

Tourism in a heritage town in the South East of Ireland: Current offering, gaps & opportunities.

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Located in Co. Cork, on the south coast of Ireland, Youghal is a remarkable town with treasures to rival any town on the world stage, a place where historical and medieval characteristics are second to none. The town of Youghal guards an important and unique collection, in terms of history, stories, buildings and artefacts. Boasting connections with an array of historical figures such as Sir Walter Raleigh (Mayor of Youghal from 1588-1589), Richard Boyle, 1st Earl of Cork, Oliver Cromwell (wintered here in 1649), Queen Victoria through the 'Youghal Lace' of her coronation veil, the distinctive figure of Tom Thumb, a chapter concerning its very own witch and corresponding witch trial, settlers such as the Vikings, the Anglo Normans, reminders of a Medieval era, Georgian era, a Victorian era, and town walls that were built in 1250 AD, still proudly facing the sea below. Youghal's strengths are in its historical offering and in its exquisite beach location. There are 4.5kms of beach available to the visitor, along with four town parks: 1798 Memorial Green Park, Millennium Park, Keane Park and College Gardens. Youghal offers a rich tourist menu that on a global stage is significant. Historically, Youghal's importance in the region was associated with its role as a Port Town and an industrial centre. Unfortunately, the 1980s witnessed a decline in these roles and the town's population waned (Youghal Town Council, 2010). Recently, however, from a tourist destination perspective, Youghal has benefited in that it was chosen for a pilot programme of the Historic Towns Initiative, together with the towns of Listowel & Westport. This initiative is with the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, The Heritage Council of Ireland and Fáilte Ireland.

This new research specifically examines the tourist product offering in Youghal and identifies gaps and opportunities for the future of the tourist product offering, together with recommendations for future development.

The empirical data for this study was gathered using both in-depth interviews and projective techniques. The qualitative element consisted of interviews with 22 relevant people drawn from local industry, the local business community, local residents and local politicians. Additionally, 71 people were picked at random to participate in the projective techniques which yielded some significant findings.

The aim of this research is to identify and analyse the region's tourism product and services offering, with the specific aim of providing hope for the region in terms of local employment, increasing visitor numbers, and driving the local economy. The research findings will determine the area's strengths, gaps and opportunities, aligned with appropriate markets and potential investment attraction for the region. Immediate actions to boost the tourist offering are identified in this study, together with long term projects and plans.

Keywords: Youghal, Tourism, Funding, Historic Towns Initiative, International Heritage, Natural and Built Environment.

INTRODUCTION

Youghal is all about Tourism. All we have left is our Tourism – it's a hidden gem!

This research was commissioned in 2014 by the YSEDG in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland to examine the tourism product offering, identify gaps, provide recommendations to enhance the tourism product to promote the Town, and to improve the competitiveness of Youghal. The aim of this research is to identify and analyse the region's tourism product and services offering. This will determine the area's strengths, gaps and opportunities, aligned with appropriate markets and potential investment attraction. The findings of this study will provide a clear understanding of the tourist offering, while also identifying gaps in the tourist product proposition. The first section of this paper will outline the current offering for the Town, the second section will present the empirical data generated from this study which used projective techniques and in-depth interviews from respondents, and the last section will outline the gaps in the offering and provide recommendations for future practice to better enhance the tourist product offering and generate economic growth.

The economic downturn had a serious impact on the Town of Youghal and the town suffered from this downturn, especially the retail sector. The Town Council had a pivotal role in supporting the Town, and were responsible for the commerce and the overall well-being of Youghal, but the dissolution of Town Councils throughout Ireland in June 2014, when the [Local Government Reform Act 2014](#) was implemented, left the Town without local support. The East Cork Municipal District has now taken over from the Town Council, but this research has found that power has now shifted to the County Council.

The Youghal Socio-Economic Development Group (YSEDG)

In 2007, The Youghal Socio-Economic Development Group (YSEDG), a strategic policy group, was established so that Youghal could exploit its significant international heritage, natural amenities, and its hosting of large-scale contemporary cultural and arts events. The group is made up of local, county-wide and regional agencies, together with local authorities, the tourism and business community, and community groups representing Youghal. Since it was established, YSEDG has become Youghal's very own 'Task Force', positioning Youghal as a desirable place to live, work, visit, and invest. Youghal's heritage-led regeneration strategy has seen YSEDG deliver conservation and restoration works to Youghal's Town Walls and The Clocktower Gate Building. Youghal also benefited from the Historic Towns Initiative¹ Pilot Programme along with Listowel, Co. Kerry, and Westport, Co. Mayo. In 2014, Youghal received €40,000 in funding to complete the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) pilot programme. This funding follows an initial allocation of €120,000 to Youghal from the programme in 2013. This initiative has seen the re-launch of the heritage painting scheme, the marketing and branding of the 'Raleigh Quarter', and the refurbishment of the Nealons Quay and Market Square area of the town:

I am . . . very pleased to be able to offer funding to all three towns again in 2014. The enhancement of the heritage of our historic towns can make places better to live in and . . . increase economic activity, (Dennihan, 2014).

