



**Katherine Webster**  
**Director**  
**Cliffs of Moher**  
**Visitor Experience**

*The Cliffs of Moher*  
*Achieving 1 Million Plus Visitors*  
*in a Rural Destination*



# Set the Scene

- ❑ The Cliffs of Moher are Ireland's most visited natural attraction
- ❑ Stretching along the Atlantic Coast of County Clare
  - ❑ 8 km long – 214m high
  - ❑ A Wild Atlantic Way Signature Discovery Point
  - ❑ Spectacular geological formations
  - ❑ SPA for seabirds with over 60,000 during nesting season
  - ❑ Part of the UNESCO recognised Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark
  - ❑ Visited by tourists since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century
- ❑ The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience opened by Clare County Council in February 2007
  - ❑ New subterranean visitor centre building, cliff edge pathways, steps and viewing areas and traffic management matched with new visitor management and education programme





# Structure

- ❑ Owned & developed by Clare County Council
  - ❑ Initial capital investment of €31.5million
- ❑ Operated & managed by Cliffs of Moher Centre Ltd.
  - ❑ Distinct management structure, budget, staffing and operational organisation
  - ❑ Operated as a tourism enterprise
  - ❑ Reporting to local authority – strategic direction & control
- ❑ Tenants companies operating leased units - main gift shop, the smaller of two cafes and six craftworker units



# Mission

*"To provide our visitors with a world class experience delivered in a safe welcoming and informative manner by friendly, professional staff who take pride in their work place and the service they deliver."*



# Visitor Information

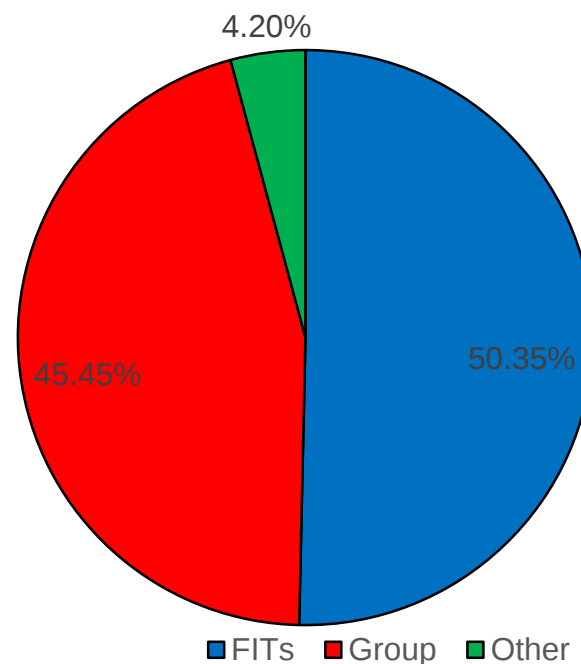
❑ 2<sup>nd</sup> most visited tourist attraction on island of Ireland

❑ 2014 – 1,080,501 visitors

❑ 2015 ~ 1,250,000

| Nationality   | %     |
|---------------|-------|
| North America | 29.5% |
| Ireland       | 24.9% |
| Germany       | 13.5% |
| France        | 8.7%  |
| UK            | 3.9%  |
| Spain         | 3.3%  |
| Italy         | 2.9%  |
| Other EU      | 4.8%  |
| Australia     | 1.7%  |
| China         | 1.1%  |
| Other         | 5.7%  |

Visitor Type





# Economic Impact

- ❑ 124 people directly employed at the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience *August 2015*
- ❑ Significant local purchaser of goods & services
- ❑ 33.2% of visitors stay the night before or the night after or both in County Clare
  - ❑ In 2014 this equated to >536,174 overnights
- ❑ 58% of visitors report visiting another attraction in Co. Clare
- ❑ Partnering closely with other local tourism stakeholders
  - ❑ Clare Tourism
  - ❑ Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark
  - ❑ Burren Ecotourism Network
  - ❑ Accommodation providers
  - ❑ Cluster ticketing with other attractions
  - ❑ Joint marketing and promotion
- ❑ Core policy to promote Clare tourism product





