

For release December 8th 2022

Industry body's monthly dashboard of tourism industry performance

- **November data shows international visitor arrivals down 4% compared to November 2019 and down 18% year-to-date**
- **For the first month since the pandemic European markets were on a par with their performance in 2019 while long haul markets were marginally up**
- **Significant industry concern for next year with twin obstacles to recovery: soaring cost inflation and reduced tourism accommodation supply**
- **Industry estimates 28% of all tourism beds in regional Ireland currently not available to tourism market due to Government humanitarian contracts**

Ireland – December 8th, 2022: The Irish Tourism Industry Confederation (ITIC) has today issued its latest monthly tourism dashboard which shows a strong level of visitor arrivals in November. However, soaring cost inflation and a deteriorating global economic outlook - allied with the limited tourism accommodation supply – means that there is significant concern for the year ahead.

ITIC's Tourism Dashboard is published compares each month to the same month in 2019, the last normal year for the Irish tourism industry. Using carrier and port data ITIC extrapolates inbound visitor numbers by market based on past performance.

660,000 international visitors came to Ireland during November, down 4% compared to the same month in 2019, an improving trajectory but with an 18% lag year to date. Last month visitors from long haul markets were 4% up while the important North American market saw 122,000 visitors.

Looking forward ITIC expressed significant concern that recovery would be threatened by soaring cost inflation, the energy crisis and the impact of Government contracts with tourism accommodation suppliers.

Elaina Fitzgerald Kane, Chairperson of ITIC, said *"Comparing tourism monthly data to 2019 we feel is the best comparison and will help track recovery. Pre-pandemic tourism was the country's largest indigenous industry, its biggest regional employer, and contributed €2 billion annually to the exchequer and it is vital that the sector returns to sustainable growth"*.

Referring to the impact of Government contracts for Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers, Eoghan O'Mara Walsh, CEO of ITIC, expressed significant concern that tourism accommodation supply would be severely restricted next year impacting on the broader tourism economy's recovery.

O'Mara Walsh said *"We now estimate that 28% of all tourism beds in regional Ireland are now not available to the tourism economy due to Government contracts. While hotels and guesthouses are part of the solution to accommodate refugees, they cannot be the only solution. If this level of tourism accommodation stock is not available next year for international visitors it will cost the broader tourism industry up to €1 billion in lost earnings"*.

Irish Tourism Industry Confederation

PRESS RELEASE

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In a flagship report last month on the impact of refugees and asylum seekers on Irish tourism ITIC argued that there needs to be a Department of Taoiseach-led approach such is the seriousness of the issue, a comprehensive 2 year plan needs to be published, and a business continuity fund is likely to be needed for impacted tourism businesses.

O'Mara Walsh said *"If there are no tourism beds in tourism towns next summer there will be no tourism activity and that will have a very negative impact on downstream tourism businesses such as attractions, restaurants, pubs, and cultural offerings."*

ITIC has called for a fair allocation from the tourism industry of 12%-15% of tourism beds for Government contracts and has called on a more balanced plan from Government to include the use of vacant buildings, unused state institutions, and modular housing.

"We can't sleep-walk into a major crisis for Ireland's largest indigenous industry and biggest regional employer" said O'Mara Walsh.

Fitzgerald Kane welcomed the commencement of the Temporary Business Energy Support but argued that it needed to be more generous as energy bills for many hotels and restaurants had jumped to unsustainable and unprecedented levels. She said *"In a recent constructive meeting with Minister Catherine Martin we communicated how challenging the business environment was for tourism and hospitality businesses and our concerns for next year. We made it very clear that it is vital that the 9% Vat rate for the industry be extended throughout next year."*

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Notes to Editor

About the Irish Tourism Industry Confederation:

The Irish Tourism Industry Confederation was founded in 1984 and is the umbrella group representing the leading tourism interests in Ireland. Its members come from key tourism stakeholders across the public and private sector and include Aer Lingus, Irish Ferries, daa, Shannon Group, Irish Hotels Federation, Incoming Tour Operators Association, Guinness Storehouse, Restaurants Association of Ireland, Vintners Federation of Ireland and Association of Visitor Experiences & Attractions amongst others. A full list of member organizations can be seen on www.itic.ie.

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Tourism is Ireland's largest indigenous industry and is a critical component of the export economy. Key tourism facts in 2019:

- Worth €9.2 billion annually
- 9.68 million international staying visitors in 2019
- Tourism employed 265,000 nationally in 2019
- 1 in 9 jobs nationally are in tourism & hospitality sector
- According to Fáilte Ireland, for every euro spent by tourists 23c is generated in tax