LITERATURE

¹ The Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) is a heritage-led regeneration programme undertaken jointly by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Heritage Council and Fáilte Ireland. To date the initiative has resulted in a series of innovative programmes of works that have enhanced the heritage character of each town, aiming to create a desirable place in which to live, do business and to visit.

Since the 1970s, cultural tourism has begun to be recognized as a tourism product category rather than a niche and specialized activity and is considered the “oldest of the ‘new’ tourism phenomena” (Haydn, 2003). McKercher and du Cros (2002) suggest that cultural tourism represents tourism which is derived from special interests, and involving participation in visiting cultural destinations. Between 35 and 70 per cent of international travellers are now considered cultural tourists. Cultural destinations can be very diverse, including historical, artistic, scientific, lifestyle, heritage and social offerings. Such tourism destinations have become fashionable as disposable income grows and information is made available (Hadyn, 2003).

Distinction can be made between tangible and intangible heritage. The tangible kind includes physical assets such as historic towns, buildings, archaeological sites and cultural landscapes. Intangible heritage is represented by “softer” aspects of culture, people and traditions, (Hadyn, 2003). Chaplin (2003) outlines that a failure to appreciate the nexus between tourism and cultural heritage management results in the suboptimal delivery of cultural tourism. The management of the combined cultural heritage segment tends to work in isolation, leading to many lost opportunities for providing quality experiences. Based on their combined experience, McKercher and du Cros (2002) reveal the close relationship between the subjects and the imperative for professionals to engage in a dialogue (Chaplin, 2003). Tourists visiting historic locations for different reasons should have implications on the marketing of heritage attractions. Psychographic segmentation according to perception of the site should be examined for such tourists. Managers of historic destinations are advised to identify tourists based on their perceptions and provide them with different angles of interpretation (Poria *et al.*, 2006).

Whether local, national or international, governments share the responsibility for the protection of cultural and heritage sites for present and future generations, ([Pereira Roders, van Oers, 2011](#)). In former times, attention was centered on the conservation of these facilities, primarily as individual buildings or structures; nowadays it entails complex processes of management to deal with change of uses, changes in the surroundings, a widening circle of stakeholders and competing demands regarding environmental, economic, social and cultural requirements. As such, management practices have been progressing towards a more holistic approach, where the cultural significance (i.e., range of values attributed to these facilities, from existence to use values and from socio-economic to environmental and cultural values) is taken into account, whenever changes need to be applied to these or other surrounding facilities ([Pereira Roders, van Oers, 2011](#)).

As a key resource, cultural heritage has become a driver for development, which, when properly managed, can enhance the liveability of surrounding areas and sustain productivity in a changing global environment. Governments, however, need to have clear strategies and effective methods for planning, designing, executing and managing these facilities in order to optimize their production and consumption potential, while preserving and, where possible, enhancing their cultural significance, ([Pereira Roders, van Oers, 2011](#)).

The subject of partnership (or its lack) between managers of cultural heritage assets and cultural tourism, is a neglected area of research (Chaplin, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Initially, extensive secondary desk research was undertaken to investigate in detail the current tourist offering in the town of Youghal. This was followed by face to face meetings with relevant protagonists who were previously, and are currently, responsible for the Town’s tourist offering. In

parallel, four visitor journeys were undertaken over a seven month period during summer peak times, and winter off-peak times to gain a further understanding of what the town had to offer during both periods of the year. From this, and for the empirical contribution, a qualitative approach was deemed the best approach to gather the new data in this study. First, projective techniques were executed with 71 people with no connection with Youghal who were asked to offer the first word that came to mind when presented with the word 'Youghal'. The aim here was to see how non-related individuals to Youghal perceived the Town. Projective techniques are based on psychology and are mainly used to get inside the participant's mind – to seek inner thoughts and feelings, to gain an insight - to get to the subconscious. Projective techniques identify a respondent's 'first thought' when a certain brand is mentioned.

For the face the face interviews, 22 in-depth interviews were carried out with participants who were drawn purposely from the local community and who had a direct involvement with the commerce of the town; for example, local business owners, tourism service providers, owners of historical buildings, local politicians, historians, event organisers, archaeologists, and contributors from YSEDG & Fáilte Ireland.

