Simple messaging to bring awareness to and help to educate the community on Sustainable Development Goals efforts and alignment for better Blueways can be initiated through <u>The United Nations Sustainable</u> <u>Development Goals</u>. These can help explain work efforts for well managed Blueways under climate action and sustainability.

Interventions such as EV charging points at trailheads, washdown areas for equipment, bicycle repair stations, water refill stations, wheelchair accessible picnic tables and native planting are all examples of how little touches can have a really positive impact on the visitor experience.

Blueways -Biosecurity Plan Recommendation <u>Toolkit</u>

Blueways -

**Biosecurity Plan** 

Development

Guidance



#### **Environmental & Built Heritage Assessments**

The tourism and recreational sectors should reflect the highest standards of environmental and economic sustainability so that we preserve and maintain our natural heritage for future generations.

The island of Ireland is seeking to be amongst the world leaders in sustainable tourism. Through our commitment to the VICE model for sustainable tourism, we should ensure that Blueways are developed to the highest environmentally sustainable standards.

Blueway Developers should investigate all statutory designations (natural and built heritage) that are located within or close to the designated Blueway. Natural heritage sites should include identification of all European and National level sites e.g SAC's SPA's, NHAs. Built Heritage should include RMPs, RPS's, ACA's and any known underwater archaeology.

In identifying these designations, you should set out the requirements to assess potential impacts resulting from development of the Blueway on any of these designated sites. This should include consultation with relevant statutory stakeholders and details of any assessments that may be required to be undertaken e.g. consideration for Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive, Environmental Impact Assessment under the EIA Directive and Heritage Assessments as required.

# Accessibility

The Blueway Management Group (see Section 6) should ensure that their Blueway is inclusive and accessible for all, including visitors who have a disability and people with limited mobility.

Irish Wheelchair Association's Sports Department in conjunction with Sport Ireland developed the concept of designing and delivering outdoor access guidelines that could be used by various organisations, that provide and manage facilities within the Great Outdoors.

The details provided in <u>Great Outdoors – A Guide for</u> Accessibility, Accessible Outdoor Places Design Guidelines and <u>Outdoor Accessibility Guidance | Paths for All</u> will ensure that people with disabilities can participate in a range of outdoor activities, sporting pursuits and family trips in the same manner as their peers.

To successfully include people with disabilities in outdoor recreation, the Blueway Management Group will need to pro-actively plan the inclusion of people with disabilities in the development of their Blueway.

#### To achieve this, consider some of the key points below:

| Auditing                       | Undertaking a self-assessment audit is the first step in assessing your outdoor amenity / facility prior to compiling an Access Improvement Plan in collaboration with stakeholder groups.<br>For more guidance on auditing, please visit <u>https://activedisability.ie/</u>   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Training                       | <ul> <li>Training for staff and volunteers is very important when it comes to breaking down stereotypes, overcoming preconceptions and developing confidence in working with people who have a disability.</li> <li>Relevant training can be sourced from the organisations listed below that develop and deliver training and education workshops across Access, Sports, Fitness, Adventure and Education sectors.</li> <li>Active Disability Ireland, delivers Inclusive Design for Outdoor Recreation (IDOR). This training is designed to give an overview of the best practice outlined in Great Outdoors, A Guide for Accessibility and a foundation understanding of how to approach implementation of the guiding principles and recommendations of this document.</li> <li>https://activedisability.ie/   email: info@activedisability.ie</li> <li>Irish Wheelchair Association - Sport. IWA-Sport advises and consults on inclusive leisure and sporting activities.</li> <li>www.iwasport.com   email: info@iwasport.com</li> <li>Irish Wheelchair Association - Access Advisory Team advises and consults regarding best practice accessible design in the built environment.</li> <li>www.iwa.ie/access-guidelines   email: access@iwa.ie</li> <li>Disability Sport NI - provides guidance and consultancy on inclusive facilities and places.</li> <li>www.dsni.co.uk   email: email@dsni.co.uk</li> </ul>  |
| Information &<br>Communication | <ul> <li>Well-designed, detailed, and accurate information about the accessibility of any site and its facilities and available amenities should be presented in various formats in order to be accessible to everyone including people with disabilities.</li> <li>The various formats through which information should be presented include: <ul> <li>The internet, including apps, QR codes, websites, e-mail and social media where appropriate. Relevant forms and documents should be accessible on-line and in downloadable format. Clearly signpost the availability of these documents on literature and on websites.</li> <li>Brochures and information leaflets that are available in Easy to Read, Plain English versions and Braille on request. Clearly display all available options. Keep written communications brief and to the point.</li> <li>Face-to-Face interaction using clear, simple user-focused language.</li> <li>An Induction Loop System which aids people who have a hearing loss should be provided at communication points. The appropriate symbol indicating the presence of a Loop System to be displayed.</li> <li>Audio Packs where appropriate. The availability of Audio Packs should be clearly displayed on-site and in any written material.</li> <li>By phone including the use of text messaging where appropriate. The availability of a text messaging option should be clearly displayed on-site and in any written material.</li> <li>Information Display Boards that are easy to read will orientate the visitor to on-site facilities.</li> <li>Waymarking for all routes should incorporate a wayfinding system that is clearly sign-posted and visible.</li> <li>Should waterways have access to adapted equipment or hoists, developers need to make this clear within all information before the Blueway users visits.</li> </ul> </li> <li>For more guidance on information and communication, please visit: <u>activedisability.ie/resources/communications</u></li> </ul> |

| Trails and<br>Infrastructure | All Blueways should strive to have accessible Trails. Where trails are appropriately designed and managed, they may be shared use and capable of facilitating a range of users including walkers, cyclists, buggy users and, in many instances, people who have disabilities. Such trails are sometimes known as Multi-Access or Challenging Access Trails.  |
|------------------------------|--|
|                              | Multi-Access Trail should look like the following:   |
|                              | <ul> <li>Flat smooth trails suitable for all users including people with reduced mobility, wheelchair users, people with a vision impairment, using crutches, with a buggy, with small children, older people and so on.</li> </ul>  |
|                              | <ul> <li>The width of the trail should be 2000mm to allow two wheelchair users to pass each other safely.<br/>A path width of 1500mm accommodates a wheelchair user and another person walking alongside.</li> </ul>   |
|                              | Normal outdoor footwear can be worn.   |
|                              | For more guidance on trails and infrastructure, please visit <u>Great Outdoors – A Guide for Accessibility</u> , <u>Accessible Outdoor</u><br>Places Design Guidelines and Outdoor Accessibility Guidance   Paths for All  |
|                              |  |
| Waterways                    | Waterways can present many challenges for visitors and particularly for visitors who have a disability. People with a range of disabilities experience difficulty in accessing waterway crafts, movement on grass, loose surfaced pathways and uneven ground.  |
|                              | <ul> <li>Information Display Boards are essential elements in providing adequate information to direct visitors towards and along<br/>trails and routes, Information Display Boards provide people with information on facilities available, the use of any<br/>waymarking system, features of interest or give warnings about hazards and obstacles along routes.</li> </ul>  |
|                              | • Accessible Parking. Provide accessible parking bays adjacent to waterway routes and include a set down area.   |
|                              | <ul> <li>Level Access from the parking area to the route/s adjacent to the waterway and leading to on-site facilities.</li> </ul>  |
|                              | <ul> <li>Public accessible WCs/ Changing Places WC Facility should be situated adjacent to the parking area or pier walkway/<br/>routes to the waterways that are serviced by accessible entrance points.</li> </ul>   |
|                              | <ul> <li>Given the nature of waterways, information on gu arding (Railings and guarding at steep places, cliff /water edge, etc<br/>would be important, along with rest areas/seating and shelter).</li> </ul>   |
|                              | <ul> <li>Without the provision of hoists, accessible fishing stands or pieces of adapted equipment an activity may not be accessible to an individual</li> </ul>   |
|                              | <ul> <li>Multi-Access Route Surfacing. Suitable surface materials for route/pathways include concrete, tarmac, bitumen macadam,<br/>timber and metal. For Multi-Access Routes there should be very little or no loose material on the route/pathway. Even very small<br/>loose particles can make a pathway challenging for people with poor balance. Loose particles should not exceed 5mm in size.</li> </ul>      |
|                              | Challenging Access Surface. Surface materials that are challenging include: dust blinding, timber, loose gravel and grass.   |
|                              | • Surface Colour for Multi-Access and Challenging Access Routes. Light coloured surfacing is preferable as it diverges in colour from the surrounding landscape and can aid in wayfinding for people who have a visual impairment. Providing an alternate surface type along the sides of any route to create a separation in colour and texture can act as a guiding strip for people who have a visual impairment. |
|                              |  |







