Judith Owens MBE
Chair NITA

Joanne Stuart OBE
CEO NITA

NITA Annual Conference

Tourism: A Force for Good

Sustainably Creating Economic Growth and Social Impact

Date: 26th September 2024

Time: 10am to 1.30pm followed by lunch

Venue – ICC Belfast

Conference Overview

The Annual conference will be held on 26th September, the day before World Tourism Day. The global theme for the day is Tourism and Peace, and we will explore this in the context of Political Tourism looking at the important role of Tourism can play as we work through interpreting the conflict and its legacy and how we maximise the opportunity while balancing sensitive narratives and contested histories to ensure inclusivity and respect for all perspectives.
The conference will also be the kick-off event of the inaugural Tourism & Hospitality Week.

Karen Patterson will be the MC for the conference and the keynote speaker is Minister for the Economy, Conor Murphy

Conference Programe

10.00am	Karen Patterson welcome
10.05am	Judith Owens, Chair NITA Welcome
10.15am	Iain Bell, CEO ICC Belfast and Main Partner/Sponsor
10.20am	Minister for the Economy Keynote
10.45am	Political Tourism – Keynote William Blair
11.00am	Panel Discussion – Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network
11.35am	Coffee Break
11.55pm	The Role of Councils in Supporting Development of Regional Tourism
12.25pm	Dynamic Pricing on Trial
13.10pm	Fireside Chat with TI CEO and TNI Director of Events
13.40pm	CEO – Review of the morning
13.45pm	Networking Lunch

Programme Overview

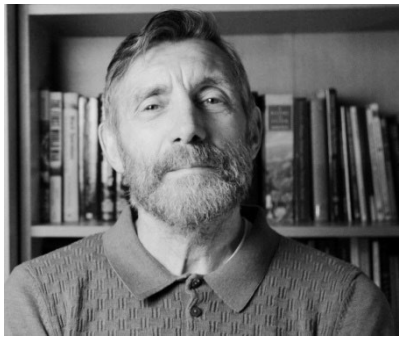
Session 1 – Political tourism: The challenge of interpreting conflict and its legacy

presented by **William Blair,** Director of Collections National Museums NI

This presentation will reflect on recent developments, notably the creation of the Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network - highlighting its potential to provide diverse engaging experiences to visitors, reflecting multiple perspectives. William will be joined by members of the Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network to discuss in more detail.

William Blair has been Director of Collections at National Museums Northern Ireland since 2017, with overall responsibility for curatorial, collections management and education. He is part of a senior executive team leading a programme of transformational change for the organisation. His particular focus is the strategic theme of 'building the museums of the future', which is spearheaded by initiatives that are changing perceptions and building new audiences – all underpinned by the goal of long-term relevancy and sustainability. William joined National Museums NI in 2009 as Head of Human History and in that role curated the new Titanic exhibition at the Ulster Transport Museum and was author of its companion book Titanic: Behind the Legend. He led the re-development of the Modern History gallery at the Ulster Museum and more recently the new 'Troubles and Beyond' exhibition, also at the Ulster Museum.

Mark Wylie owns and runs DC Tours, a Belfast based walking tour company established in 2013. The company is best known for its award winning tours which explain the Troubles and the peace process from an entirely neutral, civilian perspective. DC Tours works with universities, schools and colleges as well as with global tour operators and travel agents. The company is a member of the Conflict Legacy Interpretive Network, an all Ireland group which promotes cooperation between museums and heritage organisations working on conflict and legacy issues. It has a Tourism NI 5-star rating and a Green Tourism Silver award, and is recognised by Innovation NI as a Gold level innovator.



William Mitchell is the Project Director for Action for Community Transformation – The ACT Initiative, a conflict transformation programme designed to support the transformation of those categorised as former combatants. He has also been a senior mediator with Northern Ireland Alternatives, the first government accredited community-based Restorative Justice project in Ireland. Having been incarcerated for 13 years as a political prisoner, he has considerable experience in engaging 'hard to reach' groups,

working in conflict-related situations and has worked with hundreds of individuals to develop techniques of adaptive leadership. As part of his role within ACT, he has curated an exhibition entitled 'From the signing of the Covenant to the Good Friday Agreement', wherein he hosts peace building workshops with approximately 1000 visitors per year.

