



Birthplace of Ireland's Ancient East

Boyne Valley

Tourism Strategy 2024-2030

Summary Document



Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council



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The Ambition

The Boyne Valley as one of the Leading Experiential Destinations in the World

The ambition of this plan is to position the Boyne Valley within Ireland's Ancient East as one of the leading experiential destinations in the world, attracting high-value visitors who leave the region feeling inspired. Aside from promoting things to see and do, the Boyne Valley experiential destination will focus on immersing the visitor in the local culture, interacting with people, understanding their values and interests, engaging the senses, learning about what is unique to the Boyne Valley - the history, heritage, food, stories and contemporary way of life.



Where we are now

Opportunities

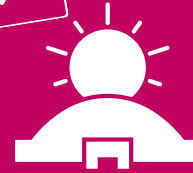
- Boyne Valley destination brand well established and primed to achieve further success
- Passionate local tourism industry engaged in destination-wide networks
- High visitor satisfaction: 98% of those surveyed advise that the Boyne Valley met/exceeded expectations
- Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage site. A world-best for cultural heritage: Ireland's richest archaeological landscape, Europe's largest and most important concentration of megalithic art
- Quality and diversity of scenery: inland and water - rivers, lakes, woodland, drumlins and coastline
- River Boyne is at the heart of the Boyne Valley and Ireland's story
- Home of Ireland's Celtic myths and legends: Boann, Salmon of Knowledge etc.
- 30 plus community and large-scale events & festivals: Púca and Lú Festival of Light are now calendar highlights
- 5,000 year old food heritage, home to the Boyne Valley Flavours food and drinks network, Samhian Festival Food and Culture and the Centre of Food Culture
- Network of exploration routes: Greenways, Blueway, Boyne Camino, Reimagined Boyne Valley Drive
- Strong tourism product: golf, equine, Emerald Park, Causey Farm and many more attractions
- New product development: Trim Castle Visitor Centre, Kells Printing Works, Emerald Park (€22million investment)
- Suited to soft adventure activities such as walking, cycling and kayaking
- Easy accessibility to Dublin, Belfast and wider areas of exploration



Consultation



400 Customer and Visitor Views



220 respondents surveyed at key Boyne Valley sites said:

- 71% took a day trip
- 29% took minimum 1+ night's stay

40%

UNESCO Brú na Bóinne site is a key reason to visit the Boyne Valley



Target: 50%

Increase dwell time in the 1+ night's category from 29% to 50%

Boyne Valley Industry Views



50 in person industry interviews, workshops, online and in person

“ Lots more opportunities for growth, particularly in the international marketplace

Festival programming has been praised for driving new demand

The destination's full identity should be drawn out ”



Travel Buyers Views



“Boyne Valley destination continues to be a success”

“Addresses availability for things to do for Free Independent Travellers”



The Way Forward

Action Plan and Commitments

While Boyne Valley Tourism in association with Meath County Council and Louth County Council will oversee the delivery of the recommendations in this Action Plan, success is dependent upon proactive engagement by Boyne Valley's tourism industry and key stakeholders. All the actions across the transformative projects and strategic objectives align under four commitments which will act as a guiding light for industry and stakeholders and inform all tourism activity in the Boyne Valley.

SHARE THE WHOLE STORY

Industry and Destination will unite in championing all industry sectors and promoting cross collaboration

BE A LEADER IN TOURISM INNOVATION

- Develop discovery routes
- Create compelling experiences, unlike anywhere else nationally and internationally
- Become the world's signature destination for the Celtic festival calendar
- Target investment for new sustainable accommodation

BE STRATEGIC

Focus on the opportunities that offer the strongest potential to achieve economic growth in experiential tourism, leisure tourism and business tourism

NURTURE PEOPLE AND PLACE

1. Enrich the lives of people who live and work in the Boyne Valley and
2. Enrich the experience for visitors through accessible and sustainable tourism

Recommendations



01

Increase supply of immersive experiences



02

Promote the Boyne Valley for diverse visitor interests



03

Promote the Boyne Valley as Ireland's leading region for food and drink experiences



04

Create compelling communications which showcase the region's diverse tourism offering



05

Position the Boyne Valley as an inspirer of Cultural Heritage and realise the potential for a Centre of Cultural Heritage



