

## HOSPITALITY & TOURISM FORUM

Meeting Minutes – 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020  
2.30pm, Online via WebEx

### Attendees:

#### **Co-chaired by:**

Leo Varadkar, TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation

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

#### **Industry Attendees:**

Eoghan O'Mara Walsh, ITIC

Elaina Fitzgerald Kane, IHF

Adrian Cummins, RAI

Ruth Andrews, ITOA

Sean Connick, AVEA

Helena Healy, B&B Ireland

Jacinta Doolan, ISCF

Donall O'Keeffe, LVA

Padraig Cribben, VFI

Feargal Barton, CTTC

Paul Davis, Event Industry Ireland

Nicola McGrane, AIPCO

Patricia Callan, Drinks Ireland

Patricia King, ICTU

Paul Kelly, Fáilte Ireland

Niall Gibbons, Tourism Ireland

#### **Department Officials:**

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Agenda Item	Record of main discussion
Introductions	<p>The Tánaiste and Minister Martin opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. They are aware that the sector is still in survival mode and the Ministers reiterated that they are here to engage, listen and discuss the challenges that the sector is facing and also to explore where further supports are needed.</p> <p>In terms of Covid-19, NPHET has advised that case numbers are rising, which is a concern. Government are monitoring the situation very carefully, but continued exponential growth may result in further public health restrictions being implemented.</p> <p>Government is conscious that this sector is one of the hardest hit by the pandemic and in that respect, discussions are on-going in relation to extending supports into 2021.</p>

	<p>The rollout of the vaccines, which it's hoped will have approval shortly, will begin early in the New Year.</p> <p>Government is committed to making tourism a central and strategic element of the National Economic Plan.</p> <p>Minister Martin advised the group that the recommendation from the Tourism Recovery Taskforce's Tourism Recovery Plan to establish an independently chaired Recovery Oversight Group has been implemented. This group is now in place and has begun its work.</p>
<b>1. Minutes of last meeting</b>	<p>There were no suggested changes/amendments to the Minutes of the last meeting and to the forums Terms of Reference.</p>
<b>2. Covid-19 response</b>	<p>Paul Kelly of Fáilte Ireland gave a brief overview of some of the supports available to the sector that they are administering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 adaptation fund</li> <li>• B&amp;B restart scheme</li> <li>• Coach Business Continuity Scheme</li> <li>• Irish based inbound agents scheme</li> </ul> <p>In the Budget, Government allocated €55 million in funding to Fáilte Ireland to support strategic tourism businesses not covered by the CRSS scheme. Fáilte Ireland are currently liaising with the Department on the design of the scheme and will be communicating in January around the criteria, timing and payments.</p> <p>A number of themes emerged in the contributions and suggestions made during the tour de table, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRSS scheme is a lifeline for many businesses, however there are some gaps in it that the group would like to see addressed.</li> <li>• Reports of some hospitality workers having difficulty in gaining approval from banks for loan and mortgage applications.</li> <li>• Labour market issues due to the loss of skilled/experienced employees.</li> <li>• Issues around redundancy payments.</li> <li>• Local Authority rates waiver very welcome but would like to see it extended.</li> <li>• Would like to see targets in relation to the vaccination roll out.</li> <li>• Call to re-open International travel and to trust the 'traffic light' system. Some concern that messaging from government on international travel is deterring people from travelling.</li> <li>• Reduction in the VAT rate very welcome but would like to see it extended.</li> <li>• Brexit is also a concern for tourism.</li> <li>• Stay and spend scheme – would like to see this redesigned.</li> <li>• Liquidity is the big issue for businesses.</li> <li>• Call for the introduction of rapid Covid testing technologies to be considered.</li> <li>• Call for further support measures in 2021 - until survival phase is over.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarification sought on the impact of some of the restrictions.</li> <li>• Concern around New Year's Eve festivities.</li> </ul> <p>The Tánaiste and Minister Martin thanked the members of the Forum for their contributions. It was very valuable to hear their feedback and concerns. They were conscious that while the supports to date had been very valuable to the sectors that there remained issues and gaps. They recognised that a recovery in 2021 would be very ambitious and on that basis, 2021 may require more targeted, sector focused supports, for sectors such as Hospitality and Tourism. Government are aware of the number of jobs sustained by the sectors and the geographical spread of these jobs.</p>
<b>3. Brexit</b>	<p>There was a brief discussion on Brexit and it was acknowledged that the outcome is still very uncertain at the moment but things should become clearer in the next couple of days as negotiations progress.</p>