The Blueway Partnership have developed branding and signage guidelines for Blueways. The Blueway branding and signage guidelines are managed by the Blueway Partnership and the Blueway brand and logo may only be used by accredited Blueways. Access to the branding and signage guidelines is granted to developers who successfully pass Stage 1 of the accreditation process.

Blueway developers should ensure that the Blueway logo complies with brand guidelines and should advise suppliers for signage and communications to consult the guidelines for the Blueway brand.

Consistency in the use of the Blueway brand will maximise visibility and make it easier for potential users to find your Blueway. This applies to online channels (before they visit your area) and in-destination (after they arrive). See section 11 Marketing & Promotion.

Use of the Blueway brand will also help to raise awareness domestically and internationally of the Blueway offering in Ireland. The Blueway brand has been designed to work alongside the Greenway brand reflecting their similarities while also emphasising their differences. Counties that offer both Blueways and Greenways can enjoy the benefits of both.







## Marketing & Promotion



## **Meeting Visitor Expectations**

Research has shown that visitors want to visit waterways, although they do not always want to be on the water. So, while outdoor recreation experiences within waterscapes are at the core of a Blueway, the offering should include both water-based and land-based trail options.

Land-based trails e.g., walking or cycling must have connectivity to the water i.e., where possible they should be adjacent to the waterway. At a minimum, the trail head should be adjacent to the waterway with a significant section of the trail either adjacent to, or providing views of, the waterway. Fundamentally land-based Blueway trails should enable active enjoyment of waterscapes. While the Blueway trails provide opportunities to appreciate and explore an attractive landscape, a richer visitor experience is created by presenting this within the context of the unique heritage and culture of the area. It is essential the Blueway proactively showcases and provides adequate interpretation of the area's key assets, points of interest and attractions. Presenting the visitor with such options creates reason to stay for longer and experience more in the destination. Attractions, bars, cafés, and restaurants should be proximate and relevant to the overall Blueway experience, and ideally be easily accessible from trail heads and / or trails.

## **Creating awareness about your Blueway**

Designing and constructing a Blueway is only one step in the process towards monetising the infrastructure for the wider community. Even before construction is complete, a marketing strategy and action plan for the promotion of the Blueway needs to be developed and implemented.

There are two stages in the promotional campaign of a new Blueway that need to be considered:

- 1. The pre-launch, launch and first six months promotional campaign
- 2. Annual marketing and promotional campaign

The first stage aims to create awareness about the new Blueway to local, regional and national audiences. This requires considerable input that is front-loaded in the initial consultation process and then in the months leading into the Blueway launch and ideally throughout the first spring and summer season following the official launch. It can be extremely beneficial to outsource the promotion and marketing communications at the launch stage, whilst the annual marketing and promotional campaign can usually be more easily managed in-house through the tourism officer in partnership with local tourism providers.

The second stage aims to ensure awareness levels amongst domestic audiences are maintained and that your Blueway is also promoted to international visitors. Given the seasonal nature of the Blueway it is especially important that locals are reminded and supported in getting 'Back to the Blue' each spring. Budgeting for an annual programming, marketing and promotional campaign, see below, is strongly suggested.

- >> Programming: local introductory activities in the early season (April, May) to support local participation in Blueway water activities and with drop-in opportunities for early tourism visitors to the Blueway.
- >> Marketing: revitalising the image library, updating the online materials and integrating local Blueway service bundles.
- >> **Promotion:** partnership promotional activities with local stakeholders



As with the interpretation strategy, budget will guide the ongoing marketing strategy and action plan to a certain extent. Fortunately, many effective marketing and promotional activities are low cost or free of charge. It is essential however that somebody within the development agency (e.g. Tourism Officer or a member of the Community & Enterprise Team) is given responsibility for implementing the marketing plan.

A range of marketing and promotion activities should be included in your marketing plan, some of which can be implemented directly by the development agency and some that will be implemented by local tourism providers.

(See the Appendices for a sample tender brief you can use to source marketing services for the launch stage.)

While a comprehensive marketing campaign is essential to stimulate demand and grow visitor numbers on a new Blueway, this should not be regarded as a once-off activity. Blueway developers must ensure a marketing and promotion budget is in place every year.

As the number of domestic and international visitors to a Blueway increases, so too will the need for a seasonal campaign than can nurture repeat and referral visits from loyal users in the shoulder and peak seasons.

Working in collaboration with local tourism providers and other ancillary services to create new visitor experiences and to pool funding resources can be extremely effective in achieving stand-out for the Blueway destination. As more Blueways are developed in the coming years, marketing investment will become ever more critical for individual Blueway destinations.

## **Blueway Activation & Business Supports**

When a Blueway becomes accredited Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and Waterways Ireland roll out an activation programme for all businesses operating along the Blueway. The activation programme covers:

- >> What a Blueway is and who the users are
- >> The Blueway consumer proposition and how it can be used by businesses in their marketing activities
- >> Where the Blueway fits within the wider regional and experience brands proposition that is presented to potential visitors
- >> Marketing and promotion ideas and tips for optimising the benefits of the Blueway to businesses and the wider destination
- Further destination specific supports such as digital, marketing and saleable experiences will also be offered to accredited Blueways through Fáilte Ireland's and Tourism Northern Ireland's regional experience brands.

>>Ensure all your marketing & promotional activity incorporates Blueway branding <<

## **Promoting the Blueway**

#### **ONLINE PLATFORMS INCLUDE:**

#### >> Website - The Blueway's 'shop window'. It should:

- Be responsive on different devices (desktop, mobile, tablet)
- Be easy to navigate with contact details clearly visible
- Feature great imagery and video of your Blueway and the wider area
- Link to your relevant destination brand (Dublin / Ireland's Ancient East / Ireland's Hidden Heartlands / Wild Atlantic Way)
- Signpost visitors to bookable experiences with tourism providers on your Blueway
- Ensure search engine optimisation (SEOS) is in place
- Use Google analytics to track visitors

#### >> Social media channels:

Facebook and Instagram are generally the most popular consumer channels, while Twitter is good for trade communication. Create links from your website to your social media channels, update content regularly and use relevant hashtags'#'

#### >> Email marketing:

Previous Blueway users who have had a great experience can be your best sales people! Where possible, ensure tourism providers along the Blueway stay in touch with them through targeted email marketing campaigns (observing GDPR guidelines) to promote repeat and referral visits. This could be particularly helpful to promote shoulder and off-season business

#### >> Online review sites:

TripAdvisor, Google Reviews and Facebook reviews are all referenced by visitors when planning their holiday. Register your Blueway on these review sites to manage your online reputation