06

Develop product and experiences for independent visitors to increase dwell time



07

Secure investment in sustainable accommodation in key tourism clusters



08

Position the Boyne Valley as the world's signature destination for the Celtic festival calendar



09

Place the River Boyne at the heart of tourism experiences in the Boyne Valley



10

Develop experiences in golf, equine, music, walking and cycling



11

Position the Boyne Valley as a leader in sustainable and regenerative tourism development and contribute to national targets in sustainability



12

Champion the Boyne Valley as an accessible tourism location



13

Develop coastal tourism and promote the Boyne Valley as a coastal destination



14

Target high value leisure tourism visitors from domestic and international markets



15

Develop business tourism opportunities, and meetings, incentives conferences and events (MICE)



16

Develop a mechanism for local data capture of visitor numbers and dwell time





Six Transformative Projects



1. Boyne Valley (Brú na Bóinne) National Park

- A masterplan to be undertaken by The National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Monuments Service and the Office of Public Works and other key stakeholders including Meath County Council and Louth County Council to develop the 552-acre lands of Dowth Hall as a National Park:
 - a site of cultural and natural heritage of national and international importance
 - the heritage of Dowth spans from early prehistory through to the medieval period, 18th and 19th centuries to the modern era
 - the lands amount to one third of the total area of the UNESCO World Heritage Property of Brú na Bóinne
 - a place of natural beauty and rich biodiversity, with the River Boyne running through the lands





2. Boyne Valley Food and Development

Support Boyne Valley Flavours and The Centre of Food Culture, to realise their vision for the Boyne Valley to be recognised:

- for its partnership approach to developing food and drink as a sustainable economic sector
- as a food and drink destination where producers are at the heart of our food and drink culture



3. Coastal Trail and Tourism Development

Identify opportunities for visitor experiences at coastal locations showcasing the Boyne Valley's 65Km pristine shoreline with Blue Flag beaches and vibrant communities across coastal towns and villages in Meath and Louth.



4. Accommodation Growth

Actively engage and target investors to achieve accommodation growth in the Boyne Valley with a focus on:

- key strategic tourism clusters and coastal locations
- sustainable accommodation models connected with nature and/or within easy reach of towns/villages and coastal areas





5. Development of Greenways

The Boyne Greenway, Drogheda to Oldbridge - This 4km greenway has become a hugely popular amenity with locals and external visitors, with Oldbridge House being a popular destination (over 400,000 visitors per year).

The Boyne Greenway, Navan to Oldbridge - This 26km greenway links Navan to Drogheda and is one of the national greenways with links to key attractions such as Brú na Bóinne, the Battle of the Boyne site, and Slane Castle. It is currently in the preliminary design development stage, with planning processes to follow.

The Royal Canal Greenway - With 22km of its 130km length in Meath, this busy greenway has recently seen development of facilities and trailheads for improved access so as to realise its full potential.

The Boyne Valley to Lakelands Greenway - This 30km greenway is the most recent addition to Meath, opening in 2023, linking Navan to Kingscourt and proving extremely popular with locals and visitors alike. The greenway also links with two local walking routes. Targeted facilities are currently in development to maximise the greenway's potential.

Pathfinder Navan to Trim Cycle Scheme - This scheme is currently in the early stages of design, once completed it will provide a joined up network of greenways in Meath and will form part of the National Cycle Network.

The East Coast Greenway, Fingal border to Drogheda - This greenway is part of the National Cycle Network route and is currently at the first stage of design.





