



Approved Tourist Guides of Ireland

FEG REPORT 2019 IRELAND

2019 was a year with some unexpected challenges. Contrary to tourism forecasts, the sector recorded a downturn which was noticeable in the group market. While the number of individual and independent travellers was consistent and small group operators recorded an increase in tourism, the traditional group sector declined over the past 12 months.

We still operate in a seasonal tourism year, April-October. Tourism products are still increasingly expensive compared to other European travel markets, the lack of hotel rooms and price policy makes it difficult for continental European operators to do business. New hotels opening in Dublin did not ease the pressure as promised but now private service operators rent entire floors in hotels to provide homeless shelter and refugee services which offers more profit. The proposal to introduce tougher regulation for Airbnb etc was not followed up which led to the first anti tourism debate in Dublin.

Our organisation ATGI made a fundamental change and is no longer a non-profit membership organisation but is trading now as a Company limited by guarantee. However, the current structure remains the same, led by a minimum of 5 committee member / directors. We trademarked our Logo and fortified our foundation so we can start building and planning for the future.

Furthermore, we have now a paid Administration Assistant in place for 20 hours a week since late spring. Incorporation and the extra help should now lead the way for us implement a new strategy and concentrate on key issues of Training, Regulation and Industry representation.

Our local educational training board are offering the national tour guide course in various locations across Ireland. Our main complaint is that these courses are inconsistent, not fit for purpose and oversaturate the market with newly qualified guides, approx. 350-400 new guides in the last 14 months alone. EN15565 is not considered in any case. We fear that the current situation is hurting the industry in the long run.

ATGI has taken the first steps of becoming the authorising body and main trainer and we will call on FEG support over the next year in our endeavour. We also must step up training, redefining what CPD actually means and bring our standards up in every sense.

Calls for regulation of walking tours in Dublin were heard last year and ATGI formed a subcommittee. We managed to convince our Tourism Authority to include a recommendation regarding group size for walking tour to 20 people maximum into a new code of conduct for tourist guides that is due for release before the end of the year.

We also want to use that momentum to propose further legislation to ensure only licenced guides can lead tours in Dublin, a licence to be obtained by the City Council on filling out an application and documenting proof of insurance, tax clearance and signed code of conduct but it is still a work in process.

We could welcome 80 new members and total membership stands at 456 qualified local or National Tourist Guides. We also have 56 qualified guides with a valid SPSV licence (driver guides with own licenced 8-seater transport) which is also very popular with our clients. At total, the number of qualified guides (local and national) as per official list held by our tourism authority stands at 1008, however it is unclear how many of them are working as guides.

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