



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Shared Island Dialogue Series

Tourism on the shared island:

Building on past success to create a sustainable future



Event Programme

AGENDA

Time: 20 January 2022, 2:30pm – 4:30pm

Participants: Online civic dialogue event with representatives from North and South

Moderator: Fionn Davenport, travel writer and broadcaster

Format:

14.30 – 14.35 **Opening remarks**

14.35 – 14.40 **Opening Address by** Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin, TD

14.40 – 14.50 **Discussion** with Minister Martin

14.50 – 14.55 **Video – *Ireland*** documentary – the spirit of all-island tourism cooperation

14.55 – 15.40 **Panel 1: 20 Years of tourism cooperation on the island**

Panellists:

- Ruth Andrews, Chief Executive, Incoming Tour Operators Association (ITOA) & Chair, Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC)
- Niall Gibbons, Chief Executive, Tourism Ireland
- Judith Owens MBE, CEO, TBL International (Titanic Belfast, SS Nomadic, Titanic Exhibition Centre)

15.40 – 15.45 **Guest Address** Dr Howard Hastings OBE, Chairman of Hastings Hotels

15.45 – 16.30 **Panel 2: Looking to the future**

Panellists:

- René de Monchy, Chief Executive, Tourism New Zealand
- Paul Kelly, CEO, Fáilte Ireland
- Brenda Morgan MBE, Chair, NI Tourism Alliance

16.30 **Close by Moderator**

Notes for Observers

Shared Island Dialogue series

Thank you for your interest in observing the Shared Island Dialogue on *“Tourism on the shared island: Building on past success to create a sustainable future”* this Thursday, 20 January.

This event is being organised as part of the Shared Island Dialogue series that was launched by the Taoiseach in October 2020 as part of the Government’s Shared Island initiative, which is focused on harnessing the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to support progress and foster trust and understanding between all communities and political traditions on the island. Further information on the Shared Island initiative is available online [here](#).

The Dialogues foster constructive and inclusive civic dialogue on all aspects of a shared future on the island, bringing together people from all communities and traditions, to discuss key concerns, opportunities for cross learning and understanding, and harnessing the full potential of cooperation through the framework of the Good Friday Agreement.

The Dialogues actively seek as broad a range of perspective and experience from civil society on the island as possible and ensure the inclusion of voices that have been under-represented in the Peace Process, including women, young people and new communities on the island.

This Dialogue is the eighth in the Shared Island Dialogue series. Previous Dialogues have focused on the themes of New Generations and New Voices on the Good Friday Agreement; climate and environment; civil society cooperation; equality issues; economic recovery on the island; health cooperation; and the future of education. Reports and videos from previous dialogues are available online [here](#).

The key points from these discussions have also been captured in a composite report: “Looking to a shared future: Report on the Shared Island Dialogue series 2020-2021”, which can be read [here](#).

The Shared Island Dialogue series provides a focus for people to engage on an inclusive basis on a shared future on the island, and a basis for broader and deeper discussions in civil society.

This Dialogue recognises the Government’s commitment to enhance, develop and deepen all aspects of North/South cooperation, including in the area of Tourism. Discussion will focus on the opportunities, as well as challenges, for deeper cooperation on tourism on the island.

There will be a particular focus on the benefits that have been delivered for people through North/South cooperation in the sector through the framework of the Good Friday Agreement including industry and community collaboration on the island and the marketing of the island of Ireland as a destination for tourists overseas.

The Dialogue will also explore avenues for increased cooperation and collaboration into the future including on growing sustainable tourism on the island and how the current circumstances of the pandemic might be an opportunity to develop and grow cross-border on-island tourism.

Please note the Shared Island Dialogue will be recorded and content from the plenary sessions will be posted online to contribute to a broader discourse on a shared island. You can follow the Shared Island Dialogues at www.gov.ie/sharedisland/dialogues.

Event Contributors

Moderator

Fionn Davenport, travel writer and broadcaster



Fionn Davenport is one of Ireland's best known travel writers. He has written dozens of guidebooks for Lonely Planet, including multiple editions of the *Dublin* and *Ireland* guides, and is a regular voice on radio, dispensing travel advice on Today with Claire Byrne on RTE Radio 1.

He has recently taken up a role as Managing Editor with In the Company of Huskies, where he is responsible for Fáilte Ireland's digital content.

Minister

Catherine Martin TD, Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



Originally from Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan, Catherine is the Green Party's Deputy Leader and T.D. for the constituency of Dublin Rathdown since February 2016. After founding the Oireachtas Women's Parliamentary Caucus, she was elected as its inaugural Chair in November 2017.