6. Heritage Assets

- Trim Castle Visitor Centre: development proposals are at an advanced stage by the OPW and Meath County Council to conserve and upgrade Trim's Market House as a modern visitor centre for Trim Castle.
- Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre - Oldbridge Estate: support the OPW in developing a renewed visitor experience reflecting the centre's historical significance.
- Hill of Tara: Enhance the visitor experience at the Hill of Tara as a place of historic and cultural significance in line with the Tara Conservation Management Plan.
- Support the implementation of Kells Creative Placemaking Programme, including the establishment of Kells Printing Works.
- Examine the potential for improved visitor experiences in the following locations:
 - Loughcrew: Ancient Neolithic passage tombs and rare megalithic art
 - Monasterboice: Christian settlement founded in 5th century, famous for its 10th century high crosses and 28m round tower
 - Fourknocks: Neolithic passage tomb 5000 years old; between Ardcaigh and The Naul; decorated with abstract art;
 - The Tholsel, Old Abbey Drogheda and Laurence Gate and Plaza.
- Millmount Museum, Martello Tower and Complex: Develop a Conservation Management Plan and renewed visitor experience for this 3000- year old landmark rich in heritage and folklore, it's Martello Tower (1808) and Complex.
- Monasterboice: Develop a Conservation Management Plan and improved visitor experience for this Christian settlement founded in the 5th century, famous for it's 10th century high crosses and 28m round tower.
- Ardee Castle: Develop a Conservation Management plan and renewed visitor experience reflecting the Castle's historical significance.
- The Táin Trail is uniquely positioned to support story-telling, community tourism, local and regional navigation and sustainable development.
- Reimagining the Boyne Valley Drive: create a world leading experiential route in line with Fáilte Ireland's Ancient Destination Experience Development Plan.
- Continue to support the promotion of the Hill of Tara as part of the Royal Sites of Ireland on Ireland's Tentative World Heritage List.
- Explore the feasibility of developing and progressing the Turas Columbanus walking trail.



Seven Strategic Objectives

Objective 4

Champion Accessible Tourism Development



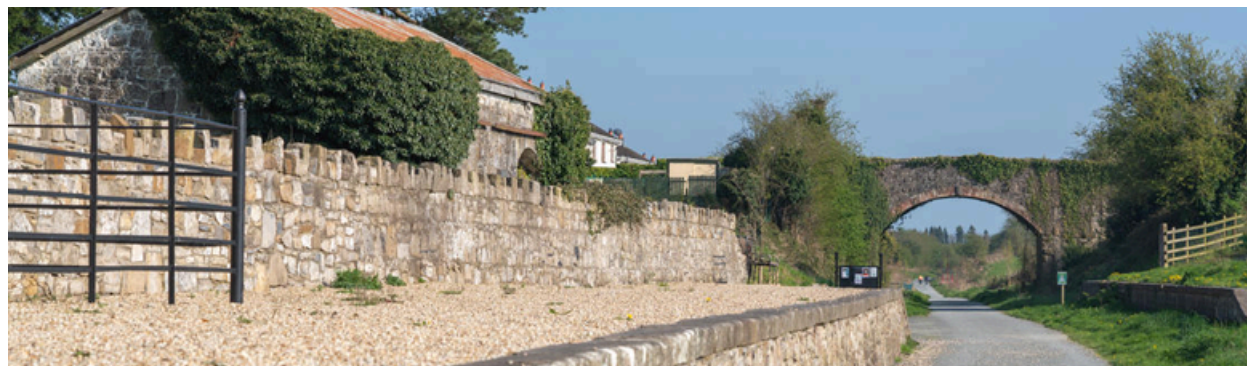


Collaborative Framework: Strategic Objective 1

1. Establish the Boyne Valley as a leader of collaboration across the tourism industry nationally

Actions to Achieve	Lead	Partner	KPI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a robust annual networking framework to foster cross-industry connections and maximise learnings. Host an inspiring event to embed the strategy and ignite the culture of collaboration. Continue to schedule networking events and the annual Boyne Valley Tourism speed networking sessions. Support tourism activity by building relationships with local agencies and community organisations. Grow international opportunities and organize a standout buyer showcase by building relationships with professional travel buyers. Win an annual conference by building relationships with national tourism associations. Boyne Valley industry to identify an ambassador who can assist in securing an association conference. 	BVT, MCC, LCC, BVIND, FI	LEO, MP, LP	+80% industry attendance

BVT: Boyne Valley Tourism
MCC: Meath County Council
LCC: Louth County Council
FI: Fáilte Ireland
LEO: Local Enterprise Office
MP: Meath Partnership
LP: Louth Partnership
BVIND: Boyne Valley Industry



Experiences, Festivals & Attraction Development: Strategic Objective 2

Experience Development

1. Deliver experience development programmes to curate compelling experiences.

Actions to Achieve

- Deliver programmes focused on the development of new never brought to market immersive experiences across the following three themes:
 - Culture, Heritage & arts
 - Adventure and activities
 - Nature and wellness
- Work with Boyne Valley Flavours and the Centre of Food Culture, to help deliver the food experience actions laid out in the Boyne Valley Food Development Strategy 2024-2028.