#### >> Online advertising:

Social media channels offer very cost-effective opportunities for online paid advertising that can be targeted and easy to measure

#### **OFFLINE PLATFORMS INCLUDE:**

#### >> Brochures / fliers/ maps:

Printed material that visitors can get from the local tourist information office, hotel receptions, local shops

## >> Advertising in local, regional and national tourism collateral:

Local tourist guides are consulted by visitors while they are in-destination and advertising in local / regional newspapers or radio stations that are within a couple of hours radius of the Blueway can encourage domestic tourism

#### >> Public relations (PR):

National, regional, and local media (particularly the lifestyle and travel sections / programmes) are always on the lookout for great imagery and quirky stories about new holiday experiences. Make it easy for them to find out about your Blueway by regularly staying in contact with them

## **Fáilte Ireland Platforms**

www.discoverireland.ie is the domestic consumer website managed by Fáilte Ireland. Listing your Blueway on this website has the potential to reach over 55,000 visitors per week as well as almost 350,000 overseas visitors per week through the international consumer website www.ireland.com

Get a free listing for your Blueway on both by completing the short form on www.failteireland.ie/get-listed

If you are planning a small festival or event on the Blueway, you can register the details about your event for free on **www.failteirelandevents.ie/#/** 

## **Tourism Northern Ireland Platforms**

Northern Ireland is marketed using Tourism NI's consumer website <u>discovernorthernireland.com</u>. With 3.6million yearly visitors to this website, as well as 350,000 overseas visitors per week through Tourism Ireland's channels, listing your Blueway, and the accompanying animating activities and the things to see and do will increase your reach to your target markets.

Get a free listing for your Blueway by visiting Tourism NI's industry website **www.tourismni.com**. You'll find steps and video guides to upload your listing and events. There is also an abundance of links and development resources to help you create experiences, develop your business practices and get involved in marketing campaigns.

### Don't forget:

register the domain name for your Blueway website as well as your Blueway social media handles as soon as the name is agreed internally and before it is announced to an external audience.



## **Tourism Ireland Platforms**

Tourism Ireland promotes the Island of Ireland in 29 international markets and attracts over 19 million people to market websites each year. To avail of low cost or no cost marketing opportunities in the international marketplace you need to:

#### >> Register with

#### www.tourismirelandindustryopportunities.com to:

- Submit press releases and images/video about your Blueway to 'Have you a story to tell', which Tourism Ireland can share with their global network of travel trade, media contacts and consumers
- Register with the Community Forum
   <u>community.ireland.com</u> where you can join in the conversation and share your knowledge to help international visitors plan their holiday to your Blueway
- Contact your local Fáilte Ireland or Tourism Northern Ireland representative to explore opportunities with Tourism Ireland to feature your Blueway on future international buyer and media familiarisation trips to explore appropriate opportunities.



## **Travel Trade**

As business on your Blueway expands, you can explore opportunities to target international markets through tour operators.

- >> The Incoming Tour Operator Association (ITOA) hosts annual workshops in Dublin and Limerick. Presenting your Blueway at the workshops offers a sales opportunity to promote to ITOA members who contract on behalf of 4,000 international tour operators and travel agents see itoa-ireland.com
- >> Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland also offer a range of trade sales opportunities in the Island of Ireland and in international markets. Contact your local representative to explore appropriate opportunities.

## **Sport Ireland**

Sport Ireland Outdoors manages the National Trails Register which includes data on waymarked walking trails and an increasing number of cycling, water and horse-riding trails in the Republic of Ireland. Any community, voluntary or public organisation may notify Sport Ireland Outdoors of trail developments for inclusion on the register.

Trails are listed on the **<u>Sport Ireland</u>** website.

Trails listed on the National Trails Register will also be included in <u>Get Ireland Active</u> – this National Database is Ireland's interactive activity, sport and recreation hub.

### **Sport Northern Ireland**

**Sport Northern Ireland** is the lead public body for the development of sport and physical activity in Northern Ireland. The Sport NI mission statement is that we are passionate about maximising the power of sport to change lives. By 2026, we want the power of sport to be recognised and valued by all. Sport NI is focused on partnership working and as such has been a long term strategic partner with Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland. As such, the main platform for trails, water recreation facilities and potential Blueways is via **Outmore NI** which provides interactive mapping of all the outdoor recreation facilities in Northern Ireland.

## **Local Partnerships and Cross Selling**

Collaboration amongst local tourism providers is one of the most significant influencers in terms of encouraging visitors to stay longer and spend more in the local area. When choosing a destination, customers need to know that there is lots to do and see. It is essential that tourism providers along the Blueway are familiar with local experiences and, when dealing with customer enquiries, everybody cross sells on behalf of the Blueway destination.

If you need imagery to use on your website, social media or printed material you can download top-quality photographs and videos for free at <u>www.irelandscontentpool.com</u>

# **Ongoing Management, Maintenance, Monitoring**

Evidence from existing Blueways points to the need for ongoing management, maintenance and monitoring of Blueways by the developer. This need continues long after development is complete therefore each Blueway project should involve the development of a management plan.

## Safety Awareness and Information

The ongoing responsibilities of the Blueway Management Group (see Section 6), includes:

#### Safety Awareness and Information:

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All trails include some level of hazard and the water trails in a Blueway can be particularly exposed to poor weather:

- >> Strong wind on large lakes or coastal areas can create waves or blow participants offshore.
- >> Fog in coastal areas or on large lakes can reduce visibility.
- >> High rainfall will increase water flows on rivers and possibly lead to flooding on lakes.
- >> Tidal flows can be difficult to travel against or maintain your position and may also cause waves.



Signage, water level indicators, supporting information panels, online and printed material are some of the formats that can be used to support this safety awareness and decision-making process. See **RECOMMENDED GENERAL WORDING FOR SIGNAGE** in the following 'Advisories';

Blueway Developers Liability (Republic of Ireland)

Blueway Developers Liability (Northern Ireland).

On-water signage should be at a minimum and only in locations where it is difficult to perceive a hazard.

Blueway developers are strongly encouraged to join with and utilise the **Guiding Principles - Visitor Safety Group** to develop a Blueway Management Plan and Visitor Safety Management Policy and Plan (See Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 for further details).





## Managing the Blueway Experience

The Blueway Management Process also includes the prompting and integration of Blueway Services. Encouraging and supporting local business to benefit from the Blueway is a key Blueway management task. This Blueway benefit can be driven by:

- >> Start of season familiarisation activities with the communities and service providers.
- >> Supporting Blueway activity, equipment hire and hospitality packages.
- >> Providing a regularly updated online promotion platform and social media posts.

This ongoing engagement of local activity providers and the hospitality sector creates opportunities and makes the Blueway experience easier, especially for the new Blueway user.

Blueway users should also be made aware that they share the Blueway with others, such as anglers, cyclists and pleasure craft and that respecting the needs of other trail users is vital. To encourage optimal Blueway sharing, developers should promote the <u>Leave No Trace Principles</u> and present a Code of Conduct for users at access points to the trail.

### Maintenance

Maintaining a high standard of Blueway is essential, and appropriate maintenance provisions form part of the Blueway accreditation criteria. Well maintained water and land trails, water access and other infrastructure make the Blueway a more pleasant experience. An ongoing maintenance plan should be incorporated into the developer's annual budget to facilitate the repair and updating of Blueway infrastructure and this is a requirement for the Blueway Partnership accreditation.

