

IRISH TOURISM MARKETING PLAN... Martin Cullen TD, Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, together with Paul O'Toole, Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland, the agency responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas, today launched details of Tourism Ireland's €47 million marketing strategy and plans to promote the island abroad in 2009. As part of the plan, details of a three-year TV, press and online advertising campaign 'Go where Ireland takes you' were also outlined. The launch of Tourism Ireland's new global advertising campaign represents the culmination of a major brand review last year, in which industry representatives North and South participated. The new advertising will have an estimated annual audience of 200 million potential visitors worldwide. Addressing tourism industry leaders at Tourism Ireland's presentation of the plans in the Burlington Hotel, Dublin, Minister Cullen said: "Ireland" really does have a unique offering - one rooted in its sense of place and its people. If we package, promote and deliver it to best effect, we can win business in 2009. The Government, in the recent budget, consolidated its commitment to tourism by allocating just over €160 million in 2009, and €47 million will be spent on the marketing strategy we are launching today. This reflects the priority that the Government is giving to Irish tourism and to North-South co-operation. It will mean that Tourism Ireland will be out there, marketing and actively working with the industry on programmes to win business now." Expressing his appreciation to the sector for its approach to the current economic challenges, the Minister said: "It is a sign of the professionalism of Irish tourism that everybody recognises that the sector, like every other business, is affected by the economic cycle. Experience has shown that maintaining marketing spend in difficult times can position Ireland for a faster recovery."

Minister Cullen added: "Achieving an even greater geographical spread of visitors across the regions of Ireland is a continuing priority for Tourism Ireland, and indeed for Government. I know that the organisation is committed to continuing to showcase the regions across all marketing activities in 2009. In addition, Tourism Ireland will continue to implement dedicated regional campaigns, which will promote the wide range of activities, such as golf, excellent food and sightseeing opportunities available."

"As an island, direct, convenient and competitive access services are critical to achieving overall tourism growth and strategic targets. For its part, Tourism Ireland will work with industry on the island and in key source markets - including air and sea carriers, ports and airports - to promote ease of access to the island and to the regions and to help sustain our vital access services."

The Minister also said: "The Government has provided specific funding once again in 2009, to enable Tourism Ireland to continue to promote the "Discover Ireland's Wonderful West" campaign in the US and Great Britain markets, in line with the commitment given in the Shannon Airport Catchment Area Economic and Tourism Development Plan." ... In his concluding remarks, Minister Cullen said: "The new advertising will feature different products, activities and regions. It will be important that tourism enterprises play their part too in delivering the experience, in line with the promise that we are making in our advertising and communications overseas."