



County Garden Trail's 'rich' tourism potential

DERMOT KEYES

TWELVE of Waterford's most beautiful gardens, along with three well-known garden centres have combined their forces to create the Waterford Garden Trail, which was recently launched at Lismore Castle.

The trail "offers something special for both the novice and experienced gardener" alike according to the accompanying 16-page booklet which outlines the county's latest tourism initiative.

County Mayor Paddy O'Callaghan welcomed the inception of the Garden Trail and hopes that it will prove a significant attraction for both domestic and foreign visitors alike.

"A question worth asking is: how many of us have actually seen Mount Congreve, Curraghmore or Ballynatray?" he said.

"Taking this into consideration, the economic downturn must be seen as an opportunity for County Waterford. The likelihood is that we'll see an increase in local and domestic tourism along with the number of people taking short breaks.

"With that in mind, the Waterford Garden Trail is just the latest in a series of innovative tourism projects being delivered by Waterford County Council in partnership with local businesses and local communities.

"And I believe that the launch of this Garden Trail represents another important step towards the creation of sustainable enterprise and sustainable jobs."

Waterford County Manager Ray O'Dwyer said the trail aimed to capitalise on some of the county's best assets and illustrated "how we must focus on what sets Waterford apart".

"Figures from Fáilte Ireland show that 1.3 million people visited Irish gardens in 2009. Waterford is home to some of the most beautiful gardens in Ireland and for that matter, anywhere.

"The 12 participating gardens and three garden centres in our new trail are of the highest quality, showcasing a wonderful part of this county's rich heritage and diversity. Some are very old, some are young but within them all, one finds a wonderful array of trees and plants loved and cared for by their custodians."

Mr O'Dwyer added: "Today marks the start of a new story and I am positive that the efforts of the participating gardens and garden centres will reap a rich reward for tourism in this county."

Guest speaker and well-known gardening columnist Charlie Wilkins (of the 'Irish Examiner') praised those behind the trail's inception.

"I'd like to thank all who have contributed to developing this trail in any way. I want to thank the gardeners themselves,

the property owners themselves who have committed themselves to a project which will, I have no doubt, go from strength to strength and long may it continue."

*The Waterford Garden Trail is composed of: Abbey Road Gardens (Ferrybank), Ballyin Gardens (Lismore), Ballynatray Castle (outside Youghal), Cappoquin House & Gardens, Curraghmore (Portlaw), Dromana House & Gardens (Cappoquin), Fairbrook House Gardens (Kilmeaden), Mount Congreve (Kilmeaden), Salterbridge House (Cappoquin), Tourin House and Garden (Cappoquin), Tramore House Gardens, Blackwater Garden Centre (Kinsalebeg), Easter Island Garden Centre (Kilbarry) and Orchardstown Garden Centre (Old Cork Road, Waterford).

For further information, visit www.waterfordgardentrail.com



Mayor of County Waterford, Cllr Paddy O'Callaghan, Lord Burlington of Lismore Castle, and Mayor of Lismore, Cllr Orla Russeff.



Margaret Leaky, Dungarvan pictured with Mary Flynn, Catherine Flynn and Marie Cullinan, all from Rathgormack, in the Puglin Room, Lismore Castle.



Arlene Kenny from Lismore Heritage Centre, and Lynn Cahill from Waterford City Council.



Charlie Wilkins, gardening correspondent with the Irish Examiner pictured with Chairperson of Waterford Garden Trail, Kristin Jameson from Tourin House and Gardens, and County Manager Ray O'Dwyer at the launch in Lismore Castle.



Tom and Margaret Power (Secretary of the Waterford Garden Trail) from Abbey Road Gardens, Ferrybank.



George and Antoinette Kavanagh from Sion Hill House, Waterford pictured with gardening expert Charlie Wilkins and his wife Frances.



Mary and John Flahavan from Flahavans, Kilmacthomas, with Denis McCarthy from Waterford County Council and Barbara Grubb, Dromana House and Gardens.

PHOTOS: DAVID CLYNCH