



nita

northern ireland
tourism alliance

Tourism: A Force for Good

the voice for tourism in northern ireland

nitourismalliance.com





With members across all sectors of the tourism economy, NITA is the voice for tourism in Northern Ireland.

Our role is to shape policy based on industry insights and expertise to create the environment for tourism to thrive.

Message from our Leadership Board

Judith Owens MBE
Chair of NITA



Since its formation in 2018 NITA has been raising the profile of Northern Ireland and the needs of our Tourism Economy across the UK, Ireland and beyond.

Joanne Stuart OBE
CEO of NITA



As an industry-led body we put the long-term sustainability and prosperity of the Tourism Economy at our core, and work towards ensuring Northern Ireland is an attractive, engaging and accessible destination.

Since our foundation, NITA has concentrated on the following issues:

- Achieving recognition of tourism as a key economic driver.
- Raising importance of NI Tourism Economy through engagement with the NI Assembly, UK and Irish Houses of Parliament.
- Securing an increased marketing budget for the NI tourism offer.
- Gaining membership of UK Tourism Industry Council, UK Tourism Industry Emergency Response Group, Home Office All Advisory Committee and raising the profile and challenges for tourism in NI.
- Highlighting the need for flexibility within immigration policy to meet the unique requirements we face in NI through engagement with the Migration Advisory Committee.
- Taking a leading role in supporting industry through Covid 19 through making the case for financial support, keeping members updated, representing tourism on the Ministerial Tourism Recovery Steering Group, working with Covid Taskforce to put forward reopening plans, developing guidance and inputting to regulations.
- Achieving reduction on domestic APD by 50% and continuing to lobby for APD to be abolished.
- Working with tourism across the UK to secure 5% VAT rate during the pandemic.
- Increasing visitor numbers from the RoI market.
- Working with industry to put sustainability front and centre of our agenda.

This document sets out our strategic goals for the future, lays the foundations for success and ensures that the industry continues to grow and reach its potential.

Tourism: A Force for Good

Sustainably creating economic
growth and social impact



THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF TOURISM FOR THE ECONOMY

Tourism is a primary instrument of job creation, sustainable development and well-being.

In 2019, Tourism contributed over £1bn in direct revenue to the economy, 70% of which was generated by visitors from outside of Northern Ireland. In addition Tourism supported over 70,000 jobs. 2022 has seen a return in some sectors of the tourism economy to 2019 levels.

EXPORT

Tourism is different to other export sectors as visitors spend while here on holiday or attending business events, and therefore money is recycled within the local economy straight away. This is in addition to the locally generated salaries and additional benefits through local supply chain usage.

RESILIENT

Tourism has proved to be one of the most resilient and successful parts of the local economy, surpassing return on investment made in other industrial sectors and out-pacing the average in job creation. Growth in tourism generates growth in other sectors such as transport, food producers, hospitality, retail, all while delivering meaningful benefit to the whole of Northern Ireland.

Tourism was one of the sectors most impacted by the pandemic and is now building back while having to deal with the increasing cost of doing business, a competitive labour market and changing consumer behaviours.

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF TOURISM FOR SOCIETY

Tourism is an exciting and dynamic industry which brings many social benefits. Attracting visitors brings spend, jobs and infrastructure directly into communities and helps to preserve and celebrate the local culture and heritage. Developing experiences for visitors leads to the provision of additional local services and provides opportunities for entrepreneurship and diversification as well as creating pathways into work for those furthest from the job market.

PLACEMAKING

Tourism creates a positive reputation for NI as a destination to visit, work, invest in and live through the creation of an inspiring and authentic brand. One that encompasses the quality and excellence of our experiences and world class attractions alongside our growing conference and events sector.

ATTRACT VISITORS

Our innovative tourism businesses adapt and develop products and services that ensure there are many opportunities for visitors to have authentic, quality experiences encouraging longer stays and increased spend.

CREATING LASTING MEMORIES

Our experiences leave a long-lasting impression on visitors. They turn visitors into ambassadors for NI, encouraging others to visit this inspiring destination.

NITA Priorities

NITA has identified the key areas that will support and shape the future growth of the Tourism Economy; these are our areas of focus, and the areas we want to see included in any future strategy.

Our membership is clear that **sustainability** is at the heart of this. We can only plan for the future, grow and prosper if we ensure our position as a sustainable destination with sustainable practice at the core of how we do business.

Our aim is for NI to be recognised globally as a sustainable destination. We are working with our members to create a co-ordinated approach and message on our sustainability and accessibility credentials.