AUDIT FINDINGS: Current Situation

Tourist Visitor Numbers

Table 1, presents the visitor numbers to Youghal during the tourist season to the end of October 2014. In all, 32,910 tourists visited the town itself:

Table 1 – 2014 Visitor Numbers to Youghal

| | March | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | Totals |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Visitors | 226 | 801 | 2055 | 2421 | 4190 | 4492 | 2610 | 1049 | 17,844 |
| Bus visitors | 144 | 734 | 2244 | 2881 | 2458 | 2997 | 2877 | 731 | 15,066 |
| Totals | 370 | 1535 | 4299 | 5302 | 6648 | 7489 | 5487 | 1780 | 32,910 |

(Youghal Chamber Tourism & Development, 2014).

248 tour buses visited the town, delivering 15,066 visitors to the end of October, 2014. Guided tours are provided for visitors, and Youghal benefits from having its very own 'Town Crier' who meets the visiting tours and guides the tourists around the town in costume. This has proven to be an excellent marketing tool in attracting groups to Youghal. 665 people took walking tours of Youghal town in 2014.

In terms of places to eat when visiting the town, Youghal has 20 outlets for food ranging from coffee shops to luxury seafood, to fast food. In relation to 'things to do and see', 20 activities are available to the visitor, including walking, sailing, cruising, bird-watching, tennis, golf, etc. Youghal has 3 societies, and runs 14 annual festivals, including the Queen of the Sea festival in July, and the Medieval Festival in August.

Accommodation Provision

As a town, Youghal offers the visitor a variety of tourist accommodation, but this research has found that during the peak demand periods, there is a dearth of bed nights in the town, and visitors have to stay further afield in Waterford.

Caravan & Camping Sector

The warm summer in 2014 boosted the caravan and camping sector. 58% of owners have seen an increase in visitors in this sector on 2013, (Fáilte Ireland, 2014). In Youghal, there is a need to expand the caravan & camping and develop the Motor Home complex², due to demand. Planning permission was granted in March 2014 for a 21 Motor Home berth complex. Motor Home tourism is becoming increasingly prevalent across Ireland. Many park in Youghal throughout the year, but, currently, without proper facilities. The development of this park is vital to the overall economic tourism development of the area.

Guesthouse Accommodation

In 2014, 69% of Guesthouses reported increased visitors, and B&Bs reported a 60% increase, (Fáilte Ireland, 2014). This sector is a very competitive one, however, due to competitive hotel offers; and this is echoed in Youghal. Room capacity in B&Bs continued to fall (-8%) for January–October 2013 compared to the first eight months of 2012. Profitability within the PSA (paid service accommodation) sector has also been very positive; 71% report it up on 2013 (Fáilte Ireland, 2014). The majority (62%) of weighted PSA operators report an increase in visitor volumes, compared to the same period in 2013 (Fáilte Ireland, 2014). There are a total of 11 B&Bs within the vicinity of Youghal providing sleeping capacity for **107 people**. **5** of these are located within the town of Youghal providing **51 beds**—3 of these are Fáilte Ireland approved. The other 6 B&Bs are located further afield and provide **56 beds**—4 of these are Fáilte Ireland approved.

Hotel Sector

The hotel sector still remains the strongest. 82% of accommodation providers report an increase in visitor numbers in 2014, with demand for hotel bed nights growing (Fáilte Ireland, 2014). In the context of Youghal and in line with National trends, (demand grew by 10%, Fáilte Ireland, 2013), an additional good quality hotel is needed in the area, either a 4*/5* facility due to the shortage of bed nights in the Town, and a need for another hotel offering. In the vicinity of Youghal and Youghal town combined there are: **10³ Hotels** offering a total of **390 rooms** and a capacity for **857**. **3** of these Hotels are located in the **Town** offering **71 rooms** and a capacity of **165**. **7 Hotels** are further afield providing **319 rooms** and a capacity of **692**. **All of the hotels are Fáilte Ireland approved.**

² A designated place where the user parks for less than 72 hours.

³ Ahernes in the town is internationally renowned for its seafood restaurant. The Cliff House Hotel and the Castlemartyr Resort both have Spa and Wellness centres. The Cliff House Hotel Restaurant holds a Michelin Star.

Self-Catering Accommodation

Self-catering operators experienced a positive 2014 to October 2014. 44% of those surveyed by Fáilte Ireland reported an increase on the same period last year. The overseas market has performed especially well, with half (51%) of respondents reporting an increase on 2013. The overseas market is predicted to be fairly strong, with a third (33%) expecting an increase, (Fáilte Ireland, 2014). Youghal provides **157** self-catering units providing accommodation for **873** adults + 30 infants.

