



Ireland's Visitor Attractions Experiencing 10% Slowdown in 2019

- **2018 AVEA member survey records 22.6 million visitors to key attractions in Ireland contributing €489 million in revenues to the Irish economy, while employing 4,000 people in local communities across the country**
- **AVEA calls for government support for this sector to combat Brexit, insurance premium concerns and international market competitiveness**
- **Responsible Tourism Initiative launched to encourage sector sustainability**

October 7th 2019: The AVEA (Association of Visitor Experiences and Attractions) National Conference 2019 was today opened by Paul Carty, AVEA Chairman and Managing Director, Diageo Irish Brand Homes. The theme of the conference, taking place in Thomond Park, Limerick is *'Ireland's VEA Sector – Vibrant, Evolving and Agile'*. Over the two days, delegates will hear from keynote speaker James Bailey, Marketing Director, Longleat House & Safari Park, entrepreneur and broadcaster Bobby Kerr, as well as a host of other panellists as the challenges and opportunities facing the sector will be discussed and debated.

In his opening address, Paul Carty outlined the importance of the VEA industry and its contribution to the Irish economy: "Our recently published Annual Members Survey showed that 2018 was a record year for Irish tourism. Our members, who employ nearly 4,000 people nationwide, welcomed 22.6 million visitors and generated €489 million in revenue, much of which flows into local economies. However, the survey also highlights significant challenges facing our sector in 2019."

Incoming AVEA Chairman Niall O'Callaghan, Managing Director of Shannon Groups tourist attraction company, Shannon Heritage, commented; "Unfortunately 2019 has not lived up to visitor expectations so far, and while the VEA sector remains positive, performance will be down by up to 10% on 2018. Clouds are gathering on the horizon for Irish tourism; Brexit, market competitiveness and more unstable geo-social and political environments in many of our key international markets. Now is the time for a close working relationship with government to realise how a championed VEA sector can play an even greater role in neutralising some of these obvious challenges. Tourism is a vital part of the national economy, creating jobs in rural Ireland where other industries are not located."

Niall also cited the increasing costs of doing business as a real concern, impacting competitiveness of the entire tourism industry; "The continued increase in insurance premiums are well-documented and will damage the sectors' ability to evolve and grow – in some cases our members have had to cancel events as insurance premiums simply make them unsustainable."

Paul Carty added; "The AVEA annual survey of members also identified the negative impact the increased VAT rate is having on our sector, with some members working on far tighter margins than

ever before in order to remain price competitive, as well as concerns regarding funding for capital intensive heritage attractions given their importance as national treasures. These are real concerns that we want to work collaboratively with government to ensure a future proofed VEA sector.”

At the conference, AVEA also launched its first Responsible Tourism Initiative with the National Biodiversity Centre Director Liam Lysaght, who is speaking at the event. Grainne Kelliher, CEO of Airfield estate and Vice-Chair of AVEA said; ‘A core initiative for 2019 was to develop a Responsible Tourism Charter to enable our members to develop or enhance their own sustainable tourism policies to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector and protect our many heritage treasures so that future generations can continue to enjoy them. AVEA attractions are firmly rooted in Ireland’s cultural heritage and have survived countless generations; their ongoing prosperity is integral to delivering the narrative of our history.”

Grainne continued; “Climate change is a key consideration for everyone and every business, we want to act now to address this challenge. It is also becoming important for visitors when choosing a holiday destination too. Many AVEA members have been actively engaged in sustainable practices – water and energy conservation, environmental protection and conservation, waste management and accessibility. We now need to show and tell our visitors how seriously we take sustainability, by raising the bar to drive the sustainability ethos amongst our AVEA members, the communities in which we are located and in the wider Irish tourism industry.”

Ends

Editor’s Notes:

AVEA – Association of Visitor Experience and Attractions - is an all-island body representing the Visitor Attractions Sector of the Tourism Industry. AVEA represents and provides advocacy for members to Government, tourism agencies, media and the tourism industry. Networking amongst the members is central to the association’s objectives to enable the organisation to provide supports in training, benchmarking and advocacy initiatives to assist our members continually improve the visitor experience. More on AVEA can be found on www.avea.ie.

Access the AVEA Survey 2018 Performance Report [HERE](#)

For further information, interviews with AVEA spokespeople Paul Carty/ Niall O’Callaghan/Grainne Kelliher, or for further information on the Responsible Tourism Initiative, please contact:

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