

## Press release

11<sup>th</sup> April 2014

### ***Greenway Tourism Conference yet another major success for Dundalk Chamber***

Almost 300 people attending, from all over Ireland, north and south, east and west, made Dundalk Chamber of Commerce's annual tourism conference a great success once again. The conference held in association with Louth County Council's heritage office and entitled **The *Greenway Forward for Tourism, Health & Sport*** took place in the lovely Ballymascanlon House Hotel last Wednesday the 9<sup>th</sup> April.

The event was intended to inform, enthuse and entertain the varied audience about the new business opportunities presented by the growing trend of adventure tourism, outdoor recreation and, especially, greenways. It comes just ahead of the long anticipated opening of the new greenway along the shore of Carlingford Lough between Carlingford and Omeath.

Delegates learned about the process of developing this new greenway and of how established greenways, like that in Mayo, have boosted the local economy and brought communities together. There were also presentations on the creation of mountain bike cycling routes, canoe trails, glamping and both accommodation, woodland playgrounds and of the importance of urban parks and recreational areas for public health.

The event was opened by Minister of State for Tourism and Sport Michael Ring T.D. The Minister said he had previously been criticised for highlighting the health benefits of outdoor recreation but he still strongly defended that position that a population with better access to countryside recreation opportunities would require fewer doctors, fewer hospitals and less medicine and the health benefits are in addition to the obvious and undoubted economic benefits arising from increased tourist visits.

The event was chaired by Gary Breen, Head of Operations of Failte Ireland. Speakers included Pádraig Philbin from Mayo County Council who spoke about the success of the Westport to Mulranny Greenway, while Louth County Council Senior Engineer Catherine Duff spoke about the development of Louth's own greenways.

Helen Lawless of Mountaineering Ireland discussed the topic of "How outdoor recreation can blossom in Ireland's upland areas". Kieran Swail from i3 showed delegates how Apps, Maps and Trails, including features of enhanced reality can enhance the Tourism Experience.

Kevin Halpenny from Fingal County Council discussed Fingal's Heritage Properties & Sustainable Tourism in North Dublin. Mairead McGuinness MEP addressed the audience on Harnessing Europe's natural capital in sustainable ways- learning from our EU partners.

Guest speaker for Plato EBR was Shane Meehan and he told delegates about the Plato EBR E Cluster and how it can benefit SMEs which are located in the Border Region and have a desire to enter new markets and to collaborate with other providers to enhance their product offerings on line.

Two workshops were held in the afternoon and delegates could attend both. The first was "The Kilbroney Story – from big stone to big money (dealing with the new mountain biking facilities in the North's publicly owned forests) and the second was on "Demystifying the web for tourism providers".

Sponsored by Plato EBR and Louth Local Authorities this conference expanded on the key issues and the collaborative actions required to maximise a regions social and investment potential, as a major tourism destination. Dundalk Chamber plans to host another conference in 2015 and will expand on this year's event.

This event is now a permanent fixture in the Chamber's event calendar and with just under 300 delegates in attendance on the day from all over Ireland this major Conference is a "must" for all those in the tourism and hospitality sector. In addition there were over 35 trade stands for delegates to visit and gain new ideas.

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**Press release ends**

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