Table 2 Accommodation Summary for Youghal

| Accommodation Type | Units | Total Capacity |
|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Caravan & Camping | 441 | 1566 |
| Guest House & B&B | 45 | 107 |
| Hotel | 390 | 857 |
| Self- Catering | 157 | 873 |
| Stately Home | 33 | 95 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 1,066 | 3,498 |

YOUGHAL'S BUILT HERITAGE

Youghal is unique in that the town possesses a distinctive internationally recognised 'built heritage', with twelve archaeological sites and monuments in state or local authority ownership, and fifty recorded monuments in the town development plan area (Noonan, 2013). Youghal is one of a national network of Walled Towns of Ireland. The built heritage is recognised in many reports as a significant asset and Youghal is designated as a heritage town by Fáilte Ireland, (Rapid Area Report, 2010). Twelve sites of specific interest are as follows: Green's Dock [OUTDOOR], Benedictine Priory of St. Johns [NO PUBLIC ACCESS], The Magazine [NO PUBLIC ACCESS], Market Place [OUTDOOR], Red House [NO PUBLIC ACCESS], Tynte's Castle [LIMITED PUBLIC ACCESS], Boyles Almshouses [LIMITED PUBLIC ACCESS], St. Marys Collegiate Church [PUBLIC ACCESS], Town Walls [OUTDOOR], The College [LIMITED PUBLIC ACCESS], Myrtle Grove [NO ACCESS], Clockgate [NO ACCESS], The Watergate [OUTDOOR].

Table 3: Monuments in the historic core of Youghal

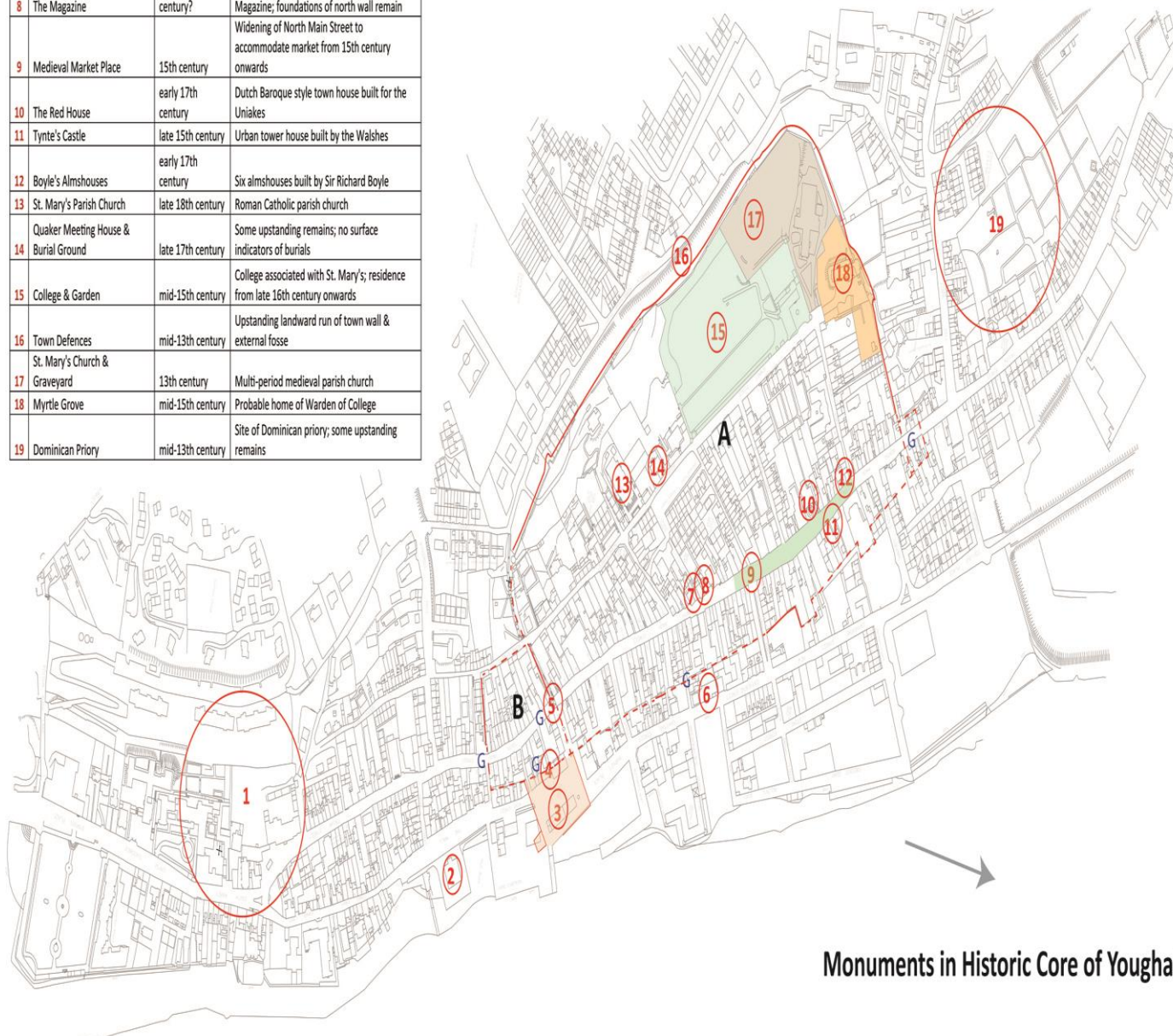
| | Site | Date | Remarks |
|----|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| A | Main town | 13th century | 13th century town |
| B | Base town | 15th century | 15th century expansion southwards |
| G | Town Gates | 13th & 15th centuries | Five formal town gates |
| 1 | South Abbey | early 13th century | Site of Franciscan friary; no surface remains, substantial subsurface |
| 2 | Town Hall | late 18th century | Town hall, built as courthouse and public rooms on reclaimed lands on the Mall |
| 3 | Site of medieval harbour | 15th century | Infilled medieval harbour, defended by blockhouse to south |
| 4 | Cromwell's Arch | 15th century | Site of water gate that gave access to the walled medieval harbour |
| 5 | Clock Gate | late 18th century | Town gaol built on site of Trinity Gate |
| 6 | Town Defences | 15th century | Line of seaward run of town wall; three short run of surviving fabric upstanding |
| 7 | The Priory | mid-14th century | Medieval house associated with Benedictine priory |
| 8 | The Magazine | late 15th century? | Site of urban tower house known as the Magazine; foundations of north wall remain |
| 9 | Medieval Market Place | 15th century | Widening of North Main Street to accommodate market from 15th century onwards |
| 10 | The Red House | early 17th century | Dutch Baroque style town house built for the Uniakes |
| 11 | Tynte's Castle | late 15th century | Urban tower house built by the Walshes |
| 12 | Boyle's Almshouses | early 17th century | Six almshouses built by Sir Richard Boyle |
| 13 | St. Mary's Parish Church | late 18th century | Roman Catholic parish church |
| 14 | Quaker Meeting House & Burial Ground | late 17th century | Some upstanding remains; no surface indicators of burials |
| 15 | College & Garden | mid-15th century | College associated with St. Mary's; residence from late 16th century onwards |
| 16 | Town Defences | mid-13th century | Upstanding landward run of town wall & external fosse |
| 17 | St. Mary's Church & Graveyard | 13th century | Multi-period medieval parish church |
| 18 | Myrtle Grove | mid-15th century | Probable home of Warden of College |
| 19 | Dominican Priory | mid-13th century | Site of Dominican priory; some upstanding remains |