Appropriate transport links, working conditions and consumer choice play a huge part in this.

BUT... to ensure we continue to reap the benefits of our Tourism Economy we need a funded Tourism Strategy that maximises the regenerative nature of tourism



COMPETITIVENESS

We are in a situation of unprecedented cost increases, in an economy which is still recovering from the devastation of the pandemic. Therefore, supporting businesses to remain competitive is critical.

We are calling for action in the following areas to ensure the long-term survival of our Tourism Economy.

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Government investment supporting businesses to recover from the effects of the pandemic, meet increasing costs and develop/adapt product.

PROMOTION

Continued and increased investment in promoting NI as a destination to our key markets.

TAXES

Recognition by UK Government of the disadvantages faced by NI through the removal of APD on domestic flights and a reduced VAT rate for Tourism services.

LEGISLATION

Update the NI Tourism Order to reflect the needs of a modern market.

ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY

Our geographical reality of being on an island off an island with no road or rail links to GB and Europe must be considered. Access into Northern Ireland, and the ability to travel easily and seamlessly throughout the Island of Ireland, is critical to the industry's growth and prosperity, which is why NITA are calling for action on the following issues.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

The removal of EU ID cards as a valid form of identity and the introduction of electronic travel authorisations for non-visa nationals travelling to the UK will adversely impact on the 70% of overseas visitors that travel to NI via RoI. We are calling for an exemption on those entering NI via the land border.

ACCESS

Additional direct air routes to NI from EU & GB are needed to allow the conditions for sustainable growth.

CONNECTIVITY

More regular rail and bus connections between Dublin and NI and a joined-up approach to infrastructure investment and development across the island of Ireland is needed to cement our offering as a sustainable destination.

SKILLS

People are the cornerstone of the sector and one of our greatest strengths. We need to ensure skills and staffing levels in order to provide our visitors with the warm welcome and fantastic service they have come to expect. Prior to COVID the sector faced a number of challenges which need to be addressed to ensure we maintain these high standards.

INVEST IN TALENT AND SKILLS

The impact of the pandemic has exacerbated many of the skills issues faced and accelerated the need to provide long term stability in this regard. We need government action to address staffing in the industry.

FLEXIBLE IMMIGRATION POLICY

With almost full employment in our labour market, Tourism relies on attracting skills from outside of NI and NITA is calling for more flexibility in how UK immigration policy is implemented here.

PARTNERSHIP

We are working closely with HATS to drive forward the skills agenda

RESEARCH AND DATA

Tourism businesses cannot plan or provide evidence to show the return on investment of funding without robust and credible data produced in a timely manner. This is an absolute necessity in order to record and report the positive economic and societal benefits of Tourism to Northern Ireland.

AN ANNUAL TOURISM BAROMETER

Will be produced by NITA bringing together different sources of data and industry insights.

A GVA FIGURE FOR THE TOURISM ECONOMY

NITA will work with the government to produce a GVA figure for the Tourism Economy to give visibility to all the work being done across the industry.

A FORCE FOR GOOD

NITA will provide case studies to show the wide-ranging positive impact of the Tourism Economy and its contribution to NI as a whole.

Shaping the future growth of tourism

NITA's role is to represent our members and ensure the voice of the tourism industry is heard. We want to shape the future growth of tourism and will do this by consistently lobbying at all levels of government and beyond to raise awareness of major strategic issues affecting the industry and contributing to their solution. We want to be a long-term strategic partner for government to ensure that our industry is recognised as a force for good and supported to reach its full potential.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO DO THIS BY:

- **Engaging** with our members and stakeholders to better understand the challenges and opportunities within the Tourism Economy.
- **Communicating** the importance of 'Tourism as a Force for Good', sustainably driving economic growth and social impact.
- **Holding to account**, and where necessary challenging, government, agencies, and politicians.
- **Influencing and Lobbying** at all levels of government – NI, RoI, UK – to shape policy based on industry insights and expertise.
- **Partnering** with stakeholders across UK and RoI to drive forward the growth and recognise the sustainability of tourism.

ABOUT NITA

NITA's membership spans the diversity of Northern Ireland's tourism sector and includes::

- **Accommodation Providers**
- **Tour Guides**
- **Regional Direct Marketing Organisations**
- **Passenger Transport - Road/Air/Sea**
- **Major Tourist Attractions**
- **Outbound Travel**
- **Education/Skills providers**

NITA also has associate memberships with local councils as well as strategic partnerships with Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland.

JOIN US IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TOURISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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