Some land-based Blueway trails may be developed separately by other non Blueway organisations or groups who continue to have responsibility for their upkeep. Before incorporating these trails into the Blueway, the Blueway developers must also engage with these other trail groups to confirm that these trails have met the standard of the **Sport Ireland National Trails Register**, **Outmore NI/WalkNI** and that they are likely to continue to be maintained at this standard.

Developers typically maintain the Blueway themselves through a blend of local community oversight, Local Authority/Council resources and other local agencies. There may also be an opportunity to create a volunteer programme for local Blueway engagement, management and maintenance; local people can be the eyes and ears for changes on the ground that the developer cannot monitor daily. The Blueway is a great opportunity for communities to benefit from and take care of their local water course. Liaison with the catchment team of the Local Authority Waters Programme and the Local Authority Environmental Officers in ROI or with the DAERA Water Management Unit in NI can support this level of community involvement in maintaining the Blueway.

## Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluating the numbers using the Blueway is key to identifying its impact and future potential. Two types of Blueways monitoring are utilised, and both are recommended;

- 1. Quantitative monitoring: automatic counters
- 2. Qualitative monitoring: interviews and questionnaires

#### **Quantitative Monitoring**

Quantitative data is primarily gathered by automatic people counters which provide information on how many people use the Blueway trails, usage levels at different times of the day, seasonal variations etc. Carefully consider the location of counters and, ideally, sites should be tested initially to determine which are the most appropriate. It will also be important to be able to distinguish between on-water and land-based users.

#### **Qualitative Monitoring**

Qualitative monitoring will provide information on why and how people choose to use the Blueway.

This information can be gathered using tools such as visitor surveys, focused interviews, focus groups and social media polls.

Combining quantitative data with qualitative feedback from users will provide the development agency, local businesses, and the local community with a rich resource to help everybody optimise the potential of the Blueway. In addition to providing tourism data, qualitative monitoring can also provide insights into the broader economic, health, environmental and social impacts of the Blueway.

## **Seasonal Activity & Events Calendar**

With winter weather constraints and seasonal operation of many water-activity providers, participants are reminded and attracted back to Blueways when there is a timetable of activities and events to kick start the season or build the buzz. The following is a suggested Blueway seasonal activity and events management calendar;

|                     | Animation   | Promotion   | Maintenance  |
|---------------------|---|---|--|
| JANUARY, FEBRUARY   | Identify outline animation programme for spring and summer.   | Identify Blueway bundling opportunities with local businesses.  | Monitor exceptional weather impacts on the Blueway.  |
| MARCH, APRIL        | Prepare familiarisation<br>schedule and content.<br>Stakeholder and Partner meetings and<br>awareness raising.<br>Where appropriate, support instructor<br>led 'Blueway Beginnings' activities. | Identify a communications<br>plan for the season.<br>Update online and social media.                        | Pass through Blueway water and<br>land trails to check for open routes and<br>infrastructure conditions. |
| мау                 | Community programme of activities,<br>evening and weekend introductory and<br>build-up programme.   | Promote animation programme,<br>events and bundles.<br>Target niche segments such<br>as schools and groups. | Begin regular maintenance programme  |
| JUNE, JULY, AUGUST  | Continued community programme<br>and tourism turn up and go and<br>pre book programmes.<br>Host signature event.  | Ongoing promotion, feedback monitor.  | Maintenance programme.   |
| SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER | Special seasonal events, heritage and environmental activities.   | Target niche segments such as schools.<br>Focus on land based activity to<br>extend the season.             | Maintenance programme.   |
| NOVEMBER - DECEMBER | All on site activities stop.<br>Seek feedback from the resident<br>and business community.  | Review promotion activities and identify following year requirements  | Complete maintenance and anticipate next year's needs.   |

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## **Developer – Key Tasks Checklist**

The checklist below is a useful reference to allow Blueway Developers assess if they have considered all the key tasks required to deliver a successful Blueway. This should not be confused with the Accreditation Criteria within section 2.

### **Blueways Strategy**

We are clear about how our proposed Blueway satisfies the official definition

We understand the two stage Blueway accreditation process

Our proposed Blueway offers a combination of water and land based trail (with connectivity to water) options

Our proposed Blueway has engaging landscapes / culture and heritage and can offer an opportunity to appreciate, explore and engage with the unique heritage and culture of the area

We have engaged with the Blueway Coordinator and Development Advisor to check the suitability of our proposal.

#### Planning

We have identified the skills we have within or organisation and will outsource elements if needed and as appropriate

Our approach is **SCATES** Appropriate (see Section 2)

We have reviewed the Sport Ireland Water Trails Criteria for guidance on water trail components and development

The proposed Blueway experience is suitable for the 'dabbler / novice' with little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities

Our planning and design take account of the Blueway Partnership accreditation process

#### Safety

The experience is suitable for the 'dabbler / novice' with little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities

A competent person has undertaken an assessment of the hazards / risks and the mitigation steps for the Blueway

A programme will be in place for activity providers to demonstrate their safety credentials

### **Design & Construction**

We have identified potential Blueway nodes and trailheads

Reasonable steps have been undertaken to ensure disabled access to the Blueway facilities

We have identified appropriate water access and egress locations and construction/infrastructure designs and their associated costs

### **Technical and Infrastructure**

We have identified the various land and water trails within our Blueway corridor that have the potential to form part of the Blueway

We have engaged with the appropriate National Governing Bodies (NGB's) of sport - ROI or NI - to get their advice on the activities

We have identified the status of any land trails in the Blueway via the Sport Ireland National Trails Register / WalkNI

We have considered and identified the steps to mitigate against potential conflict between waterway / trail users

#### **Engaging with Landowners**

We liaise with local landowners who may be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed Blueway route early in the process and maintain contact with them even after construction has been completed

Access from all landowners and relevant authorities - public and private will be sought for a minimum period of 10 years.

Public liability insurance will be in place providing indemnity for all infrastructure, land-based trails and water trails' access and egress points. (See Advisories for **ROI** / **NI** )

### **Public Consultation**

We have identified appropriate spokespeople as the relevant liaison person with the community

We have an open-door policy for community enquiries about the proposed Blueway and answer all queries in a timely manner

We ensure the needs of the local community are properly understood and addressed, whether the consultation process is managed internally or whether it is outsourced to a third party

We are in regular contact with local businesses and together aim to identify opportunities for new businesses / services that will add value to our Blueway and enhance its economic impact

We work closely with local businesses (tourism and non-tourism) to create Blueway experiences that help to bring to life the stories of our Blueway in an immersive way for visitors

We ensure our Blueway experiences are aligned with our local tourism destination brand e.g. Wild Atlantic Way / Embrace a Giant Spirit

We collaborate with Tourism bodies on the delivery of experience development workshops and training for business owners on our Blueway

We take part in tourism body supports for Blueway developers e.g. training, seminars, information exchange etc.

#### Funding

 $\checkmark$ 

We have designed and implemented a process to ensure we are aware of impending funding sources and deadlines for funding calls

We have earmarked match funding within our organisation annual budgets to ensure we are ready to respond with an application to funding calls when they are announced

We are aware that our Blueway's operation must include budget for ongoing maintenance, marketing, and interpretation as well as the initial capital outlay



### **Branding and Naming**

We adhere to all national Blueway branding guidelines both online and in-destination signage

We follow the Blueway branding guidelines when branding and naming our Blueway

We will register the domain name for our website and all social media handles before the Blueway name is communicated externally

### **Interpretation Plan**

We have developed an interpretation plan in partnership with public, private and community stakeholders

Drawing on the interpretation plan, we have identified our local stories and the best interpretive tools to tell those stories

We have a signage plan in place to bring users to the Blueway and where necessary to guide them along the Blueway.

