

## **Failte Ireland awards Clonakilty District Best Emerging Rural Tourism Destination 2007**

Clonakilty District has been awarded the title of European Destinations of Excellence - Best Emerging Rural Tourism Destination 2007, in a competition funded and organised by Fáilte Ireland with support from the European Union. Clonakilty District comprises of Ross Carbery, Rathbarry, Ardfield, Clonakilty, Ballinscarthy, Timoleague, Courtmacsherry and all the areas in between. Clonakilty District demonstrated how they build the capacity of villages and product providers outside of the hub through environmental education, local supports and training, the use of local produce, accommodation networks, innovation, product development, and town enhancements to grow business in outlying communities.

The aim of this European Destinations of Excellence Competition is to highlight the value, diversity and shared characteristics of European tourist destinations, and to promote destinations where the economic growth objective to ensure the social, cultural and environmental sustainability of tourism. The competition had entries from areas that have implemented marketing initiatives that aim to preserve local, natural and cultural heritage, while also ensuring the area's social, cultural and environmental sustainability.

Clonakilty District will now receive an energy waste audit and management plan, a 3 year marketing plan as well as a DVD production which will be shown at the awards ceremony. In addition the EU will offer the winner from each Member State international promotion of the destination, representation at an EU award ceremony during the 2007 European Tourism Forum in Portugal, distribution of the audio-visual material, e-marketing opportunities and participation in an EU network.

The adjudicators were very impressed with the variety of products, the high standards and commitment of the local groups which they met throughout the preliminary rounds. Each group recognised their destination's needs and demonstrated an awareness of the need for ongoing improvement of their tourism experience. "The future for rural tourism lies not just in innovative product offering and sustainable tourism initiatives, but also in the commitment, energy and enthusiasm of local networks", said Fiona Buckley, Acting Manager - Fáilte Ireland South West.

The eleven finalists were:

- |                             |                          |                              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| * <i>Tipperary Lakeside</i> | * <i>Westport</i>        | * <i>Clonakilty District</i> |
| * <i>Ballyhoura</i>         | * <i>Inis Mor</i>        | * <i>Kerry Geo Park</i>      |
| * <i>Leighlinbridge</i>     | * <i>Howth</i>           | * <i>Inishowen</i>           |
| * <i>Slieve Blooms</i>      | * <i>Beara Peninsula</i> |                              |

If you require further information please log on to:

**<http://www.failteireland.ie/Developing-Markets/Ireland-Market/European-Destinations-Of-Excellence.aspx>**

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