

Accessible and Inclusive Tourism

Submission from the Event Industry
Association of Ireland (EIAI)

Fáilte Ireland consultation
Your Voice, Your Journey

28 October 2026

Enabling everyone to attend, participate and enjoy



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Executive Summary

The Event Industry Association of Ireland (EIAI) welcomes Fáilte Ireland's national consultation on Accessible and Inclusive Tourism. As the representative body for Ireland's events, festivals, parades and live experiences sector, we emphasise that accessible tourism cannot be achieved without accessible events.

Events are central to Ireland's cultural identity, visitor economy and community life. They can be the reason a person travels, determine where they stay and how long they remain, and provide opportunities to experience local culture and connect with communities. Accessibility must enable people to attend, participate and enjoy these experiences with dignity, independence and equal opportunity.

EIAI's concern is the gap between accessibility commitments and consistent delivery across temporary sites, public spaces and different event types. Organisers need clear expectations, dedicated resources, specialist advice and coordinated support. Visitors need reliable information and arrangements that work throughout their journey, including the return home.

Our top three priorities

1. **National standard.** Develop a National Accessible Events Standard and practical guidance framework, building on existing resources.
2. **Dedicated funding.** Establish an Accessible Events Fund for infrastructure, specialist services, planning and training.
3. **Consistent implementation.** Embed proportionate accessibility plans in relevant licensing, public funding and approval processes, backed by competent advice and delivery checks. Audit Fáilte Ireland-funded activity to verify inclusive delivery.

Supporting priorities

- Recognise events as core tourism infrastructure.
- Enable disabled people to participate as performers, sports participants, volunteers and workers, as well as visitors.
- Provide a national training pathway and clear supplier performance requirements.
- Use a shared delivery programme with disabled people's organisations, EIAI, local authorities and tourism partners.

EIAI request inclusion in the consultation's follow-up focus groups, with lived-experience engagement central to subsequent co-design.



About the Event Industry Association of Ireland

The Event Industry Association of Ireland (EIAI) is the national representative body for Ireland's professional event industry. Its membership comprises more than 850 businesses, organisations and individual professionals, collectively representing over 56,000 people working across the sector. Our work spans grassroots and community activity through to major national and international events [9].

EIAI's membership includes individual professionals and businesses alongside organisations representing specific parts of the industry, including the Irish Exhibition Organisers Association (IEOA), the Irish Showmen's Guild, Funfairs & Circuses, the Wedding Band Association and the Irish Inflatable Hirers Federation. These organisations retain their own identities and sectoral roles, while EIAI provides a unified voice on national policy, enterprise, governance and cross-industry issues.

Ireland's event industry is a broad and interconnected ecosystem that does not align neatly with conventional sectoral classifications. It encompasses event management and production, festivals, exhibitions, conferences and business events, entertainment, technical production, staging and temporary infrastructure, safety and security, transport, catering, attractions, performers, venues, communications and a substantial network of specialist suppliers and independent professionals. Many businesses operate across several of these areas and multiple event types, reflecting the inherently cross-sector nature of the industry.

This diversity is one of the industry's strengths, but it can also make the sector difficult to identify and represent within traditional policy and regulatory structures. EIAI provides national representation for this complex ecosystem, supports coherent and proportionate event governance, and works to ensure that the operational realities of planning and delivering events are understood in national policy, regulatory and strategic-risk discussions.



1. Introduction

This submission draws on the operational experience of EIAI members who plan and deliver events across Ireland. It identifies the practical barriers organisers encounter, and the systems needed to address them. It complements, and cannot substitute for, the lived experience of disabled people, which should be sought directly through the next stage of co-design.

EIAI proposes a next stage to gather documented member input and seek direct participation by disabled event-goers and disabled people's organisations. The size and method of that engagement, and any examples used with permission, should be recorded and reported. EIAI's industry contribution must complement, and cannot substitute for, lived experience.

2. Events as tourism infrastructure

Ireland's visitor experience includes parades, festivals, concerts, sporting events, cultural celebrations, markets, fairs, seasonal and civic events, conferences, exhibitions and community gatherings. These experiences depend on infrastructure, skilled delivery teams and connected public services, even when the event itself lasts only a few hours.

The survey expressly includes arts and entertainment, sport and community experiences in Question 28. Question 36 recognises sporting or cultural events and activism or community events as reasons for travel. Events therefore belong within the core analysis of accessible tourism, including domestic tourism, day visits and overnight stays [1].

Why this matters economically

Fáilte Ireland reports €3.6 billion in domestic overnight tourism expenditure in 2025 [10]. Events give people reasons to travel: the all-island Home of Halloween programme attracted over 322,000 domestic and international visitors in 2025 and generated more than €43 million in reported economic impact [11]. The 2025 NFL Dublin game attracted over 51,500 international visitors and generated an estimated €104.5 million in total economic impact [12]. These figures cover different scopes and measures; they are not a national total for event tourism or an estimate of spending lost through exclusion.