Fáilte - Welcome



Contae an Chláir  
COUNTY CLARE

# The Visitor Experience

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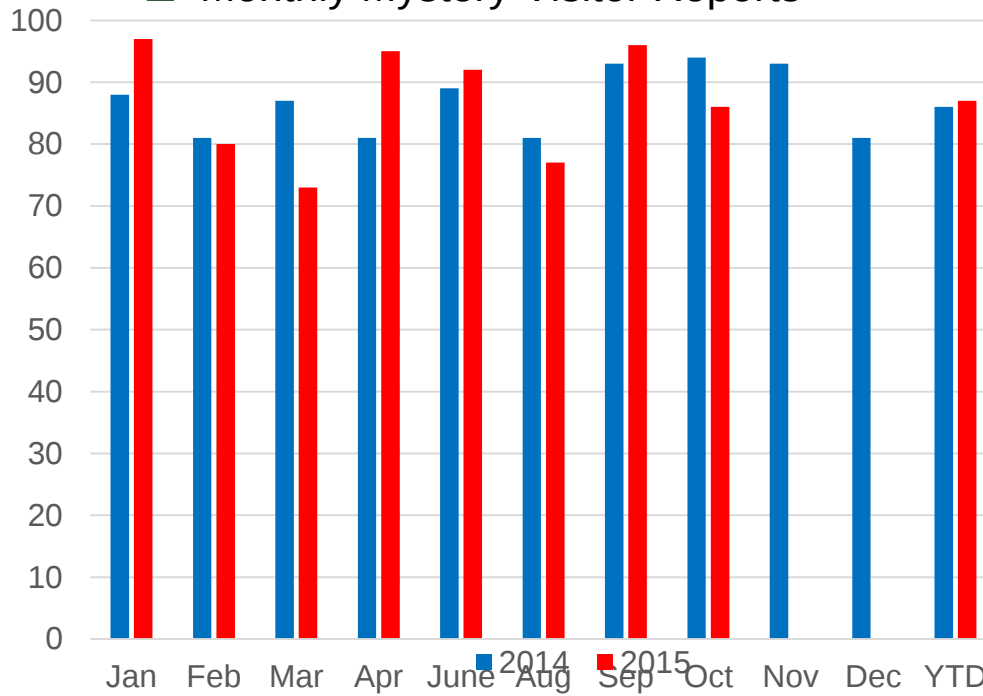
- ❑ One million plus visitors
  - ❑ Attracting them is the easy part
  - ❑ Delivering a world class visitor experience is the key
- ❑ Visitor Management
  - ❑ Advance booking – concourse management
  - ❑ First point of contact onsite – welcome
  - ❑ Capacity management
- ❑ Visitor Education
  - ❑ Safety, Conservation, Experience
- ❑ Our people make the difference
- ❑ Every member of the team is focused on the visitor first and foremost





# Through the Visitor's Eyes

- ❑ Wide range of feedback mechanisms
  - ❑ Online surveys, Visitor Book, Comment Cards, Coach operator surveys, review sites
- ❑ World Host customer service delivery programme
  - ❑ London Olympics 2012, NITB
  - ❑ Customer Service Excellence workshop
  - ❑ Monthly Mystery Visitor Reports



# The Social Economy

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- ☐ Word of Mouth/Word of Web
- ☐ Social Sharing
  - ☐ Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest
  - ☐ Youtube
  - ☐ Tripadvisor, Yelp, Travel specific sites
- ☐ Cliff edge WiFi
- ☐ Free Cliffs Audio Guide
- ☐ Postcards from the Edge
- ☐ Mobile content





# Capacity – the Next Big Challenge

- ❑ Peak periods – May to September
- ❑ Peak times – 11am to 4pm
- ❑ Negative Impacts
  - ❑ Safety
  - ❑ Quality of Experience
  - ❑ Environmental impact
  - ❑ Operational aspects
  - ❑ Knock on impact in local areas – Doolin, Burren etc.
- ❑ Reputation/recommendation impact

*“As I see the world, there's one element that's even more corrosive than missionaries: tourists. It's not that I feel above them in any way, but that the very places they patronize are destroyed by their affection.”*

*Tahir Shah – House of the Tiger King: The quest for a lost city.*





# Not just an issue for the Cliffs of Moher

## ❑ Venice

- ❑ The “Veniceland” phenomenon
- ❑ 55,000 residents / 22 million visitors – 400 visitors per resident per year
- ❑ Daytrip impact of cruise & megabus tourism – limited economic benefit
- ❑ Demands to limit the numbers of visitors to the city
- ❑ *“Though there are some disagreeable things in Venice there is nothing so disagreeable as the visitors.” Henry James American author 1843-1916*

## ❑ The Battle for Barcelona

- ❑ Residents protests & *“Tourists go home or die”* graffiti

## ❑ Global attractions threatened by unsustainable growth

- ❑ Great Barrier Reef, Macchu Pichu, Ankor Wat, Stonehenge

## ❑ A lesson for the Wild Atlantic Way





# Addressing the Challenge

- ❑ Existing measures
  - ❑ Extended opening hours
  - ❑ Advance booking and intelligent management
  - ❑ Price based incentives for trade operators
  - ❑ “*Come later in the day*” FIT messaging
  - ❑ Operational closure of admissions
- ❑ Next Steps
  - ❑ Add value to advance booking for FITs
  - ❑ Intelligence & management of real numbers onsite
  - ❑ Price based disincentives for peak period
- ❑ Numbers cap on visitors
- ❑ Wider context
  - ❑ North Clare - working with authorities and local interests on overall capacity management measures





# Sustainable Destination Management

- ❑ Chasing the numbers alone is a race to the bottom
- ❑ Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark
  - ❑ Geopark status achieved in 2011, revalidated in 2014
  - ❑ Destination management approach
  - ❑ EU GeoparkLIFE 5 year programme 2012-2017
  - ❑ 60+ tourism enterprises in Burren Ecotourism Network
  - ❑ Recognised as global best practice example
    - ❑ Shortlisted for Best Destination in 2013 Responsible Travel Awards
    - ❑ Shortlisted for WTTC 2014 Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Award
    - ❑ Winner of 2015 EDEN award for Sustainable Tourism & Gastronomy
    - ❑ Shortlisted for 2016 National Geographic World Legacy Destination Leadership award
    - ❑ Multiple national awards



Discover &  
**Experience**

Learn &  
**Engage**

Community &  
**Business**

## European Destination of Excellence for Tourism and Local Gastronomy



# Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark

Pol O’Conghaile Ireland’s Travel Journalist of the Year

*“People often ask me how to get their towns and regions on the tourism map. What can they do to penetrate the media, boost social shares, and get on the visitor’s radar? I’ve a pretty standard answer now. I suggest a short break in the Burren.”*

Irish Independent 25 Oct 2015

People, Place, Learning, Livelihood

Stay Another Day

See More with a Guide

*“Great places to live are great places to visit.”*