### Marketing & Promotion

We will outsource the launch stage (pre-launch and first six months after official launch) of the Blueway promotional campaign if we know that we do not have the resources internally to manage it effectively

We have an annual marketing and promotional plan with an associated budget for the ongoing promotional campaign

Responsibility for the implementation of the annual marketing and promotional plan is assigned to the Blueway Developer official. That person liaises closely with local tourism providers and relevant sports organisations to optimise the joint marketing and promotional effort of the wider community

### **Ongoing: Management, Maintenance, Monitoring**

In partnership with the local community, we implement an annual plan to ensure the optimal management and maintenance of our Blueway.

We undertake annual quantitative and qualitative research to better understand the needs and expectations of the people who use our Blueway (locals, domestic and overseas tourists) and we base future Blueway plans on the research findings

### **Conservation and Environment**

Consultation and approval from appropriate statutory bodies can be demonstrated

Proactive measures will be in place to stop the spread of invasive species and harmful pathogens

Site specific environmental sensitivities and Leave No Trace principles have been incorporated.

Steps will be taken to ensure that the Blueway remains free from litter and fly-tipped waste

## Resources

## Blueway Developer Website

www.bluewaydevelopment.org

## **The Blueway Partnership**

Sport Ireland <u>www.sportireland.ie</u> Sport Northern Ireland <u>www.sportni.net</u> Fáilte Ireland <u>www.failteireland.ie</u> Tourism Northern Ireland <u>www.tourismni.com</u> Waterways Ireland <u>www.waterwaysireland.org</u>

## **Recreational Trails/Outdoor Activity**

Sport Ireland National Trails Register www.sportireland.ie/outdoors/irelands-trails

Sport Ireland Publications & Resources www.sportireland.ie/outdoors/publicationsresources

Local Sports Partnerships www.sportireland.ie/participation/local-sportspartnerships

National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) in ROI www.sportireland.ie/national-governing-bodies

National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) in NI www.sportni.net/performance/governingbodies/recognition-of-governing-bodies/

Walk NI www.walkni.com

Benefits of Outdoor Sports for Society (BOSS) outdoorsportsbenefits.eu/

Visitor Safety Group (VSG) Guiding Principles www.visitorsafety.group/principles/guidingprinciples/

### Interpretation

Bored of Boards, The Heritage Council www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/bored\_ of\_boards\_1mb.pdf

#### Ireland's Ancient East Storytelling Toolkit (Fáilte Ireland)

www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/ WebsiteStructure/Documents/Irelands%20 Ancient%20East/Storytelling-Interpretation-How-to-Help-Visitors-Experience-Your-Story.pdf

Interpretation Toolkit, Woodland Trust (UK) www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/4254/ ancient-woodland-restoration-interpretationtoolkit.pdf

Development Guidelines for Tourism Destination Towns (Fáilte Ireland) www.failteireland.ie/FailteIreland/media/ WebsiteStructure/Documents/Publications/ Failte-Ireland-Tourism-Destination-Towns-Guidelines.pdf



## Resources

Getting Active in Ireland's Ancient East – A Toolkit for Activity Providers https://www.failteireland.ie/Failtelreland/media/ WebsiteStructure/Documents/Irelands%20 Ancient%20East/failte-ireland-activity-providerstoolkit-AW-web.pdf

Tourism NI Outdoor Experiences Toolkit https://www.tourismni.com/business-guidance/ sector/activities-attractions/activities-andattractions-growing-your-business/outdoorexperiences-in-tourism/

### Accessibility & The Outdoors

Active Disability Ireland activedisability.ie

Disability Sport NI dsni.co.uk

### Sustainability & Environment

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan https://pollinators.ie

Check Clean Dry (Northern Ireland) https://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/what-can-i-do/ check-clean-dry/guidance-for-paddlers/

Check Clean Dry (Republic of Ireland)

https://invasives.ie/biosecurity/check-clean-dry/ paddle-sports/

Leave No Trace <u>www.leavenotraceireland.org/</u>

Clean Coasts https://cleancoasts.org/enjoy-protectguides/#water\_sports

How to Grow Green – Sustainability Toolkit Tourism NI https://www.tourismni.com/sustainability-toolkit/ sustainability-toolkit/

Climate Action – Fáilte Ireland supports.failteireland.ie/climate-action



Appendices

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## **Appendix 1: Technical Suitability of Trails**

| Activity / Trail   | Grade   | Guideline                           |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| PADDLING TRAILS    | The paddling trail <u>must</u> be suitable for those with little or no experience i.e. there <u>must</u> be a section of ' <b>Simple Waters</b> ' and if ' <b>Moderate Waters</b> ' are included there <u>must</u> be an appropriately qualified activity provider available. | Water Trails Criteria               |
| SNORKELLING TRAILS | Simple Waters – Beginner  | Water Trails Criteria               |
| WALKING TRAILS     | Class 1 or Class 2 <sup>2</sup>   | Walking Trail Criteria              |
| CYCLE TRAILS       | <ul> <li>&gt;&gt; Greenway</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Off-Road Traffic Free (all Ability &amp; Easy)</li> <li>&gt;&gt; Off-Road Mountain Biking (Easy &amp; Moderate)</li> <li>&gt;&gt; On Road (Easy)</li> </ul>  | Recreational Cycling Trail Criteria |

2. All trails will be assessed using the relevant Sport Ireland Criteria. This is to ensure a consistent approach across the island of Ireland.

## **Appendix 2: Responsibility Statement**

To demonstrate the shared responsibility between the visitor and the Blueway Developer the following Responsibility Statement provides a useful basis for adaptation by individual Blueways. This statement relates to water-based trails.

## **Responsibility Statement**

#### YOUR SAFETY ON BLUEWAYS

We aim to provide an enjoyable Blueway experience and will ensure that our actions do not jeopardise your safety and health. We view the responsibility for your safety as one that is shared between you and us. We have taken reasonable measures to minimise but not eliminate all risks. Water sports are adventure sports and as such should be treated with respect.

#### **NEW TO WATER SPORTS?**

Paddling trails on Blueways have been designed with the novice in mind, however, **those with limited skills and experience should use a local Activity Provider.** They will be able to provide:

- >> Appropriate safety equipment and clothing
- >> Appropriate itinerary
- >> Expertise relating to weather and water conditions
- >> Tuition / coaching

In addition, they will be able to add real value to your Blueway experience through their insight into local culture and heritage, places to eat and visit.

#### **PRIOR EXPERIENCE**

If you are undertaking the Blueway without a local Activity Provider, you can help ensure your own safety by:

- >> Take Advice: Make sure you have the necessary skills and experience for the location and the activity, and are aware of your limitations. Consult (website) or Activity Provider.
- >> **Plan:** Plan your trip well in advance. Tell a responsible adult of your intended route and estimated time of return.
- >> Group: It is not recommended to canoe alone 3 boats are the minimum required for most rescues.
- >> **Conditions:** Consult weather forecasts, tides / water levels in advance of your trip. Ensure you are properly equipped for changes in weather.
- Equipment: Carry essential safety equipment spare clothes, extra food, warm drink, form of shelter, First Aid kit, means of communication (VHF radio / mobile phone in a waterproof case), torch and whistle. Always wear a buoyancy aid. Canoe/ craft buoyancy should be enough to keep it afloat if you capsize.
- Emergencies: In the event of emergencies contact 999 or 112 for emergency services. Use VHF Radio Channel 16 to contact Coastguard.

