



1. Vision

To promote County Wicklow as a tourism destination and to support the development and diversification of the tourism and recreational product in an environmental and sustainable way.

2. Context

For the period 2000-2006, the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation proposed a new direction and strategic approach to national tourism policy. The states main role will be to:

- Promote better spatial development
- To preserve the environment and existing tourist assets through the use of grant supports and targeted tax incentives.
- Funding supports to focus more on integrated programmes rather than a project by project basis.
- Promote more self reliance in the private sector.

The following bodies currently deliver tourism policies and aim to strengthen Irelands position as a high quality tourist destination of choice:

- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (NSS)
- Tourism Ireland Limited
- National Tourism Development Authority
- Fáilte Ireland

County Wicklow forms part of the Eastcoast and Midlands Tourism Authority's region. This authority is involved in the production of Tourism Development Plans at regional and county level, providing planning inputs and research to Regional and Local Authorities. They also provide marketing advisory services to the tourism industry and co-ordinate seasonal surveys as part of national tourism programmes.

Wicklow County Tourism is a marketing company promoting County Wicklow as a tourism destination.

3. Strategy

Wicklow has compelling advantages as a destination and centre for tourism and recreational activities. Its core comprises the greatest mountain mass in Ireland, with granite peaks, wide valleys and lakes. The northern stretch of coastline offers some of the best sea angling in Europe. The southern coastline possesses long stretches of gently sloping sandy beaches and dunes. Taken together, the mountains and coastline provide a unique, attractive and varied landscape, which is largely unspoilt. Given its close proximity to international ports and airports in Dublin and Wexford, there is great potential for exploiting this market for the benefit of the County by expanding the availability of accommodation for tourists. In addition, Wicklow's location proximate to the Dublin Region is ideally located to benefit economically from the day-tripper, the foreign visitor and the "stay over" visitor markets. However, proposals for tourist orientated developments such as hotels, guest houses, camping

and caravan facilities, cafes, restaurants and retail outlets, must be controlled to preserve the character and scenic amenity of the county.

4. Policy

4.1 – TOURISM

4.1.1 – ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The Council recognises the importance of co-operation with appropriate agencies, in promoting sustainable tourism and securing the development of tourist orientated facilities in the County.

Policy T&R 1: The Council will encourage the development of the tourist industry through the use of its statutory powers (where appropriate) to promote Co. Wicklow as a tourist destination in co-operation with Fáilte Ireland, the Eastcoast and Midlands Tourism Authority and Wicklow County Tourism Ltd.

4.1.2 – TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE

The Council will encourage the promotion of County Wicklow to enable it reach its full tourism potential and facilitate the provision of necessary infrastructure. The Council will encourage the further development of infrastructure in the County from a tourism perspective placing particular emphasis on traffic flow, improved sign posting, car parking facilities and information signs.

Policy T&R 2: It is the policy of the Council to encourage and assist in the provision of adequate recreational and tourism infrastructure and to further develop existing tourism and recreational infrastructure in the County.

Policy T&R 3: The Council will assist in the provision and maintenance of picnic area facilities along tourist routes and adjacent to rural tourist attraction car parks

Policy T&R 4: Wicklow County Council will locate a map in each town and village displaying a street plan and places of historical importance at a strategic location in the interest of tourism.

4.1.3 – CONTROL OF TOURIST RELATED DEVELOPMENT

Great care must be taken with such proposals to ensure that they do not destroy the qualities which visitors and tourists come to the area to enjoy. Thus, one of the major issues facing the Council is how to encourage the further development of tourism and the promotion of tourist attractions within the county whilst retaining its largely unspoilt rural character and maintaining the other qualities which make Wicklow an attractive experience for tourists and residents alike.



The Council will adopt an approach of promoting the growth of tourism whilst having due regard to the environment which is the basic attraction and setting for all of Wicklow's tourist activities. By preserving and improving the quality of the environment, the County can be assured of retaining a viable sustainable and healthy tourist industry.

A policy of sustainable tourism development is therefore required which will leave the physical and social environment undiminished, and ideally enhanced, as a resource for future enjoyment. Sustainable tourism provides a high quality product based on, and in harmony with, a high quality natural environment. It minimises adverse impacts on local communities, our built heritage, landscapes, habitats and species while supporting social and economic prosperity.

Policy T& R5: The Council will continue to permit development, including tourist related development, in such a manner as to conserve and enhance the built and natural environment, thereby securing the future of a sustainable tourist industry in the county.