Defended harbour c. 1680



William Jones Map of Youghal c. 1600



Monuments in Historic Core of Youghal

[Source: Noonan, 2013].

CONSERVATION: Built & Natural Environments: HISTORIC TOWNS

In 2012, Youghal was chosen to take part in a pilot scheme involving three historic towns, including Westport, Co. Mayo and Listowel, Co. Kerry. The pilot was led by The Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, in partnership with Fáilte Ireland and The Heritage Council of Ireland. The scheme sought to combine the conservation and protection of the built and natural heritage of the participating historic towns through effective urban renewal while maximizing the economic value of tourism in the towns. For Youghal, areas that benefited from the funding included Nealon's Quay & Barry's Lane. Another key initiative arising from this scheme was the branding of 'The Raleigh Quarter'. In recent years, Youghal Town Council invested in the 'Historic Quarter', which lies in close proximity to Youghal's Medieval Town Walls and Gardens. St. Mary's Collegiate Church, a National Monument of significance is also in this vicinity. It is also the area where Sir Walter Raleigh's former home sits; Myrtle Grove (currently in private ownership).

Ongoing Conservation & Developments

Clock Tower

The story of the Clock Gate Tower is the story of Youghal (Scroope, 2013).

Youghal's iconic Clock Tower, a listed building benefited from essential conservation and restoration works being undertaken in 2013, financed by SECAD and match funded by Youghal Town Council to the value of €243,000. The story of the Clockgate, spanning 600 years, is unique on a national and international level. Its story as a gaol precedes that of Cork Gaol, Kilmainham Gaol and Wexford Gaol heritage sites. It represents a unique opportunity to develop a further tourism product, providing an inspiring and interesting experience to the 'high-value' cultural visitors to the town and region and major boost to the local economy. The future of the Clock Tower is now dependent on new funding to finish the final 'fit out' (17 weeks to complete) to make it accessible to the public. If open, it could generate €400,000 to the local economy. Deirdre Cole, Project Officer, Fáilte Ireland, believes that the importance of the Clock Tower will "revolve around the story it will tell and how this is interpreted". Access to this important building will "fill a gap in the product offering for the Town".