Lead

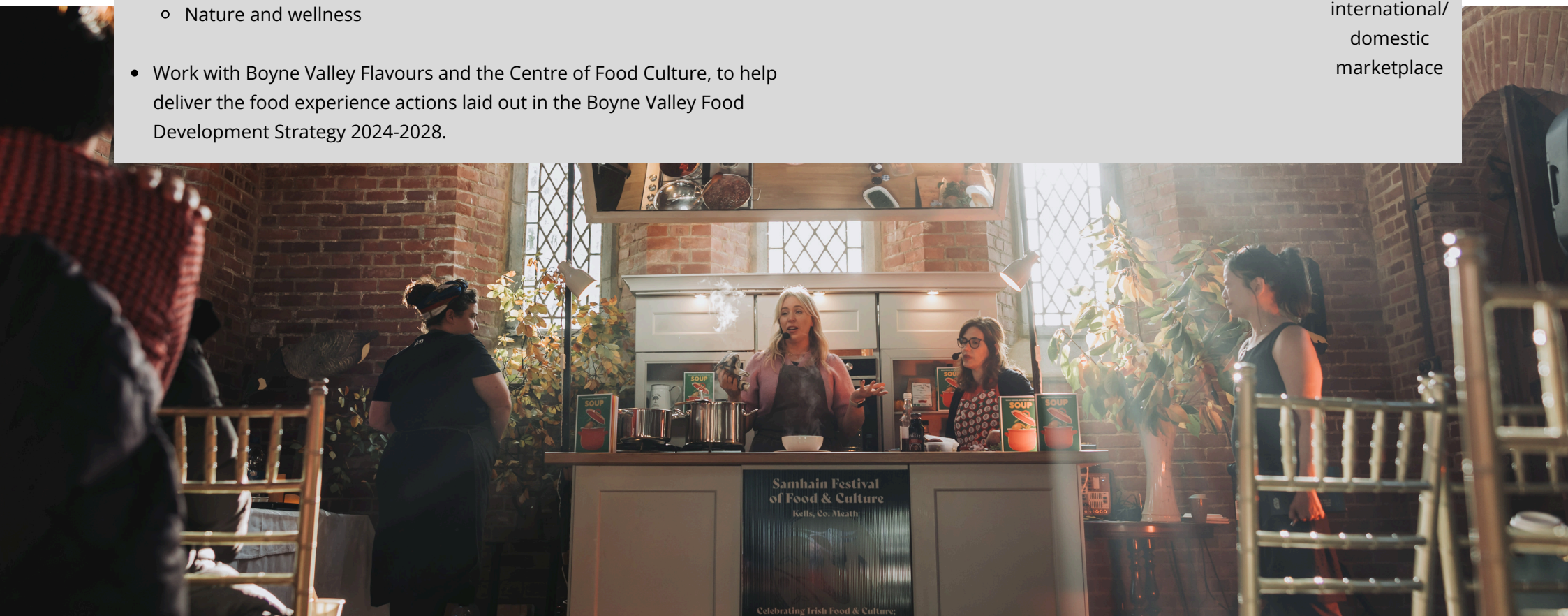
BVT, MCC, LCC, FI,
BVF, MP, LLP

Partner

LEO

KPI

Across all 3 programmes
20 experiences suited for sale in the international/ domestic marketplace



Events & Festival Development

2. Develop new events & festivals with inspired programming and grow existing festivals to maximise opportunities

Actions to Achieve

- Extend the season: need for programming during off-peak periods and calendar gaps from December to March.
- Position the Boyne Valley as the world's signature destination for the Celtic Festival Calendar.
- Establish the Púca festival as the Home of Halloween, increasing its international audience.
- Champion Lú Festival of Light as a spectacular display of urban animation – increasing its domestic and international audience.
- Support Samhain Festival of Food and Culture to become a leading Food Festival internationally.
- Support the development of new festivals, establishing these as annual calendar highlights: Winter Solstice, Boyne Midsummer Festival, Drogheda Comedy Festival, Féile Siamsa Glas.
- Position the Boyne Valley as a destination that champions innovation in festival programming.
- Support existing festivals with potential to expand to international audiences.