4.1.4 – RURAL TOURISM

Rural development aims to provide the maximum number of people with access to employment and income, basic provision of public goods and services and a viable rural community and social life.

Like any industry, tourism has its disadvantages as well as its advantages. When operating to its greatest capacity, it attracts significant visitor spending in the local economy, creates employment and assists investment. On the other hand there can be disbenefits ranging from traffic congestion and parking problems, to the commercialisation of historic and attractive environments. Pressure to provide tourist orientated facilities to meet the needs of visitors and tourists also creates particular problems. Proposals for tourist orientated developments such as hotels, guest houses, camping and caravan facilities, cafes, restaurants and retail outlets are not always compatible with the character and scenic amenity of the area.

County Wicklow has a good opportunity to establish itself as a prime location for rural tourism holidays. There is a well organised strong sense of identity and a wide range of interesting special interest and other attractions that can be further developed for tourists while also maintaining and preserving the rural character, visual amenity and scenic views of the open countryside. Examples of such activities are on-farm tourist accommodation and supplementary activities such as health farms, cookery/painting schools, best practice organic farming, equestrian tours thereby promoting people to stay longer in the County.

Policy T& R6: The Council will promote rural tourism in an environmentally sustainable manner in order to benefit the employment and development of rural areas.

Policy T& R7: The Council will give favourable consideration to alternative types of rural tourist activities such as alternative farm enterprises, agri-tourism, green/eco tourism, farm holidays, farm foods, craft work and other rural craft type activities.

4.2 – POLICY: RECREATION

4.2.1 – RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Council recognises the need for the provision of recreational amenity facilities in the County and the need to ensure a balance is maintained between sporting recreational activity in County Wicklow and safeguarding the environment.

Policy T& R8: The Council will promote and develop recreation and leisure opportunities within the natural environment within the principles of sustainable development.

Policy T& R9: The Council will give favourable consideration to the development of leisure or recreational facilities that are activity orientated and which involve the appropriate use of parklands, disused mineral workings, water resources, forests and woodlands and where such proposals accord with proper planning and sustainable development. The Council will assist in the provision and maintenance of picnic area facilities along tourist routes and adjacent to rural tourist attraction car parks.

4.2.2 – WALKING ROUTES

Wicklow County provides the visitor with 1,250 square kilometres, 320 square kilometres of which are over 1,000m altitude, of beautiful nature to be explored. The first trail in Ireland, the Wicklow Way, was opened in 1981, and routes in Wicklow are still generally uncrowded. The St. Kevin's Way was opened in 2001 and runs from Hollywood to Glendalough in the heart of the Wicklow Mountains National Park.

There are opportunities to enjoy walks along the coast or rivers, through the forests and mountains. There are miles of old coach roads, disused military supply lines, old bog roads, nature trails, sandy strands, world class heritage gardens and mountain paths in County Wicklow. These all provide a variety and interest for walking to be further developed as a recreational activity in Wicklow.

Policy T&R 10: The Council will co-operate with representative bodies in order to support the development of walking routes throughout the County in an environmentally sustainable way.



4.2.3 – MORE EXTENSIVE USE OF COASTAL STRIP

Over one third of the 48km county coastline is fringed in soft golden sand, and thousands of visitors travel to these beaches during the summer. Brittas Bay, Arklow, Clogga, Jack's Hole, Silver Strand and Magheramore Beach are among the best beaches on the East Coast. North of Wicklow town, the coastline is a mixture of shingle and sand. Newcastle and Kilcoole have lovely walks on the grassy banks along the fore-shore. Bray and Greystones are twin resorts on the northern shoreline, which still retain the Victorian charm that has ensured their popularity since the 19th century.

Policy T&R 11: The Council will promote, in co-operation with the various relevant organisations, the more extensive use of the coastal strip for such activities as touring, sight-seeing, walking, pony trekking, etc. as a tourism resource and as a recreational resource for the residents of County Wicklow and other visitors.

5. Development Control Objectives

5.1 – TOURISM LAND USE MATRIX

The Council will have regard to the Tourist Land Use Matrix described in Table 11.1 in assessing the suitability of any proposed tourist development.

Permitted in Principle: Permitted in principle is defined as those uses that are normally considered acceptable. The Council shall seek to ensure development of lands in accordance with the policies set out in the Plan, however, it should not be assumed that if a proposed development complies with the matrix table that it would be necessarily accepted. The implementation of the land use objectives is dependent upon the provision/implementation of the necessary infrastructure. In addition, factors such as density, height, traffic generation, design criteria and physical environment factors will also be considered in establishing whether or not a development proposal conforms to the proper planning and development of the area.