St. Mary's Collegiate Church

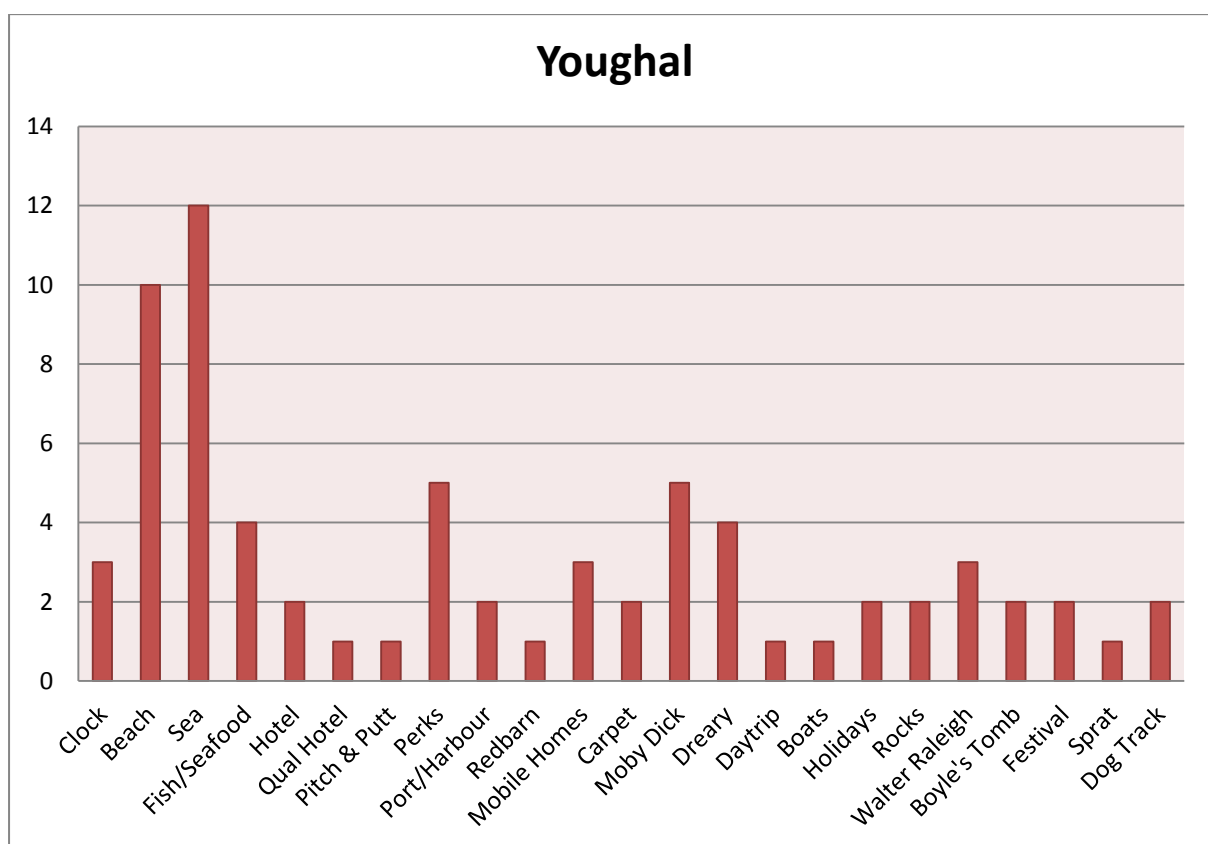
St. Mary's Collegiate Church is one of the best preserved medieval church sites in Ireland. The built and archaeological fabric of the site is of unique cultural national and international significance, with a nationally significant collection of tomb sculptures containing examples from the 13th-7th centuries. Radio-carbon dating places the roof in the middle of the 13th Century (AD1223-AD1281). The church has seen expansion, destruction and repairs from the 13th Century to the present day [youghalonline.com]. The Church is currently in receipt of funding from The Department of Heritage Arts & the Gaeltacht for repair to the Church Floor [€18,000]. This is additional funding from the original grant of €60,000 made under the 'Buildings in State Care 2014' fund, [June 2014], and [€20,000 September 2013], for essential conservation works. During the repair, in October, 2014, previously unknown important burial sites were discovered,—the tomb of John Fitzgerald, Earl of Desmond who died in 1662, & three other tombs, together with a 200 year old central heating system and a vaulted chamber.

MAIN FINDINGS

Projective Techniques

Interestingly, but not surprising due to the sea aspect of the Town, the results of the projective techniques found that from the 71 respondents, 'sea (12) & beach (10)' came to the fore as the 'top of mind' associations with Youghal in this test. These results were used to feed into the qualitative in-depth interviews.

TABLE 4: Projective Techniques-Results on Youghal – 71 Responses



In-depth Interviews

Youghal has it all! . . . but, who knows about it? Marketing the town is a bigger challenge than anything else facing it . . . !

