



## **Press Release**

**March 29<sup>th</sup> 2017**

### **Evidence of Brexit impact – sharp drop in British visitors alarms Irish industry**

**Central Statistics Office confirms 6% decline in British arrivals from December 2016 to February 2017 - monthly drop in February alone is 22%**

**ITIC warns that up to 10,000 jobs at risk**

### **Industry repeats calls for urgent Government action to protect Ireland's largest indigenous industry**

The Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC), the umbrella group for the tourism industry in Ireland, today (Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March) warns that the impact of Brexit is already damaging Irish tourism.

The latest data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) confirms that British tourism arrivals to Ireland are down 6% for the period December-February. This represents 49,200 fewer British visitors compared to the same period last year and is real evidence that the Irish tourism industry is very vulnerable to Brexit.

ITIC represents airlines, hotels, tour operators, ferry companies, visitor attractions and other leading tourism interests.

Paul Gallagher, Chairman of ITIC, said: "The three-month trend from Britain shows a decline of 6% but looking at February alone there is a very worrying decline of 22% - if that level of decline continues for the year it would mean 850,000 less arrivals from Britain to Ireland and this would impact up to 10,000 jobs."

"The CSO figures released today are confirmation of what the Irish tourism industry has been saying for some time. Brexit represents the biggest challenge to Irish tourism since the global recession. The Government has been asleep at the wheel, despite the Irish tourism industry urgings, and corrective action is needed now."

Tourism is Ireland's largest indigenous industry, employing 220,000 people throughout the country, 1 in every 9 jobs. The industry is worth over €8 billion annually to the economy, according to ITIC.

ITIC has previously published a report on the impact of [Brexit](#) on Irish tourism warning that failure by the Government to put policies in place to mitigate the adverse consequences of Ireland's largest tourism market leaving the EU will damage jobs and regional growth.

Eoghan O'Mara Walsh, CEO of ITIC said: "Although other markets are performing well, Britain is Ireland's largest visitor source market and of critical importance. There were 3.9 million arrivals from Britain in 2016 and they spent €1.1 billion in the national economy.

"Over 2 in every 5 international visitors to Ireland come from the UK and Brexit poses a unique and unprecedented challenge. It is absolutely vital that everything is done to support the tourism sector and underpin jobs."

ITIC calls on the Government to reverse recent cuts and provide an immediate €12 million boost to tourism budgets to consolidate UK market share, diversify into new markets and provide a package of supports to tourism businesses.

Mr Gallagher said: "Corrective policy action is urgently needed. Other export sectors have received support and yet tourism, which employs 220,000 people throughout the country, is being taken for granted by the Government".

ITIC pointed out that Brexit will have a particularly negative impact on Dublin and the border regions.

Mr O'Mara Walsh said: "The tourism euro is as valuable as the euro earned by any other export sector and more valuable in the context that tourism is one of the few industries that can provides regional balance and sustainable local employment.

"The Government must be proactive and help the sector consolidate its market share in Britain but crucially diversify into other markets. Diversification cannot happen on its own – the State agencies for tourism need to be given the resources to increase traffic and business from Europe and North America."

Mr O'Mara Walsh stressed that the tourism sector was very exposed to Brexit and required a strategic support framework. ITIC is calling for a €12 million support package for Irish tourism to allow for market diversification and to support the industry and vulnerable tourism enterprises.

Mr Gallagher added: "As a sector if pro-tourism policies are adopted and appropriate investment strategies implemented we can continue to grow but Brexit poses a real risk to sustained growth unless the Government acts now".

**ENDS**

**For Further information**

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

ITIC is the umbrella group representing the leading tourism interests throughout the country including airlines, air and sea ports, ferry companies, the hotels federation, tour operators, B&Bs, and visitor attractions. See [www.itic.ie](http://www.itic.ie).

Tourism is Ireland's largest indigenous employer with 1 in every 9 jobs nationally within the tourism and hospitality sector. Last year was a new peak for Irish tourism when overseas visitors to Ireland numbered nearly 9 million spending €4.7 billion locally within the economy.

According to Fáilte Ireland, every 1,000 extra tourists supports 14 jobs in the industry. For every €1 spent by tourists, 24.5c is generated in tax.