Eimear Hargey is a long-standing community and heritage campaigner. She is the Heritage Manager in Fáilte Feirste Thiar the award-winning neighbourhood tourism authority responsible for transforming West Belfast as a tourism attraction. Eimear is responsible for the promotion and development Áras Uí Chonghaile, The James Connolly Visitor Centre, in West Belfast, as well as outreach and engagement of the wider community. In 2021 she developed the groundbreaking city wide James Connolly Heritage Trail, the first of its kind walking tour powered by augmented reality.

Caoili O'Doherty is the Bloody Sunday Trust and Conflict Legacy Digital Intern; working on the Conflict and Legacy Interpretive Network since December 2022. As such, she manages the the Network's digital platforms and content, processes membership requests, and is the point of contact for Network members.

Session 2 – The Role of Councils in supporting the development of regional tourism

Karen Patterson will lead a discussion with two Local Government CEO's to discuss the important role of Councils in supporting the regional development of tourism, investing in product/experience development, engagement with communities and discussing the social impact of tourism.

David Burns is Chief Executive of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, appointed in 2018 making the move across from Scotland with his wife and 2 children. David worked for Councils and Housing Associations in the West of Scotland for close on 25 years, with a particular focus on Council housing, housing management, community planning & engagement, capital projects and regeneration initiatives. David is currently Chair of the Belfast Region City Deal Tourism and Regeneration Advisory Group. In his spare time, David is an assistant referee with the Irish Football Association, operating at Premiership level

Roger Wilson is Chief Executive of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council appointed in 2014. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, a Fellow of the Institute of Directors, a Chartered Company Secretary and Company Director. Roger is an observer on the NITA board, Co-Chair of the All Island Local Authority Forum, the Deputy Chair of the Ulster Orchestra, a board member of Armagh Observatory and Planetarium, Southern Area Hospice Services and the Chief Executives Forum.

Session 3 – Dynamic Pricing on Trial,

presented by **Robin Cantrill-Fenwick,** CEO Baker Richards

Dynamic pricing is commonplace in travel and accommodation, but how is this practice being adopted by attractions – and should it be? In this session, Dynamic Pricing is put on trial – charged with doing more harm than good to visitor attractions – and you're the jury. Will it be guilty or not guilty? You decide. Robin is prosecution (and defence!) and will explore the pros and cons of pricing approaches in use today.

Robin Cantrill-Fenwick is Chief Executive of Baker Richards, an audience research, revenue strategy and analytics company that helps cultural organisations achieve their commercial potential. Baker Richards have worked with more than 750 organisations worldwide. He has specialised in using data and digital systems to help transform organisations across numerous sectors for more than two decades. Having worked for organisations as diverse as the UK's National Trust, a university and a producing theatre, Robin went on to provide professional advice to a wide range of attractions in the areas of organisational strategy, marketing, audience development, visitor experience, and operations. Robin founded the Cultural Enterprises Academy, an online learning environment for people leading and working in commercial and revenue-generating functions across the culture, heritage, visitor attractions and arts sectors in the UK and Europe.

Session 4 – Fireside Chat with Tourism Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland

We will be joined by CEO Tourism Ireland, Alice Mansergh and Director of Events Tourism Northern Ireland, Aine Kearney, for a fireside chat about what has been covered throughout the morning.

Alice is Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland, appointed in September 2023. Previously, Alice was Managing Director, Google Customer Solutions, UK & Ireland, and corporate reputation lead for Google's EMEA HQ, based in Dublin. Alice has almost 20 years strategic leadership experience, specialising in leading international marketing teams, consumer brand engagement strategies and corporate responsibility. Alice has wide experience working with travel industry partners and has served on the board of Fáilte Ireland.

Aine Kearney is currently Director of Events at Tourism NI. Her role includes responsibility for leading on, securing, and supporting the delivery of major events in Northern Ireland. Aine was responsible for strategic coordination across central government, local government, private sector and the global rights holder of major events including The Open Championship, The Irish Open, Game of Thrones Touring Exhibition, as well as major events programmes such as 'TheYear of Food and Drink 2016' and 'Taste the Island'