The findings from the in-depth interviews reveals gaps in the tourist product offering in Youghal such as the bad quality of the sea water, the urgent need to regain the 'blue flag' beach status, limited toilet facilities & changing facilities, no boating facilities or angling stands, the need to update immediately the Town & Beach area., the need for more bed nights during peaks seasons, better signage, better infrastructures, more and improved walkways, .more ancestral and historical

connections highlighted, promote more culture, more marketing and PR, the urgent need to develop set-down water facilities, the lack of visitor moorings, the need for a floating breakwater that would work as a floating pontoon and could take 20 berths, but most especially, there is an urgent need to examine the possible development of a Marina for Youghal. A study of the Marine Leisure Industry estimated that almost 1.5 million adults in Ireland partake in some form of water based activity, contributing approximately €434m to the ([Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine](#), 2011).

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

A Marina

A need for a marina has been identified for Youghal and is documented in the southern marine strategy. Marine tourism is growing with visitor nights increasing. “For a seaside town, it is shocking that we do not have a marina for visiting boats”. The Irish Government outlines that the Irish coastline offers spectacular tourism and leisure opportunities and a rich maritime culture and heritage ([Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine](#), 2011). In February 2012, a consultation document entitled *Our Ocean Wealth: Seeking Your Views: New Ways; New Approaches; New Thinking* was launched by Minister Simon Coveney T.D.

The economic importance of the sea is a key feature of Government and on June 18, 2014, the first conference on Ocean Wealth was held in Dublin Castle ([ouroceanwealth.ie](#)). Ireland has over 9,000 kilometres of coastline and there has been some expansion in marina development in the past few years, with numbers growing from less than 10 in 1996 to over 22 in 2006. Marina development in Ireland needs to expand by at least 50% in the near future to facilitate forecast demand. In relation to Tourism & Leisure, the [Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine](#), (2011), outlines that the Irish marine tourism and leisure sector is significantly under-utilised. Marine tourism and leisure is estimated to represent 7% of our overall tourism and leisure sector and contributed €453 million to the Irish economy in 2007. Marine events such as the *Volvo Ocean Race* (2009 & 2012) alone can generate in excess of €50 million in revenue for the economy. Marine leisure is a lifestyle pursuit of increasing importance contributing to the local economy and to our human and physical health.

Dedicated angling tourism accounted for 173,000 visitors in 2010, and a spending of €58 million. Ireland has become one of Europe’s top destinations for whale watching, bird watching and outdoor activity enthusiasts. Ireland has a growing reputation as one of the world’s best cold water surfing locations. Cruise ship tourism continued to grow with a 12% increase in 2010; with over 200 cruise liners carrying over 305,000 passengers ([Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine](#), 2011). The benefits of a Marina to a local economy are substantial. It is estimated, for example, that a 250 berth marina in Skerries would potentially benefit the local economy by between €850,000 and €1.2m per annum ([skerriessailingclub.com](#)). Youghal needs a marina, and similar projects have been undertaken successfully in the past, for example, the Carrickfergus Marina, which was completed in 1998 and now has a 350 berth multi-award winning marina development. Spending by the local Authority of £4m attracted an investment of £25m by private developers and the creation of over 300 jobs in the area. This has become an international case-study in how local government & private partnership can work for the benefit of the entire community ([skerriessailingclub.com](#)).

ACCOMMODATION

More bed nights are needed in Youghal, ideally another hotel of at least 4 or 5 star rating. Successful weekends such as that of the *Queen of the Sea* have resulted in a dearth of accommodation for

visitors with the surplus travelling to Co. Waterford for accommodation. Many of the Section 23 properties that were originally developed and operated as self-catering accommodation have been sold and are now privately owned and not available for the tourist market. “We need more upmarket accommodation and a conference centre. “Despite the Walter Raleigh being an excellent hotel, more facilities are needed in the town. If people visit, they need places to stay”. There is also a current need to update the caravan & camping facilities as there is not enough capacity at present.

WATER TOURISM

A key strength for Youghal is its sea frontage. ‘Sea and beach’ were the most cited results from the projective techniques in this research. There is however, a serious lack of water related activities. “More water activities are needed such as adventure kayaking, canoeing surfing etc, Whale & Dolphin watching & more river trips at two hourly intervals”. This research finds that water tourism activities must be supported & developed. Issues of space allocation, huts for rental of boats, kayaks, canoes etc., & changing facilities must be addressed immediately. Insurance issues were also mentioned by previous boating providers as a major barrier to the continuation of their business.

WATER QUALITY

While acknowledging that the water quality in the sea at Youghal is currently substandard, the Youghal Main Drainage Scheme sought to address this issue in 2014(this project, however, has now been further delayed). Youghal lacked a proper wastewater treatment, and this has seriously impacted on the town, especially the quality of the bathing water. This has been a major setback for the Town coming into the summer season 2015. “The Front Strand will lose its bathing status this summer as a result of consistent ‘poor’ water quality ratings by the EPA – something must be done”. While the new Water Treatment Plant will eventually be in situ, however, to compete effectively, and enhance the product offering, Youghal will need a carefully drafted plan and strategy to regain the ‘Blue Flag’ status for its 4 beaches in the future.