Open for Consideration: Land uses indicated as “Open for Consideration” are uses that are not considered acceptable in principle and will only be permitted in special cases where the Council is satisfied that the use would not conflict with the general objectives of the zone and permitted or existing uses as well as being in the interests of the proper planning and development of the area.

Not Permitted: Land uses that are not classified as “Permitted in Principle” or “Open for Consideration” will not be permitted.

Where conflicts occur between the coastal management zone and the area of outstanding natural beauty the coastal management zone designations will apply.

Table 11.1 Tourism Land Use Matrix

Y: Permissible in Principle O: Open for Consideration

X: Not Permissible

Tourist Use	Outstanding Natural Beauty Zone	Special Amenity Zone	Rural Zone	Corridor Zone	Coastal Zone	Town Village
Tourist Attractions or Services						
Fun Parks	o	o	o	o	x	y
Equestrian Centres	o	o	o	o	x	y
Skirmish Parks	o	o	o	o	x	x
Golf Courses	o	o	o	o	o	y
Driving Ranges	o	o	o	o	o	y
Activity Centres	o	o	o	o	x	y
Specialist Activities ³²	o	o	o	o	x	y
Leisure Facilities ³³	o	o	o	o	o	y
Permanent Self-Catering Accommodation						
Static Caravans	x	x	x	o	x	y
Holiday Homes	x	x	o	o	o	y
Self catering Units at Existing Hotel / Tourist Accommodation Facilities	o	o	o	y	o	y
Hostels	o	o	o	o	o	y
Touring Self catering Accommodation						
Touring Caravans	x	o	o	o	x	y
Camping Facilities	x	o	o	o	x	y
Catered Accommodation						
Guest Houses	o	o	o	y	o	y
Hotels/Country Houses	o	o	o	y	o	y
Other						
Change of use and Extension of Dwelling	o	o	y	y	o	y
Extension and Intensification of Established Rural Tourist Activities	o	o	y	y	o	y
Tourist Use of Unused Abandoned Buildings	o	o	y	y	o	y

5.1.1 – RECREATION DEVELOPMENT IN AMENITY AREAS

The Council will promote and encourage the recreational use of coastline, rivers and lakes for activities such as game fishing, boat sailing etc. Where such recreational uses involve the development of structures or facilities, the Council will ensure that the proposals will respect the natural amenity and character of the area, listed views and prospects onto and from the area in question. Where possible, such structures should be set back an appropriate distance from the actual amenity itself and should not adversely affect the unique sustainable quality of these resources.

³² Specialist activities would include open farms, rare breed livestock farming, traditional handicrafts, folk museums, agricultural museums, working mills, sailing, specialist schools, falconry, shooting ranges/clay Pigeon, quad biking etc

³³ Leisure facilities would include feature activities such as swimming pools, gymnasiums, ski slopes etc



5.2 – TOURIST ACCOMMODATION

The Council will continue to secure the growth of a varied accommodation market, providing for both the traditional tourist and the holiday home market. Particular encouragement will be given to the construction of new hotels given the recognised shortage of bed spaces within the County. The Council will look favourably upon the location of such accommodation in existing settlements.

Particular encouragement will be given to the use of abandoned or under utilised buildings, outbuildings and upper floors for tourist accommodation within existing settlements. All tourist accommodation developments will be expected to meet the tourist accommodation standards outlined in Section 6.

The Council will consider the development of self catering tourist accommodation adjacent to and ancillary to existing hotels.

5.3 – HOLIDAY HOME DEVELOPMENT

The Council will generally only consider holiday home accommodation in the rural landscape zone, the corridor zone, or the coastal zone where such development is ancillary to an established integrated well-developed rural tourism facility. Where such holiday homes are allowed, the Council will require that the entire development remain in single ownership, shall not be sold individually or leased out for long term periods and that they shall be available for short term holiday use only.

5.4 – TOURIST ACCOMMODATION IN TOWNS AND VILLAGES

The Council will ensure that the development of permanent holiday homes in towns and villages should not seriously interfere with residential or other amenities. Single one off holiday homes will not be permitted. Where such holiday homes are allowed, the Council will require that the entire development remain in single ownership, shall not be sold individually or leased out for long term periods and that they shall be available for short term holiday use only.

Applications for permanent holiday homes which are of a size and scale as to adversely dominate the existing scale, character, vitality and size of the village will be discouraged.