Removing access barriers can support longer stays, overnight visits and repeat attendance, spreading spending across accommodation, food, transport and local businesses. Exclusion can mean lost ticket sales, cancelled stays and lost future visits, sometimes for an entire accompanying group. Destination pilots should measure these effects so accessibility investment is assessed alongside participation and regional tourism benefits.



3. Barriers that event planning must address

Temporary, mobile and volunteer-led events need arrangements that work under actual operating conditions. A venue's usual access information may not describe an event layout, and a clear route can become obstructed when barriers, queues and spectators are in place.

Physical routes and facilities

Planning should address kerbs, steps and uneven ground on routes to viewing areas; unsuitable temporary ramps; crowd pressure; inaccessible toilet locations; and insufficient seating, rest areas or quiet spaces. Assess the continuous journey from arrival to the activity and facilities, rather than treating an accessible platform or toilet as an isolated provision.

Participation as well as attendance

Barriers can exclude disabled people from taking part in parades, sporting events and cultural activities. They include inaccessible start lines, parade assembly and warm-up spaces, costume fittings, rehearsals, stages and backstage areas; no arrangements for support persons or adapted equipment; and volunteer roles or briefings designed without access needs in mind.

Information and customer service

Inaccessible websites, difficult booking journeys, unclear arrival instructions, missing route maps and sensory information, inconsistent terminology and unprepared teams can prevent participation. Visitors may have to contact several organisations to establish whether a trip is feasible. Planning must account for disabled visitors, older people, families, carers and personal assistants.

Consistency across Ireland

Visitors expect national consistency; accessibility should not depend on the county hosting the event. A national review should identify variation between local processes, establish the evidence base and retain effective practice. Rural events need tailored guidance for limited transport options, uneven surfaces, lighting and infrastructure constraints.



4. A national standard and practical guidance

EIAI calls for a National Accessible Events Standard and supporting implementation framework. Its purpose should be clear, consistent expectations across event formats and local authority areas, supported by competent advice and resources.

This work should build on Fáilte Ireland's event accessibility checklists, Access Welcome Guide resources and training [2]. Relevant tourism standards already exist, including I.S. 373:2013 and ISO 21902:2021 [3]. The task is to translate and connect relevant requirements and good practice into an operational framework for events, and identify any remaining gaps through a formal review.

Scope of the proposed standard

Cover continuous accessible routes from parking, public transport and drop-off points into and through event zones; kerb-free access to viewing areas; appropriate ramp design; viewing capacity and sightlines; toilets and changing facilities; seating and rest areas; quiet and sensory-friendly provision; accessible information and signage; participation arrangements; and emergency communication and evacuation.

Weather and environmental conditions must form part of access planning. Rain can soften ground and make temporary surfaces slippery or impassable; wind can affect shelters and signage; darkness can make routes and level changes difficult to identify. Plans should include drainage, suitable surfacing, lighting, inspections, maintenance and accessible contingency routes, with clear communication when arrangements change.

Develop technical criteria with access specialists, disabled people, NSAI, local authorities, organisers and suppliers. Address gradients, surfaces, widths, capacity, maintenance and operating conditions as relevant. Distinguish event formats and scale while preserving meaningful access. Organisers should not have to invent technical specifications or assume that hired equipment is suitable for its intended use.

Guidance that organisers can use

Extend and connect existing resources with modules on parade design, festival site planning, inclusive sporting participation, temporary infrastructure, digital information and ticketing, disability-inclusive customer service and supplier specifications. Include model accessibility plans, route maps, procurement questions and pre-opening checks. Make the materials usable by smaller and volunteer-led events as well as large promoters.

EIAI is developing related modules in areas including Barriers and Fencing, Crisis Communications and Accreditation. We propose bringing that work into a shared co-design process with Fáilte Ireland and disability organisations, avoiding duplicated or conflicting advice.

Rights and policy alignment

Align the framework with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly accessibility and participation in cultural life, recreation and sport [4], and with A New Era for Irish Tourism [5]. Public bodies should integrate delivery with their Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty under section 42 of the 2014 Act [6]. Distinguish existing legal obligations, technical standards and proposed new policy requirements so organisers and authorities understand what each requires.



5. Funding, public processes and complete journeys

Establish an Accessible Events Fund

Accessibility costs are real and predictable but are not consistently provided for in event budgets or support schemes. Without a dedicated mechanism, improvements risk remaining uneven and dependent on discretionary resources. Create a dedicated fund, coordinated with existing event and tourism supports, to turn access plans into practical improvements. Eligible costs should include access audits and specialist advice, co-design with disabled people, temporary ramps and routes, viewing platforms, accessible toilets and Changing Places provision, suitable hoists where required, sensory-friendly areas, communication support and accessible transport links.