ANGLING

It is a significant loss that the angling club in Youghal no longer exists. Angling is a major tourist activity for Ireland. Angling tourism in Ireland is worth €0.75 billion to the Irish Economy and supports 10,000 jobs in rural Ireland (Inland Fisheries Ireland, 2013). “Angling stands would be great on the Quayside, also an upgrading of the Jetty”. The lack of angling facilities is a tourist void that needs attention. The potential for angling should be addressed as there is an opportunity to attract anglers into the region, given the substantial resources available, thereby boosting the local economy.

WALKWAYS

Walkways from the town need to be extended so there are “connections with the town to the Quality Hotel & Red Barn”. The consensus of this study is that there is a wonderful opportunity to develop the Marsh Land walks—“a wonderful wildlife amenity” and to “create a number of walk and cycle tracks”. This research recommends the development of the old railway line and station and to examine the possibility of developing a ‘Greenways Projects’. Westport has developed 42KM and a similar opportunity exists for Youghal. The old train station is apt for development and a plan should be established for same with the inclusion of tea rooms and a museum.

HERITAGE

More investment is needed in the built environment. A heritage building development plan should be developed to identify funding opportunities. The continuation of the development of the

historical structures in the town is vital as this historical aspect is a main differentiator (Chaplin 2003; Hadyn, 2003). Build upon the development of the Raleigh quarter around St. Mary's Church as well as the town walls. "Heritage is our differentiating factor", our town walls are a 'stand-out' feature". The clock tower needs to be available to the public with immediate effect. The re-opening of the Clock Tower will appeal to the 'culturally curious' visitor market, providing a first class interpretive and animated heritage site in the heart of Youghal. All contributors are in support of the Clock Gate refurbishment. "We capitalise on the strengths and gems that we have in the town". A major void in the offering is the absence of a dedicated museum space as Youghal has a wealth of history that can rival any other medieval town. Historical spaces like Tynte's Castle could be used. "It is potentially a smaller Bunratty Castle. Some of the people and events in the life of the castle could easily be exhibited. For example, William Penn had a Castle in Shanagarry. In his diary, he mentions visiting Lady Tynte in Youghal.

MARKETING

"Youghal has significantly improved the marketing of the historical and heritage offering", but more support structures are needed. Additional resources need to be directed towards a new official website for Youghal: www.youghal.ie. This upgraded and updated site would be 'mobile enabled' and engage in all associated online social media forms. More marketing of the larger festivals is needed and Youghal must appeal to the 'culturally curious' and 'heritage tourist' and not just be associated with 'sea and beach'. This association was very much to the fore in the results of the projective techniques. Youghal can easily appeal to a wider heritage tourist, and also, to an older demographic—the 'grey market'. The historical aspect of the town is under promoted and there is limited visibility and knowledge when one travels away from the Youghal area.

MYRTLE GROVE

In relation to Myrtle Grove, the historical home of Sir Walter Raleigh, much debate ensued in this study. "If we had access to develop Sir Walter Raleigh's villa, then we might develop a world class facility around it (think of Ann Hathaway's cottage, or, Shakespeare's house). Owners and family members living at Myrtle Grove outline however that "people must remember that Myrtle Grove is somebody's home and is in private ownership and not something that can be taken for granted by the town of Youghal". Constructive goodwill does exist from family members regarding the future of this iconic building, its gardens, and stables. Sensitivity in any discussion or negotiation concerning its potential development as a pivotal tourist attraction for Youghal will be needed.

CONCLUSION

Youghal is a rare tourist commodity combining heritage, history, and nature in one accessible setting. In possession of a wealth of vital ingredients, it can be a major and distinctive visitor attraction and tourist 'must see' destination, on a par with any of Ireland's current leading tourism centres. Cork County Council is currently in the process of preparing a new Heritage Regeneration Strategy for Youghal, and, as outlined, (Hadyn, 2003; Chaplin, 2003; Poria *et al.*, 2006) heritage is an important tourism driver. The Plan is a strategic approach to the social, economic and heritage development of Youghal up to 2020. In terms of 'must have' developments, the development of a Marina is paramount. A steering group should be appointed to lobby Government. There may be an opportunity for a public/private partnership or a private investor to develop the Marina. Given the correct impetus and determination, Youghal is set to become a commercially successful thriving economic hub, providing a superior quality of life for resident and visitor alike. If evolutionary planning, relevant expertise, common purpose, goodwill and hard work are correctly and urgently synchronised and aligned, then all investment, whether public, private, or philanthropic, will deliver rich returns.

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