5.5 – ON-FARM TOURISM ACCOMMODATION

The Council will support rural tourism and the provision of on-farm tourism accommodation including holiday accommodation by farmhouse extension, by the utilisation of other existing dwellings on the property or by the construction of new holiday accommodation. Any such new built tourist accommodation should be proximate to the farmhouse. The farmer shall retain ownership of the tourist accommodation, which shall be available for short-term tourist letting only.

5.6 – OTHER TOURIST ACCOMMODATION ADJACENT TO PUBLIC HOUSES

The Council will support rural tourism and the provision of tourism accommodation by public house extensions in rural areas or by the construction of new holiday accommodation adjacent to and within the ownership of the public house which

- A. Must be part of an integrated rural tourism plan that is based upon a substantive and integrated rural dependent tourist package
- B. Must be proximate to the public house
- C. Must only be available for short term tourist letting and
- D. The public house owner shall retain ownership of the tourist package

5.7 – CARAVAN AND CAMPING OBJECTIVES

The Council will encourage touring caravan and camping sites to locate adjacent to or within existing settlements, having due regard to surrounding land uses and the proper planning and development of the area. The Council will ensure that there is an adequate distribution of touring caravan locations throughout the county, avoiding a concentration in one area.

The Council will permit the development of touring caravan and camping sites in areas where the local environment can absorb such development. Sites should have significant existing natural screening. All proposals should be accompanied by comprehensive planting schemes. In particular, the Council will discourage touring caravans from locating on the actual amenity which attracted them to the area in the first instance in order to protect the interpretation and tourist value of the site in question.

The upgrading of existing static caravan parks to holiday home developments will be favoured. The Council will discourage static caravan parks because of their visual impact and their lack of contribution to the county's economic base. In particular the Council will ensure that no additional caravan parks will be permitted at Brittas Bay, Silver Strand or Clogga in order to maintain the recreational capacity of the coastline and to preserve the scenic amenity of these areas.

5.8 – TOURIST FACILITIES OR TOURIST SERVICES OBJECTIVES

The Council will consider favourably the provision of dining and/or leisure facilities in association with tourist accommodation (other than Bed and Breakfast accommodation).

The Council will encourage new developments that provide facilities and services for travelling tourists (such as garages, shops, cafes, filling stations etc) to locate within existing settlements or at zoned locations at grade separated junctions on the N11 or at existing tourist enterprises (i.e. existing open farms, rural activity centres)



5.9 – INTEGRATED TOURISM/LEISURE/RECREATIONAL COMPLEX

The Council will encourage the development of major integrated tourism/leisure/recreational complexes on lands, which incorporate existing and proposed facilities as identified below:

Map 27: It is the specific policy of Wicklow County Council to provide for the development of the integrated tourism/leisure recreation complex at Brook Lodge, Macreddin West, Aughrim, Co.Wicklow.

It is the Council policy to encourage appropriate further development of the existing facility and to promote the development as one of the premier tourism and leisure complexes in the country.

In particular the County Council will support the further development of the complex by the development of a golf course and appropriate additional accommodation, including the development of 22 private dwelling homes on lands associated with the complex, provided they are of a high quality design and situated on appropriate sites. Provided that the dwelling homes are developed in conjunction with the golf course or other tourism facilities, the Council will not restrict the ownership or occupancy of these dwellings.

Map 31: Druids Glen Golf Club, Woodstock Demesne

Map 32: Model World, Newtownmountkennedy

Map 33: Ballynattin, Arklow

Map 34: Rathallagh House, Rathallagh Golf Club, Dunlavin

Other locations for integrated tourist/leisure/recreational projects will be considered on their merits having regard to the following criteria:

- Accessibility from the east and west corridors
- Accessibility to primary growth centres and/or centres of population
- Proximity to designated tourism/visitor areas
- An adequate site area to accommodate a range of integrated tourist/leisure/recreational activities

An integrated tourism/leisure/recreational complex should include a number of the following:

- Hotel and associated facilities, conference centre, golf course, equestrian centre, trekking centre, fitness centre, indoor/outdoor water facility, fishing facility, multi-purpose facility, indoor/outdoor ski centre, cineplex, model world, scientazia, children’s museums, nature trails, walking routes and associated facilities.

It may also include tourist related residential and leisure retail which is ancillary to the main tourist attraction. The tourist related residential development shall be retained in single company ownership and shall not be sold off individually and/or be the subject of a concise legal management contract which meets the objectives of the zoning.