## **Appendix 3: Blueway Management Plan**

Every Blueway project should include the development of a Management Plan. This is good practice for a range of reasons that include:

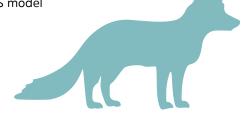
- >>> Blueway management that ensures the safety of users is considered and that trail standards are maintained at a consistent level.
- >> Blueway management that relates directly to the liability of the Blueway Developer. Proper evidence of an implemented Management Plan will reduce the likelihood of the Blueway Developer being found at fault should a claim resulting from injury on the Blueway arise.
- >> Funding many funders will require evidence of a Management Plan that clearly shows how the Blueway Management Group will ensure that the trail(s) project will be managed for a specified period of time, normally the duration for which their Letter of Offer is valid. This provides evidence that there is a procedure in place to ensure that the Blueway is maintained at the standard and for the purpose for which the project was funded.
- >> Partner buy-in a Blueway Management Plan ensures that all project partners are clear about the commitment required to managing the project, once completed. The Plan will also clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners.

#### The Blueway Management Plan should:

- >> Clearly relate to the requirements of the members of the Blueway Management Group.
- >> Be developed by individuals who have an understanding of Blueway management, provision and development within the context of the area.
- >>> Clearly reflect the development process for that Blueway to date.

#### The Trail Management Plan should include (but is not limited to):

- >> Visitor Safety Management Policy and Plan
- >> Biosecurity Plan
- >> Product Inventory (to include all infrastructure)
- >> Maintenance Plan
- >> Risk Assessment and Management Plan
- >> Marketing Plan
- >> Biodiversity Education
- >> Leave no Trace aligned to SCATES model

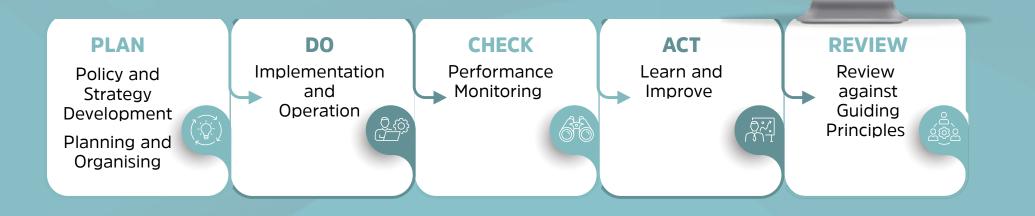


## **Appendix 4: Visitor Safety Management Policy and Plan**

The best practice in this area is outlined within Guiding Principles - Visitor Safety Group. The Blueways Ireland Partnership encourages the adoption of these risk management techniques.

Developed by the Visitor Safety Group the guiding principles and risk management techniques have been developed and implemented by all of its members. They have provided their worth in practice and have been recognised by enforcing authorities and courts, as the basis for sensible risk management.





## **Appendix 4: Visitor Safety Management Policy and Plan** *continued*

## **Protocols and Procedures**

The Visitor Safety Management Policy and Plan should clearly set out the protocols and procedures that will be followed to ensure that the Blueway Provider is meeting the Duty of Care. This will include:

#### The number and content of inspections:

- Inspections will include formal e.g. once a month, or informal e.g. after a storm, an event, or provided via feedback from a user.
- >> All inspections should be recorded including the date, time, who completed the inspection and the action to be taken following the inspection.

#### Who will complete the inspections:

Consideration should be given as to who will complete the inspections. This may include a paid member of staff, volunteers or a company contracted to deliver the service. It is important to consider the skills and experience required to complete inspections and ensure that the person completing the inspection has the necessary skills.

#### Actions resulting from inspections:

- The reporting structure of any inspections must be clearly set out to ensure that action is taken where required. The action required can be prioritised in terms of urgency. For example –
  - > Priority 1 within a day
  - > Priority 2 within a week
  - > Priority 3 within a month
  - > Priority 4 within 3 months
  - > Priority 5 within 6 months

#### For example:

- >>> Missing/ damaged waymarkers/ information or warning signs - Priority 1/ 2
- >> Fallen trees/ branches across trails Priority 1
- >> Waymarkers/information or signs partially obscured by vegetation – Priority 2 /3
- >>> Damage to trail tread Priority 1 to 5, depending on level of damage

In some cases, for example if a tree has fallen across a section of trail (Priority 1), the section of trail will need to be closed and a suitable diversion put in place. This section of trail should remain closed and users informed of this until the tree has been safely removed. A suitable diversion route will need to be put in place and this will also need to be inspected as part of the normal inspection regime of the trail for the duration of the diversion.

#### **Informing Users:**

The procedure for informing Trail Users of any diversions/ trail closures or other trail related issues must be clearly set out in the Management Policy. This should include clear and appropriate signage/ information at the trailhead, online, and at the start of the relevant section. This information should remain in place until the necessary works have been carried out to address the problem. The Management Plan should also identify who is responsible for ensuring the relevant trail information is put in place and removed again once the issue has been resolved. A clear record of the action taken should be kept.

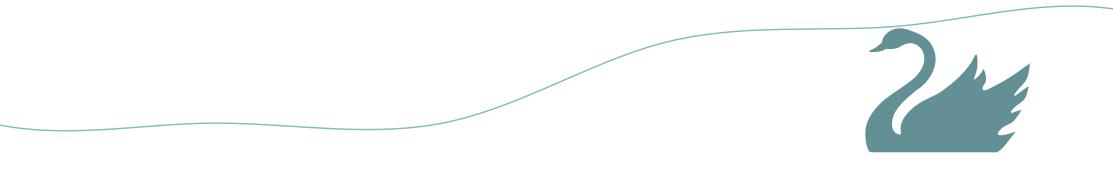
## Appendix 5: Request for Tender (RFT) Samples Introduction

As it is likely Blueway Developers will need to outsource certain elements of their Blueway development plan, this toolkit presents sample specification briefs when contracting external expertise for:

#### >> Feasibility Study

#### >> Launch Marketing Strategy

These sample Requests for Tender (RFTs) will provide you with guidance and an overview of the content you should consider when preparing tender documents; however, you will need to tailor the sample content to the specific needs of your County / Blueway and you should liaise with your procurement section on same.



## Appendix 6: Republic of Ireland Sample RFT -Feasibility Study for for [Blueway name]

## **Requirements and Specifications**

Tenderers must address each of the issues and requirements in this part of the RFT and submit a detailed description in each case which demonstrates how these issues and requirements will be dealt with/met and their approach to the proposed delivery of the services. A mere affirmative statement by the tenderer that it can/will do so, or a reiteration of the tender requirements is NOT sufficient in this regard.

### Introduction / Scope of Requirements

[Developer name] invites tenders from companies and consortia, with relevant experience to examine the feasibility of a Blueway which commences in [insert starting point] and extends to an end point at [insert end point].

The main elements required under this tender are:

- 1. Technical study scope
- 2. Economic appraisal
- 3. Environmental appraisal

A study area map is included in [insert Appendix name].

The Blueway is being developed in line with the Blueway Development and Management Guidelines.

### **Background to this Project**

#### Blueways are defined as:

A network of approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites, based on, and closely linked to the water, together with providers facilitating access to activities and experiences'.

Blueways offer waterscape experiences, in, on or near the water for locals and visitors, using lakes, canals, rivers and coastal environments to walk, cycle, swim, kayak, SUP and engage with nature and heritage.

Blueways are activity experience corridors with water at the core.