Lead

BVT, MCC, LCC,
BVF

Partner

FI, TI

KPI

Create at least
2 new festivals



Visitor Attractions and Experiences

3. Scope the opportunity to develop a unique visitor attraction/experience

Actions to Achieve	Lead	Partner	KPI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a cultural heritage attraction/experience: an inspirer of cultural heritage, unlike anything in the world, focused on Celtic myths and legends. 	MCC, LCC	FI, OPW	Explore visitor attraction/experience opportunities

Business Tourism Incentive Project

4. Develop incentives for business tourism opportunities

Actions to Achieve	Lead	Partner	KPI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Incentive Experiences and pitch to Incentive Buyers, example: quirky food tastings in scenic locations 	BVIND,BVT	BVIND, MCC, LCC, FI	2 new incentive experiences



Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism Development: Strategic Objective 3

Embed a sustainable and regenerative ethos in the tourism culture

Actions to Achieve

- Support education and awareness: aligning activity with UN Sustainable Development Goals, National Climate Action Plan 2021 and the VICE model for sustainable tourism contributing to national targets.
- Embed the sustainability ethos and principles across industry.
- Make sustainability visible across Boyne Valley Tourism and tourism industry channels.
- Use the collaborative network framework (Objective 1) to promote education and awareness.
- Identify Boyne Valley champions of sustainable and regenerative tourism.
- Promote their practices, experiences and stories through Boyne Valley Tourism channels.

Lead

BVT, MCC, LCC

Partner

BVIND, FI

KPI

3 new sustainable champions



Champion Accessible Tourism Development: Strategic Objective 4

Build a culture and infrastructure that promotes accessibility for all

Actions to Achieve	Lead	Partner	KPI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote education and awareness of accessible tourism development across the industry. Make accessibility visible across the Boyne Valley and tourism industry channels. Raise Boyne Valley's profile as an accessible tourism destination. 	BVT, MCC, LCC	BVIND, FI	By Y3: an industry-wide understanding of accessible tourism

Captivating Communications: Strategic Objective 5

Develop Captivating Communications that Inspire Visitors and Promote Dwell Time

Actions to Achieve	Lead	Partner	KPI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The positioning of the Boyne Valley as an ancient destination is strong, the contemporary story and wider tourism offering around activities requires a greater presence. Update Boyne Valley brand guidelines and toolkit to reflect a broadened tourism offering, translating the new approach across Discover Boyne Valley website, social media channels, brochures, ezines, advertisements, public relations etc. Make greater use of technology to animate the story of the Boyne Valley e.g. Augmented Reality/Virtual Reality. Grow social media channels. Develop industry training on composing compelling communications. 	BVT, MCC, LCC	FI	Inspire visitors, increasing followers on each channel by min. 5% per annum

Economic Growth & Enterprise Development: Strategic Objective 6

1. Develop a mechanism for data capture to assess Boyne Valley performance and trends

Actions to Achieve	Lead	Partner	KPI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture visitor data from all sources and make available to all key stakeholders /industry. • Review the data fields that have emerged through this plan (business category, visitor numbers, markets, channels), deciding if others should be added – e.g., the business and/or area (urban, rural, coastal). 	BVT, MCC, LCC, FI	BVIND	Publish data annually to industry

2. Support industry to achieve economic growth

Actions to Achieve	Lead	Partner	KPI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the value of tourism in achieving economic growth and supporting enterprise development. 	BVT, MCC, LCC	FI, MP, LLP, LEO	Increase in new businesses/ experiences

3. Be strategic: target opportunities best suited to the Boyne Valley

Actions to Achieve

- Target the opportunities in leisure tourism that offer the Boyne Valley the strongest potential for growth
- Explore business tourism as a new opportunity through a dedicated group of industry experts.

Lead

BVT, MCC, LCC

Partner

BVIND, FI

KPI

Increase in leisure tourism revenue; increase in meetings, conferences and events