An overall planning application will be required for the entire complex which will include proposals, where appropriate, for:

- The preservation/conservation of natural amenities on the site,
- The preservation/conservation of the heritage structures on the site,
- The retention of the open nature of the lands
- Significant and intensive landscaping of the site
- A phasing plan for the provision of the proposed facilities, together with any necessary guarantees in regard to the provision of such facilities

Such a development will not generally be considered in the area as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.10 – PLACES OF RETREAT, STUDY, CONTEMPLATION, MEDITATION AND PHILOSOPHICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ARTISTIC EDUCATION AND DISCUSSION

The Council will encourage the opening up of private estates to the public by facilitating the development of places of Retreat, Study, Contemplation, Meditation and Philosophical, Theological and Artistic Education and Discussion on lands that incorporate existing or proposed facilities including the estate at Derrybawn House, Laragh (see Map 23). Other locations may also be considered.

A place of Retreat, Study, Contemplation, Meditation and Philosophical, Theological and Artistic Education and Discussion may include a number of the following facilities:

- Ancillary residential accommodation, meeting/seminar facilities, education facilities and restaurant/dining facilities
- Passive leisure areas, walking routes and pathways, landscaped gardens for meditation and contemplation

Any development of such estates should have regard to the following criteria within an overall planning application:

- Proximity to existing tourism/visitor areas
- An adequate site area to provide the appropriate facilities without comprising the existing attractions of the location.
- The preservation of the character of the existing landscape.

Any development, including ancillary residential shall be retained in single or common ownership and/or shall be the subject of a concise legal management contract that ensures the continued future appropriate maintenance and management of the property.



6. Tourist Accommodation Standards

The following standards shall be used when assessing any application for tourist accommodation:

Caravan and Camping Developments

1. Sites accommodating caravans should have good access to the National Primary and National Secondary Roads (but not necessarily be capable of directly assessing them unless located within the speed limit and be sited adjacent to public roads of adequate width, capacity and visibility i.e roads not less than 5m in carriageway width)
2. Design and layout should be of a high standard ensuring that the mass of the structures are broken up by imaginative layouts, suitable planting and well located communal areas such as toilet or shower blocks and common open spaces. The requirement of the Department of the Environment's "Model Standards for Camping Sites" (1980) and Bord Failtes's "Guidelines for Development of Caravan and Camping Sites"
3. A grant of permission for a caravan park will not imply, unless otherwise stated in the permission, a grant of permission for additional facilities such as a shop, café, restaurant or building for other commercial purposes.
4. Services: Sites should normally be accessible to existing local services and public utilities, but should not adversely affect them. All sites should also have scavenging and electricity services.
5. Amenity: The overall level of development in any one area should not detract from the amenity presently enjoyed by local residents. No such sites should be located immediately adjacent to existing residential properties or be overlooked by the same
6. Landscaping where trees are to provide essential screening for a proposed caravan site, the Planning Authority will require that these are already well established. Any new planting should only be necessary to reinforce existing substantial tree cover and not to compensate for a lack of existing cover. A boundary hedge or single line of trees will normally be sufficient site screening. New planting should normally comprise indigenous species and a comprehensive and detailed landscaping scheme, prepared by an appropriately qualified professional, should be submitted with any application.
7. Public lighting should be on low-level posts and of low intensity.

Holiday Homes

1. The design of holiday homes should be of a high standard, incorporating imaginative layouts, well laid out communal open spaces, landscaping as prepared by an appropriately qualified person, sufficient private space and parking facilities for each individual unit. The design of the units themselves should be imaginative, of a high quality and respect the character of the area in which they are located. Favourable consideration will generally not be given to detached suburban type developments-courtyard type developments will be particularly encouraged. Site features such as hedgerows, trees etc should be maintained wherever possible and services such as public lighting, scavenging etc should also be included in any development.
2. It will be a requirement of the Planning Authority that any proposal for a holiday home development should be accompanied by an agreement that indicates that the entire development remain in single ownership, shall not be sold individually or leased out for long term periods or as a time share or similar agreement. The use of holiday homes as permanent residential units will not be permissible, nor their sale for use as individual holiday homes. It will be a condition that this agreement is entered into for all such development.
3. A management company will be required to maintain for the upkeep of holiday home developments in particular with respect to landscaping and the maintenance of communal buildings.
4. A management company will also be required to maintain and repair any private effluent treatment plant. A Discharge License may be required in instances where the final effluent is being discharge to watercourses or the sea. It will be a condition of any permission that legal documentation be submitted which satisfactorily complies with this requirement prior to the commencement of any development.