The Blueways Ireland brand represents:

- >> Being active in nature
- >> Exploration of waterscapes
- >> Service providers enabling easy access for all
- >> Multi-activity trail options (water and land)
- >> Set within the context of places to stay, eat and go
- >> Enriched by local culture, heritage, arts and visitor attractions
- >> Responsible recreation within the environment

## Appendix 6: Republic of Ireland Sample RFT -Feasibility Study for for [Blueway name] continued

By definition, a Blueway is a network of recreational trails or sites, concentrated within a reasonable travel time within one area / destination. A Blueway Trail *does not have to encompass the entire area/destination*; however, each component trail should offer an attractive proposition in their own right. For example, the 'Lough Derg Blueway' is comprised of several component Blueway trails e.g. 'Portumna Forest Walking Trails' and 'Mountshannon to Holy Island Paddling Trail.'

Blueways will typically include a combination of:

- >> Walking Trails
- >> Cycling Trails off road / segregated trails
- >> Paddling Trails / Sites Canoeing / kayaking / Stand Up Paddleboarding
- >> Snorkelling Trails / Sites
- >> Sailing and Windsurfing Sites may also be included, however, given the needs of the 'Dabbler' this will be included as either Royal Yachting Association Recognised Training Centres or Irish Sailing Training Centres

#### **The Blueway User**

Research has provided clear evidence that the 'Dabbler' or 'Novice' will be the best prospect visitor for Blueways in the Island of Ireland i.e. those that have **little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities.** 

Whether a Blueway user is a member of the community enjoying their local waterway or a visitor exploring a new destination, it is essential the Blueway delivers a memorable experience. Memorable Blueway experiences ideally incorporate nature, heritage, activity and hospitality in scenic, well kept, easily accessed settings.

#### **Blueway Users Expect AWE**

#### Attractive locations

- >> striking waterscape environments: especially important to attract visitors
- >> sheltered waters: not the force of the ocean or the surge of a rapid

Water and land-based activities:

- >> high safety and quality standards
- >> geared towards entry or novice level
- >> guides and instructors to assist
- >> equipment available for hire
- >> opportunities for locals to sample and maintain their involvement

#### **E**clectic Experiences:

- >> historical, cultural experiences nearby
- >> seasonal programmes of activities and events
- >> local dining and accommodation
- >> activity and hospitality packages

It is clear that potential Blueway users are attracted by the proximity to water, however it is evident the preference remains to be alongside water rather than in or on the water. Hence the importance of multi-activity options.

## Appendix 6: Republic of Ireland Sample RFT -Feasibility Study for for [Blueway name] continued

#### **Vision Aim**

The overall vision for [Blueway name] is [outline vision]

### Strategic objectives of [Blueway name]

Blueways have been called out as priority recreational trails for investment under the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future. The strategic objectives guiding the development of the [Blueway name] are:

[the list below is indicative only and some are likely to apply, but you will need to include those that are additional and specific to your Blueway].

- >> To provide land and water-based trails that contribute to individual and community health & well-being.
- >> To drive an increase in visitor numbers, dwell time, spend within [County name] and the wider geographic region.
- >> To provide the catalyst for an increase in collaboration between destinations, industry providers and groups in the area.
- >> To interpret the history and heritage of the area bringing local stories to life in an immersive and engaging manner.

#### **Proposed location**

#### Developer to:

- >> Insert details of the proposed trails together with outline maps.
- >> Indicate local historical, heritage or landscape highlights on or adjacent to the proposed trails.

#### **Project elements**

The development of the feasibility study encompasses three elements.

- 1. Technical study scope
- 2. Economic appraisal
- 3. Environmental

#### **1. Technical study**

The successful tenderer must submit a methodology for the development of the technical study which should include but not be limited to the following steps:

- >> Adherence to the Blueway Management & Development Guide.
- >> Review of planning policy and other policy considerations relating to the proposed Blueway.
- >> Stakeholder consultation with all relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies including, but not limited to: Department of Transport, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Department of Community and Rural Development, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage [other potential consultees: NPWS, OPW, Waterways Ireland, IFI, Coillte, utility providers etc.)
- >> Consult with landowners, property owners and communities regarding access and technical issues.
- >> Identify the physical, environmental and engineering and community constraints.
- >> Prepare drawings and maps of the proposed trails.
- >> Propose locations of necessary services at trailheads and other sections along the route.

## Appendix 6: Republic of Ireland Sample RFT -Feasibility Study for for [Blueway name] continued



The land-based trails should be listed on the Sport Ireland National Trails Register and water-based trails should meet the criteria of the relevant National Governing Body (NGB) and/or Sport Ireland Water Trails criteria.

#### 2. Economic appraisal

The successful tenderer must submit a methodology for the development of the economic appraisal which should include but not be limited to the following steps:

- >> Identify engineering / professional fees associated with the provision and delivery of the Blueway.
- >>> Prepare a costing for the agreed Blueway to include planning, design, construction and development.
- >> Determine projected user numbers.
- >> Present socio-economic business case to support the route. This should outline anticipated direct, indirect and induced economic impacts as well as the social and health benefits to the local community.

#### 3. Environmental appraisal

The successful tenderer must, at a minimum:

- >> Carry out screening for Appropriate Assessment accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Planning and Development Act 2000-2015, and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011)
- >> Undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- >> Conduct a biodiversity and ecological survey of the route options.

#### **Project management**

The project will require a collaborative approach with [Developer name] and all relevant stakeholders. The successful tenderer will demonstrate effective organisation and project management of the process in close collaboration with all stakeholders.

A site visit is a necessary requirement for all applicants prior to tendering. A project briefing will be held at [insert place] on [insert date] for those who wish to discover more about the Blueway prior to submitting a tender.

### **Intellectual Property Rights**

The selected tenderer will be required to provide copyright to [Developer name] for unrestricted and free use of all contract documentation, drawings and maps, all designs produced under this contract, all text, image or multimedia content developed under this contract, any specifications produced and any other project information provided during the course of the project to [Developer name] and / or the company's agents.

### **Tender Requirements**

- >> An outline of the proposed methodology intended to be used in delivering this project.
- >> A project programme of works for completion of each stage and section of the project.
- >> Proposed team to deliver the requirements of the tender
- >> Costings/Budget for each element of the project.

## **Requirements and Specifications**

Tenderers must address each of the issues and requirements in this part of the RFT and submit a detailed description in each case which demonstrates how these issues and requirements will be dealt with/met and their approach to the proposed delivery of the services. A mere affirmative statement by the Tenderer that it can/will do so or a reiteration of the tender requirements is NOT sufficient in this regard.

## Introduction / Scope of Requirements

[Developer name] invites tenders from companies and consortia, with relevant experience for the development of launch marketing campaign for the [Blueway name].

This tender covers marketing and promotional activity for the pre-launch stage, a launch event and the post launch period for a term of six months. Thereafter, the marketing and promotion of the Blueway will be undertaken by [Developer name].

The objective of the launch marketing campaign scheme is to create awareness of and engagement with the [Blueway name] by locals and domestic tourists.

The main elements required under this tender are:

- 1. Develop a digital media strategy including the creation of a website and social media channels (the www.bluewayname.ie and social media handles are already in place)
- 2. Undertake a local marketing communications campaign to create awareness of the Blueway in the lead up to the launch

- 3. Deliver a launch event with invited guests and manage the marketing communications to support the launch event
- 4. Create and deliver a 6-month marketing communications campaign for the post-launch period to target local and domestic Blueway users

## **Background to this Project**

#### Blueways are defined as:

A network of approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites, based on, and closely linked to the water, together with providers facilitating access to activities and experiences'.

Blueways offer waterscape experiences, in, on or near the water for locals and visitors, using lakes, canals, rivers and coastal environments to walk, cycle, swim, kayak, SUP and engage with nature and heritage.

Blueways are activity experience corridors with water at the core.