A graduate from NUI Maynooth and a classical singer, Catherine taught English and Music in St Tiernan's Community School in Dundrum, Dublin, for 16 years prior to being elected to the Dáil. She was a Councillor on Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council from 2014 to 2016, and she served on the boards of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education Training Board, Dundrum and

Stillorgan Colleges of Further Education and St. Tiernan's Community School.

She lives in Dublin with her husband and three children.

Guest Address

Dr Howard Hastings OBE, Chairman of Hastings Hotels



Howard was born and grew up in Belfast. Educated at both secondary and university levels in England, his first job was as a commis chef in the Gresham Hotel in Dublin. Howard holds a law degree, is a chartered accountant, and has an MSc and Honorary Doctorate from Ulster University.

Howard has worked in Hastings Hotel, his family business, since 1989. Aside from the six hotels the family have in Northern Ireland, they also own 50% of the Merrion in Dublin.

At various times in his career, Howard has served on the Board of the Overseas Tourism Marketing Initiative (OTMI) and Tourism Ireland. He has also chaired the NI Hotel Federation, Tourism Northern Ireland, and Visit Belfast. Howard is currently on the Board of Food NI and has also chaired his local independent Preparatory School, Rockport, near Holywood, where he lives.

Howard is married to Philippa and has three grown up children.

Panel 1

20 Years of tourism cooperation on the island

Ruth Andrews, Chief Executive, Incoming Tour Operators Association (ITOA) & Chair, Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC)



With a career spanning over 35 years in Irish tourism, Ruth commenced her tourism career in the Hotel sector as a marketing/sales professional. She established her own tourism marketing/sales consultancy service in the late '90's, providing marketing communications, coaching & mentoring and business development expertise to a wide range of Irish Tourism industry businesses in almost all sectors.

She is Chief Executive for the ITOA – Incoming Tour Operators Association and was appointed Special Advisor to AVEA – The Association of Visitor Experience and Attractions in 2017.

She is currently chairperson of ITIC – Irish Tourism Industry Confederation and in 2020 she was appointed by Government to chair the Tourism Recovery Taskforce and now serves on its Recovery Oversight Group. She is a Director of Tourism Ireland and continues to serve on many industry advisory boards.

Niall Gibbons, Chief Executive, Tourism Ireland



Niall Gibbons is Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland. He oversees the marketing of the island across the world, leading a team of 160-plus in more than 20 markets, whose work is underpinned by sustainable destination marketing principles.

In 2019, over 11 million overseas visitors contributed more than €5.8BN to the island of Ireland economies and supported 325,000 jobs.

Niall has overseen Tourism Ireland's emergence as a leader in digital marketing and led its expansion into new markets like China and the Middle East. He developed ground-breaking partnerships with LucasFilm and HBO which allowed Tourism Ireland to leverage the global success of Star Wars and Game of Thrones and showcase the island overseas in a new way. He led the development of Tourism Ireland's Global Greening initiative, which brought tourism to the heart of St Patrick's Day celebrations across the world. He has been a member of the Covid Tourism Recovery Taskforces in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. The World Economic Forum ranks Ireland 3rd in the world out of 136 countries for 'effectiveness of marketing and branding to attract tourists'.

Niall is a business graduate of Trinity College Dublin and a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland. He is a member of Culture Ireland's Expert Advisory Committee and an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality in Ireland.

Judith Owens MBE, CEO, TBL International (Titanic Belfast, SS Nomadic, Titanic Exhibition Centre)



Judith Owens is CEO at TBL International Ltd, parent company to the award-winning Titanic Belfast, SS Nomadic and the Titanic Exhibition Centre. With experience spanning nearly three decades, Judith is one of UK's the most experienced and established operations management professionals.

Judith has an exceptional track record in the tourism, events and media industries. Titanic Belfast has gone from strength to strength under her leadership, welcoming over 6 million visitors from over 145 countries and winning World's Leading Tourist Attraction at the prestigious 2016 World Travel Awards. Judith has also played a fundamental role in the business' commercial development to include the operation of SS Nomadic (April 2015) and the Titanic Exhibition Centre (September 2015).

Judith currently serves as a board member of Visit Belfast, the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, and the Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance. She also Chairs the Attract Group as part of Hospitality and Tourism Skills (HATS) which is an industry lead collaboration seeking to address labour supply and skills issues within the sector, and previously the Association for Visitor Experiences and Attractions in Ireland (AVEA), she is passionate about advancing tourism on the Island of Ireland.

She never loses sight of her ambassadorial role in driving the tourism sector and its valuable contribution to the NI economy. She chaired the Ireland Tourism Recovery Task Force and played an active role as a key member of the NI Tourism Recovery Steering Group, set up in 2020 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Judith was awarded an MBE for services to tourism in the Queen's 2022 New Year's Honours.