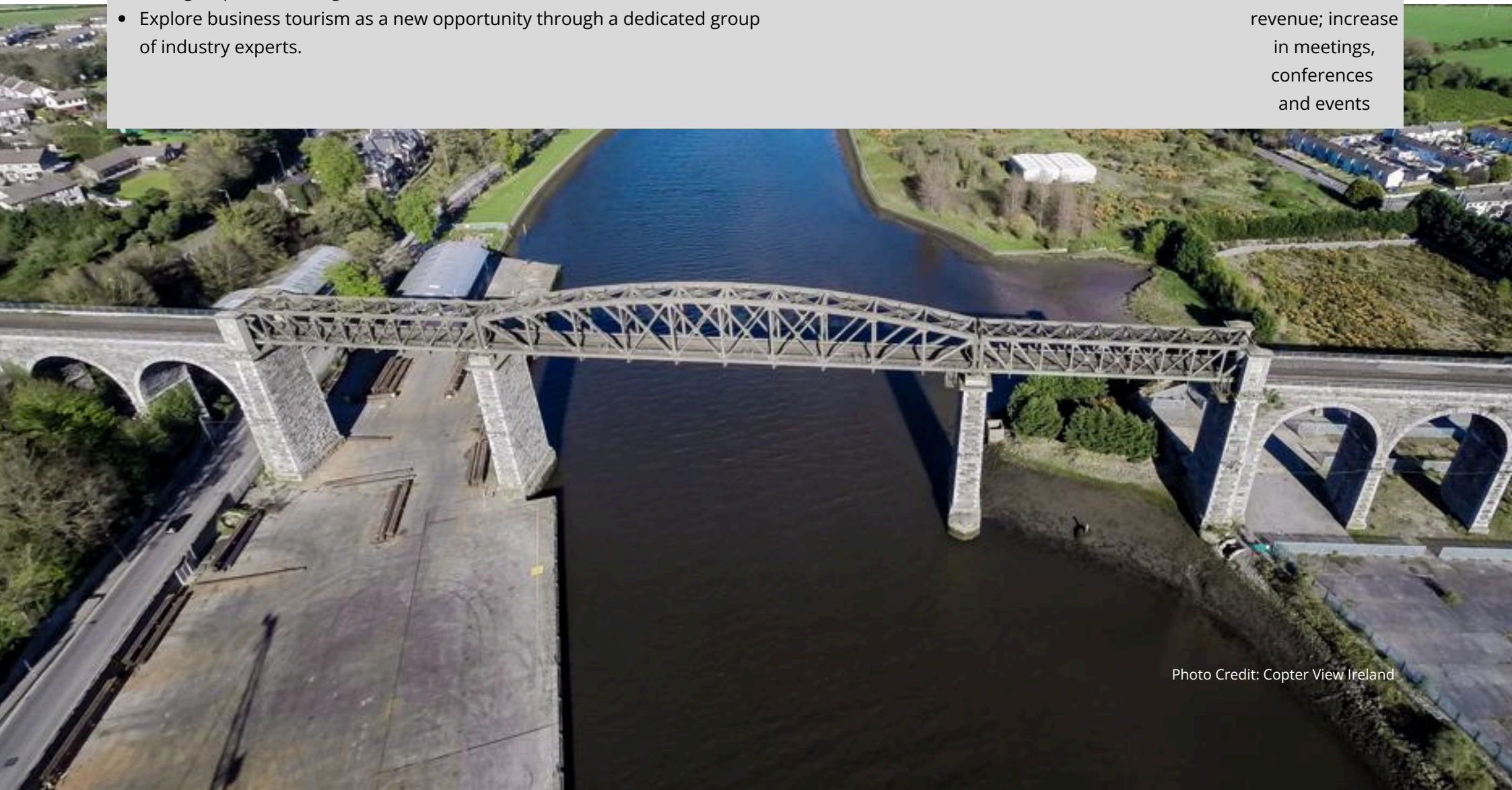


Photo Credit: Copter View Ireland

Tourism Dispersion: Strategic Objective 7

Apply a holistic approach to achieve tourism dispersion

Actions to Achieve

Lead

Partner

KPI

- Promote an awareness that achieving tourism dispersion is integral to this plan via:
 - Communications
 - Visitor Experience Development
 - Greenway Development
 - Continue the successful Boyne Valley travel trade familiarisation trips
 - Collaborative networking with industry and stakeholders to benefit the whole destination
 - Accommodation growth
 - Festivals and events
- Support the development of town regeneration projects, high quality public realm enhancement works to contribute to the overall visitor experience in our towns and villages.
- Investigate the opportunities to enhance the visitor experience and visitor interpretation at many key heritage sites and in our towns and villages.

BVT, MCC, LCC

FI, MP, LLP

A rural economic spread







Birthplace of Ireland's Ancient East

www.discoverboynevalley.ie

