

Westmeath Tourism Strategy 2021 to 2027

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

5: Immersive Visitor Experiences

Countywide, Westmeath boasts a wide variety of high-quality visitor attractions and activities, including historic houses, castles, gardens, greenways, walking trails and water-based activities. In addition, our local communities, towns and villages, restaurants, bars, shops and parks all make a strong contribution to the experience of a visitor. For today's international tourist, holidays are less about 'doing' something and more about feeling that they are truly immersed in a place or an activity. "An **immersive tourism experience** is one that engages the senses, makes connections on an emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual or social level and creates a lasting memory."

- How can we create more immersive visitor experiences in Westmeath?
- How can we market our tourism offering in a stronger and more effective way, taking account of opportunities offered by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland?

Outdoor Recreation

With extensive greenways, woodland and lakeshore walks and water-based activities, opportunities for visitors to engage in outdoor recreation are in abundance in Westmeath.

- How can we grow and enhance our outdoor visitor offering in an environmentally sustainable way?
- How can we create more immersive experiences for visitors engaging in outdoor recreation?
- What services and facilities need to be provided to support outdoor tourism and where?
- How can we engage these visitors with our communities, culture and other visitor offerings?
- How can we encourage long distance cyclists or day trippers to stay longer and spend more on their visit?

Heritage, Tours and Visitor Attractions

Westmeath is steeped in heritage and already has a strong foundation in the provision of world-class tourism attractions. Assets include Athlone Castle Visitor Centre, Belvedere House, Gardens and Park, the Luan Gallery, The Hill of Uisneach, Tullynally Castle Gardens, Kilbeggan Distillery, the Kilbeggan Races, Dún na Sí Amenity and Heritage Park and Fore Abbey. Increased investment and support is required in order to increase revenue generated to the local economy from these attractions, both directly and indirectly. Creating stronger linkages between attractions, activities, visitor services and accommodation is critical to increase visitor dwell time and spend.

- How can more immersive visitor experiences be provided at our visitor attractions?
- How can we increase revenue generated to the local economy?
- How can we create strong, effective linkages between attractions and visitor service providers to increase visitor dwell time and spend?
- How can our visitor attractions be better aligned with regional brands Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands in order to maximise marketing potential?
- How can we incorporate storytelling and local culture into the visitor experience?
- What additional visitor attractions and activities could be provided and how?

Culture, Festivals and Food

Westmeath is a county rich in culture and the artist expression, with art galleries, craft shops and theatres offering the chance for visitors to experience our local artistic talent.

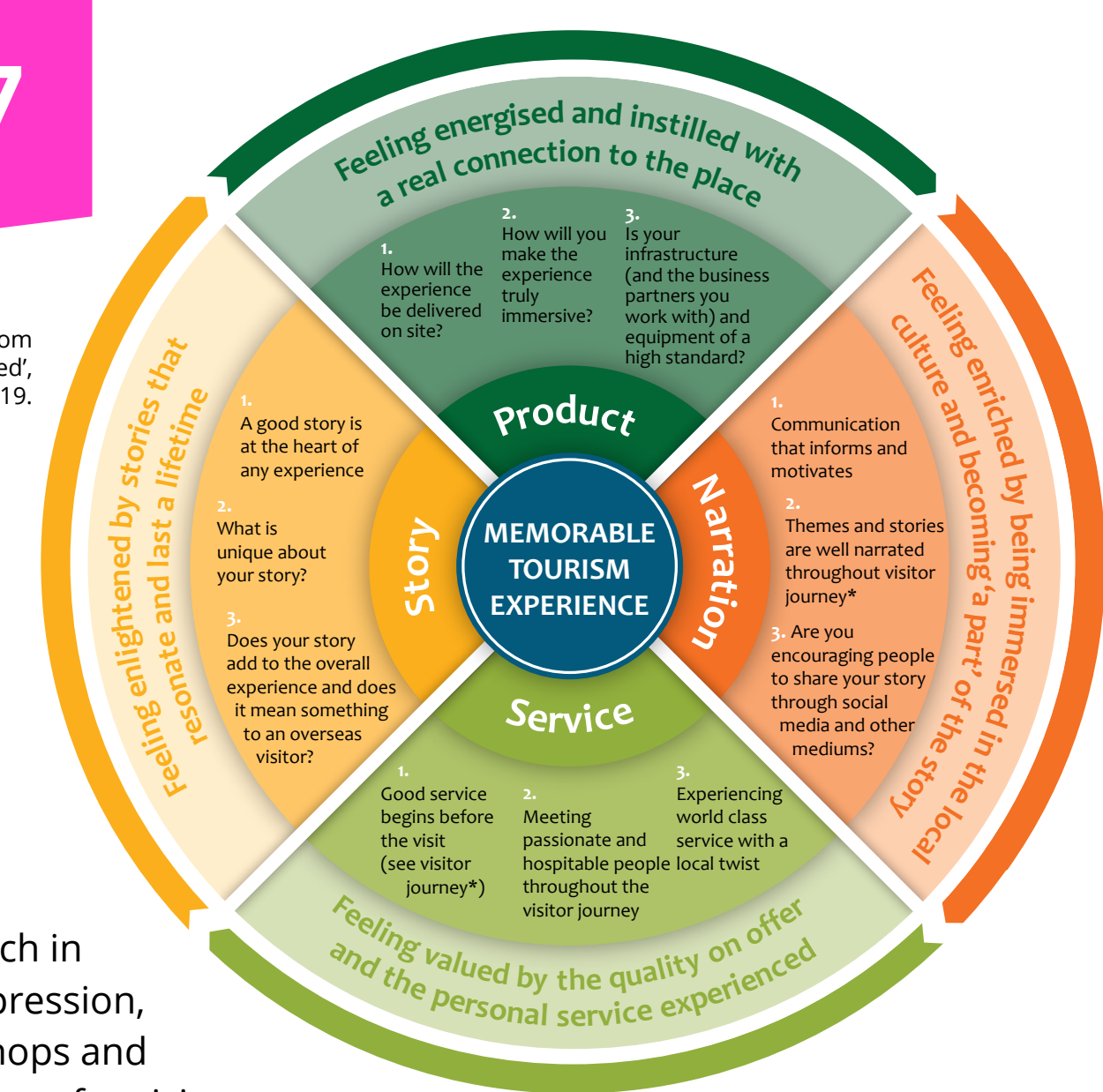
Musical talent is also evident and the tradition of Irish music is celebrated county-wide, through Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann centres and traditional pubs.

A number of vibrant festivals enable local communities to celebrate a valuable cultural heritage and spotlight unique local attributes.

Food tourism is increasing in importance internationally and locally produced food and beverages offer the opportunity to engage the senses and create memorable experiences.

- How can we better showcase our local artists and musical talent to visitors in a structured way, to facilitate marketing and maximise revenue generated?
- How can we support home-grown events and festivals to develop to their full potential and attract larger audiences where appropriate?
- How can we better connect our local creative communities with visitor infrastructure in order to enable visitors to better experience our local talent and distinctiveness?
- How can we create more memorable food experiences for visitors, showcasing our artisan produce and connecting visitors with the stories and people involved?

'Experience Wheel' from 'Experiences Explained', Fáilte Ireland 2019.



How to have your Say

Send your submission via the [Public Consultation Portal](#), or email tourism@westmeathcoco.ie.

