

Ireland's Association for Adventure Tourism

PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION



OCTOBER 2020



**IRELAND'S ASSOCIATION
FOR ADVENTURE TOURISM**

INTRODUCTION

THE IAAT IS THE INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVE ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVENTURE TOURISM SECTOR ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND.

This sector is one of the fastest growing and most exciting within Irish tourism and the IAAT aims to work with adventure tourism operators to develop the sector in a sustainable and responsible manner.

IAAT represents over 200 of Ireland's leading Activity providers for the domestic and international markets - everything from hiking to kayaking, surfing to equestrian, fishing to climbing, and indeed adventure centres offering a wide array of activities groups, families and schools.

Activity Tourism contributes to the physical and mental well-being of our society, arguably at a time when it is more needed than ever.

CHALLENGING TIMES

OUR SECTOR HAS BEEN COMPLETELY DECIMATED BY THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND NOW SEEKS URGENT SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE BUDGET.

Our businesses exclusively or very heavily dependent on:

1. Having access to a full high season (typically March to September)
2. Having access to the inbound international tourism market

Both of these key drivers for our sector were not made available. Furthermore, restrictions to accessing the domestic market was skewed from county to county depending on populations available.

Ultimately, the Activity sector goes in to Winter 2020 struggling to survive, with a view to being able to re-open and lead the drive to recovery in 2021.

BUDGET 2021 ASKS

TO GIVE THE ACTIVITY SECTOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SURVIVE 2020, AND LEAD THE RECOVERY INTO 2021, WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING 9 ASKS:

1. GRANTS & LOANS RESCUE PACKAGE

We ask for Business Continuity Grants to provide Enterprise and Brexit - as per the ITIC (of which we are a member) Call To Action.

Grant support is urgently needed to re-employ key staff who will help build for the 2021 season. It is also important that any grants take account of businesses who do not pay rates.

2. STAY & SPEND SCHEME

We ask that the Stay & Spend Scheme simplified and expanded to include Activity businesses.

Activity businesses - by their nature - are in a strong position to lead the recovery in 2021, with customers often choosing activities at a given location before choosing where they will eat or stay.

We believe that the Scheme should run through Summer 2021, to support Domestic Tourism market that will be needed to replace the lost international visitors.

3. EMPLOYMENT WAGE SUBSIDY SCHEME (TWSS)

We ask for the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) to be revised to bring it back into line with the former temporary wage subsidy scheme (TWSS) to at least March 2021, eased to a 50:50 wage subsidy for providers taking people off the Covid-19 payments scheme.

4. RE-INTRODUCE THE JOBS BRIDGE SCHEME

We ask for the Re-introduction of Jobs Bridge, which will allow small business to hire talent and grow the business. Jobs Bridge is a great way to get young grads, school leavers into the tourism sector.

5. THE VAT RATE

We ask for a universal VAT rate of 9% in the immediate term to at least the end of August 2021.

Also note that certain Activity businesses are currently classified under the amended 21% VAT rate. This classification is not a reflection of their main activities - tourism activities for the domestic & international markets. We would like this to be addressed by the Department of Finance.

6. DIGITAL GRANTS

We ask that digital enhancement grants (such as the one provided through Local Enterprise Offices) be extended through the winter to give businesses the opportunity to improve their online booking and overall process delivery capabilities.

7. OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRES (OECS)

We ask - with the support of the Department of Finance - that the Department of Education direct all Irish schools to reschedule bookings to a new date as opposed to cancel.

Schools tourism is vital for the survival of outdoor activity businesses (such as adventure centres), particularly in the shoulder season.

8. MARKETING

We ask that marketing budgets be doubled, to address optimising of the domestic market as well as the eventual reintroduction of the international market.

9. MEMBERSHIPS

We ask that key memberships be funded by Government that will engender collaboration and a cohesive approach by the tourism sector as we seek to recover from the Covid-19 crisis.

For example: membership to ITIC, IAAT, Chambers and other cluster associations.

IAAT

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