Judith was named Chief Executive of Titanic Belfast in December 2017, following on from her time as Director of Operations and Deputy CEO since opening in 2012. Prior to this she was Head of Operations and House Manager at the Waterfront and Ulster Hall for 14 years.

With experience spanning nearly three decades, unrivalled knowledge of the tourism and events industry and an exceptional track record, Judith's leadership, commitment and expertise has seen Titanic Belfast go from strength to strength, welcoming over 6 million visitors from 145 countries, winning 'World's Leading Tourist Attraction' at the World Travel Awards and seeing the attraction contribute £360m in additional spend back into the NI economy to date.

She led further commercial development by establishing TBL International as a management company overseeing the introduction of heritage ship SS Nomadic and exhibition venue TEC Belfast, into its operational portfolio. In 2019, Judith successfully attracted HBO's Game of Thrones: The Touring Exhibition to Belfast, spearheading the planning and operation of the exhibition during its six-month run, working tirelessly with industry to further establish NI as the 'Home of Thrones'. She is also an enthusiastic and key collaborator in the wider development of Titanic Quarter, enhancing it to attract visitors and investors.

Outside of her position at TBL International, Judith is currently serving on the board of Visit Belfast, Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA UK), NI Tourism Alliance (NITA), and previously the Association for Visitor Experiences and Attractions in Ireland (AVEA), she is passionate about advancing tourism on the Island of Ireland.

She was Chair of Tourism NI's 'China Ready' industry development programme and Chair of the ROI strategy review taskforce, while also played an active role as a key member of the NI Tourism Recovery Working Group, set up in 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19 on the NI tourism and hospitality sector.

Her ethos of nurturing people and talent inspired her as a co-founder of Hospitality and Tourism Skills (HATS), a collaborative network set up to attract and retain talent in the sector.

Judith is passionate about inclusive tourism, having previously chaired Adapt NI, and is an ambassador for accessibility working selflessly with charities such as Autism NI, Royal National Institute of Blind People and NOW Group to ensure tourism venues are inclusive to all, including minority and community groups. She has established a long-term relationship with the learning disability charity, Orchardville, providing opportunities to work at Titanic Belfast and remains devoted to our maritime heritage, advocating it through community engagement and outreach at every opportunity.

Panel 2

Looking to the future

René de Monchy, Chief Executive, Tourism New Zealand



René de Monchy joined Tourism New Zealand in August 2015 bringing 20 years' global experience in consumer-led businesses including local and international marketing roles for Fonterra and Heineken and Asia Pacific Breweries in Singapore.

René was appointed Chief Executive of Tourism New Zealand in April 2021, prior to this he was Tourism New Zealand's Interim Chief Executive for four months. Before this, René was Tourism New Zealand's Director Commercial. In this role René led a team across 15 offices in 14 countries responsible for identifying key markets and audiences to target for travel to New Zealand. René also led the development of Tourism New Zealand's Aviation Strategy to guide partnerships with international airlines including establishing Memorandum of Understandings with major airlines including Air New Zealand.

Paul Kelly, CEO, Fáilte Ireland



Paul Kelly has been the Chief Executive of Fáilte Ireland since 2017. Paul is leading Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority, through the deepest crisis ever for our country's tourism industry and our largest source of employment.

His work is to ensure survival, enable reopening and reimagine a different future post-Covid. The future will build on Fáilte Ireland's previous successes including the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands, the Dublin brand refresh and The Gathering.

Paul's leadership has led Fáilte Ireland to be listed in the top 20 best large organizations to work in and is the only public sector body on this list. In 2020 Paul was named as Ireland's Most Trusted Leader by Great Places to Work.

Before his appointment as CEO of Fáilte Ireland, Paul held several management and marketing leadership roles. Raised in a small retail family business, he began his career with Procter & Gamble UK. Paul then went on to senior executive positions with Diageo Ireland, Aviva and the UCD Smurfit Business School.

Paul Kelly is a native of Co. Wexford and a Commerce graduate from University College Dublin. He is married and has four children.

Brenda Morgan MBE, Chair, NI Tourism Alliance



Brenda Morgan MBE has over 30 years' experience of business development and commercial relationships in the aviation industry. As Head of Business Development at the City of Derry Airport she is responsible for sales and marketing working closely with trade, corporate and industry partners. Brenda has extensive experience in the domestic and international markets as a senior manager in BMI for over 20 years and more recently British Airways, working in collaboration with their partners American Airlines and Iberia.

Brenda was responsible for working with key stakeholders within the Travel and Tourism Industry reaching across the public and private sector and was elected on the council for the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry for 8 years. She was awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List for her Services to Economic Development to Northern Ireland in 2016. A founding member and Chair of NI Tourism Alliance since 2018, representing the Tourism Industry, providing a single and unified voice supporting the sustainable growth of the industry.