The Blueways Ireland brand represents:

- >> Being active in nature
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- >> Multi-activity trail options (water and land)
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- >> Enriched by local culture, heritage, arts and visitor attractions
- >> Responsible recreation within the environment

By definition, a Blueway is a network of recreational trails or sites, concentrated within a reasonable travel time within one area / destination. A Blueway Trail *does not have to encompass the entire area/destination;* however, each component trail should offer an attractive proposition in their own right. For example, the 'Lough Derg Blueway' is comprised of several component Blueway trails e.g. 'Portumna Forest Walking Trails' and 'Mountshannon to Holy Island Paddling Trail.'

Blueways will typically include a combination of:

- >> Walking Trails
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- >> Paddling Trails / Sites Canoeing / kayaking / Stand Up Paddleboarding
- >> Snorkelling Trails / Sites
- >> Sailing and Windsurfing Sites may also be included, however, given the needs of the 'Dabbler' this will be included as either Royal Yachting Association Recognised Training Centres or Irish Sailing Training Centres.

#### **The Blueway User**

Research has provided clear evidence that the 'Dabbler' or 'Novice' will be the best prospect visitor for Blueways in Island of Ireland i.e. those that have little to no skills or prior experience in undertaking adventure activities.

Whether a Blueway user is a member of the community enjoying their local waterway or a visitor exploring a new destination, it is essential the Blueway delivers a memorable experience. Memorable Blueway experiences ideally incorporate nature, heritage, activity and hospitality in scenic, well kept, easily accessed settings.

#### **Blueway Users Expect AWE**

#### Attractive locations

- >> striking waterscape environments: especially important to attract visitors
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Water and land-based activities:

- >> high safety and quality standards
- >> geared towards entry or novice level
- >> guides and instructors to assist
- >> equipment available for hire
- >> opportunities for locals to sample and maintain their involvement

#### **E**clectic Experiences:

- >> historical, cultural experiences nearby
- >> seasonal programmes of activities and events
- >> local dining and accommodation
- >> activity and hospitality packages

It is clear that potential Blueway users are attracted by the proximity to water, however it is evident the preference remains to be alongside water rather than in or on the water. Hence the importance of multi-activity options.

#### **Vision Aim**

The overall vision for [Blueway name] is [outline vision]

#### Strategic objectives of [Blueway name]

Blueways have been called out as priority recreational trails for investment under the Programme for Government – *Our Shared Future*. The strategic objectives guiding the development of the [Blueway name] are:

[the list below is indicative only and some are likely to apply, but you will need to include those that are additional and specific to your Blueway]

- >> To provide land and water-based trails that contribute to individual and community health & well-being.
- >> To drive an increase in visitor numbers, dwell time, spend within [County name] and the wider geographic region.
- >> To provide the catalyst for an increase in collaboration between destinations, industry providers and groups in the area.
- >> To interpret the history and heritage of the area bringing local stories to life in an immersive and engaging manner.

#### The specific objectives of this RFT are to:

- 1. Create awareness of and engagement with the Blueway by the local community before the official launch of the Blueway; the aim is to encourage locals to use the Blueway as a local amenity.
- 2. Create awareness of and engagement with the Blueway by domestic visitors immediately after the official launch event; the aim is to position the [Blueway name] as a hook to stimulate domestic tourism in the wider area.

## **Project Stages**

There are four elements associated with the launch marketing campaign for the [Blueway name].

- 1. Develop a digital media strategy
- 2. Implement local marketing communications
- 3. Deliver a launch event
- 4. Implement a 6-month marketing communications campaign to target local and domestic Blueway users

#### 1. Develop a digital media strategy

#### 1.1 Website development

The **www.bluewayname.ie** domain name has been registered. The tenderer is required to create a responsive website for the Blueway that reflects the themes, stories and experience unique to this Blueway.

The website should reflect international best practice in terms of:

- >> Design, Layout and Navigation
- >> Content, imagery and video
- >> Usability
- >> Call to action
- >> Search Engine Optimisation and analytics

The website should be aligned with [insert relevant tourism destination brand].

#### 1.2 Social media platforms

The social media handles for Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube [insert other as relevant] have been registered.

The tenderer will be required to produce and distribute creative digital content and proactively engage across all social media channels for the period [insert timeline – approximately two months pre-launch through to 6 months post-launch]

#### 1.3 Imagery and video bank

The tenderer will be required to create a small number of copyright free photographs and up to three short videos that can be used at this launch stage across marketing communications platforms. The image and video bank will be extended and enhanced post-launch stage.

#### 2. Implement local marketing communications

Create and implement a local marketing communications campaign targeting local and regional broadcast, print and social to include:

- >> Press releases and Photo calls
- >> Traditional and digital advertising (including creative, production and media costs)
- >> Familiarisation media visits with local / regional journalists
- >> Social media activity content, competitions

#### 3. Deliver a launch event

In partnership with [Developer name] the tenderer will be required to organise a launch event to mark the official opening of the [Blueway name].

The tenderer will also be required to manage the media engagement around the launch at a local, regional and national level.

#### 4. Implement a 6-month marketing communications campaign

Building on the local pre-launch and launch event marketing communications campaign, the tenderer will be required to extend the local and regional activities noted under points 2, 3 and 4 above to a national level in order to target domestic holidaymakers.

The national campaign should also include targeting of influencer marketing i.e. organise familiarisation trips with high profile influencers and bloggers and use social media platforms specifically for geo-targeting and demographic/interest targeting.

The successful tenderer, in partnership with [Developer name] will also ensure the Blueway is listed on **www.discoverireland.ie** and domestic marketing activities with Fáilte Ireland are optimised.

#### Note:

While the responses must provide for the four elements outlined above [Developer name], also welcomes alternative / additional innovative recommendations on how best to achieve the communications objectives in the most cost-effective manner.

#### **Project management**

The project will require a collaborative approach with [Developer name] and all relevant stakeholders. The successful tenderer will demonstrate effective organisation and project management of the launch marketing campaign process in close collaboration with all stakeholders.

As part of the proposed project but separate to this tender, [Developer name] will be undertaking an interpretation strategy for the Blueway. It is a requirement of this tender to engage with the company appointed to the development of the interpretation strategy to ensure the brand strategy aligns with the interpretation strategy.



#### **Project Timeline**

[Developer name] envisages that this project will be delivered in the order outlined above and in line the milestones outlined below. Any recommended changes to this order and timeline can be agreed after appointment.

| Milestones  |  |  |
|-------------|--|--|
| Insert date | Issue Tender   |  |
| Insert date | Appointment  |  |
| Insert date | Secure sign off on brand development                         |  |
| Insert date | Design and implement digital media strategy                  |  |
| Insert date | Commence pre-launch marketing communications locally         |  |
| Insert date | Launch event   |  |
| Insert date | 6 month post-launch national campaign                        |  |
| Insert date | Handover of all marketing communications to [Developer name] |  |

#### **Intellectual Property Rights**

The selected tenderer will be required to provide copyright to [Developer name] for unrestricted and free use of all contract documentation, all designs produced under this contract, all text, image or multimedia content developed under this contract, any specifications produced and any other project information provided during the course of the project to [Developer name] and / or the company's agents.

#### **Tender Requirements**

- >> An outline of the proposed methodology intended to be used in delivering this project.
- >> A project programme of works for completion of each stage and section of the project.
- >> Proposed team to deliver the requirements of the tender
- >> Costings/Budget for each element of the project.



THE BLUEWAY PARTNERSHIP COMPRISES:





www.failteireland.ie



www.waterwaysireland.org

www.sportireland.ie



www.tourismni.com



www.sportni.net