The fund should also support staff and volunteer training, accessible digital information and evaluation. Include smaller, community and volunteer-led events through proportionate applications and access to planning support. Make decisions early enough for organisers to commission suitable equipment and specialist services. Consider advance payments where cash flow would otherwise prevent delivery.

Assess regional opportunities for shared equipment and coordinated hire. Any model must cover transport, installation, maintenance, competent operation and availability at peak times. Shared equipment should complement suitable local provision, with clear responsibility for safe and effective use.

Seasonal peaks, including summer, Halloween and Christmas, can concentrate demand for equipment, staff and transport. Coordinate availability and funding decisions early enough to secure suitable services.

Embed accessibility plans in approvals and funding

Work with the relevant departments and local authorities to introduce consistent accessibility plan expectations within applicable event licensing, public funding and approval routes. Outdoor event licensing is a specific process and does not cover every event [7]. Smaller events and other formats therefore also need suitable routes for guidance and accountability.

Plans should identify accessible arrival and internal routes, viewing and seating, toilets and changing provision, participant access, information and communication support, emergency arrangements, a responsible coordinator and a process for checking delivery. Use a common template with detail proportionate to the event, integrated into existing event management documentation.

Agree the lawful mechanism for any mandatory requirements, consult the sector, and provide a clear implementation timetable and resources. Guidance and funding should support delivery of new requirements. Phased implementation must not postpone existing legal obligations. Site checks should assess the installed layout and operating arrangements, with a route to rectify deficiencies before opening. Fáilte Ireland-funded activity should be subject to proportionate accessibility and inclusion audits by competent assessors, including checks of actual delivery and feedback from disabled participants. Funding agreements should set clear criteria, require corrective action where gaps are found, and track whether improvements are delivered.

Create clear shared responsibilities

Organisers cannot independently resolve inaccessible public footpaths, unavailable accessible transport or unsuitable accommodation. Destination plans should assign responsibilities across organisers, venue owners, local authorities, transport operators and tourism providers. Include accessible drop-off points, managed crossings, routes through road closures and a workable return journey after the event finishes.



Plan the return journey as carefully as arrival

For a disabled visitor, the return journey can be the most difficult part of attending an event. Crowding, fewer late services, fatigue and inaccessible diversions during road closures or reopening can leave someone unable to use the route or transport that worked on arrival. Plans should confirm accessible collection points, available services after the advertised finish, assistance during dispersal and continuity of accessible routes until visitors have left. Publish these arrangements in advance and provide a clear contact if they fail.



6. Participation, business events and skills

Create accessible participation pathways

Disabled people should have opportunities to take part as performers, parade participants, sports participants, speakers, exhibitors, volunteers and workers. Include accessible rehearsal and assembly spaces, stages and backstage routes, warm-up areas and start and finish arrangements. Identify support person access, adapted equipment and communication requirements early, working with participants and relevant disability and sporting organisations. Accessible events should support disabled children's and young people's participation and inclusion, with age-appropriate activities and support developed with them and their families.

Offer meaningful choices and adaptations that retain the purpose of the activity. Safety decisions should consider the individual, the activity and available adaptations, with competent advice where needed. Disability should not be used as a blanket reason for exclusion. Accessible volunteer and work roles should include recruitment information, induction, facilities and support arrangements.

Accessible conferences and business events

Ask delegates, speakers and exhibitors about access requirements at registration, with clear response times and privacy safeguards. Confirm arrangements before travel. Provide accessible registration desks, stages, speaker preparation rooms, exhibition stands, networking spaces and toilets. Offer presentation materials in accessible formats and plan captioning, Irish Sign Language interpretation and hearing support according to identified needs. Hybrid access should support participation and questions, alongside access to the in-person event.

Provide a national training pathway

Build on existing Fáilte Ireland training with practical modules for organisers, local authority event teams, production suppliers, ticketing teams, security, customer service staff and volunteers. Cover respectful communication, non-visible disabilities, sensory needs, assistance dogs, accessible equipment, responding to requests and escalation. Use event scenarios and short briefing materials suitable for seasonal teams.

Each event should have an identified accessibility coordinator with appropriate authority and an escalation route. Responsibility must also be shared across teams and contractors. Suppliers should demonstrate that equipment and services meet the accessibility performance requirements specified for the event. Procurement should require competent installation, operating instructions, handover checks and a clear route to remedy failures.

Co-design with disabled people

Involve disabled people and their representative organisations before decisions on sites, routes, programming and purchases are fixed. Include diverse experiences rather than expecting one contributor to represent everyone. Budget for accessible engagement and payment for specialist lived experience input. Families, carers and support persons can add valuable perspectives alongside disabled people's own voices.

Use site visits, booking tests and complete visitor journey trials to identify foreseeable barriers and test improvements. Include people with mobility, sensory, intellectual and cognitive disabilities, neurodivergent people, people with chronic illness and fatigue, older people and families with disabled



children. Ask about assistance required, respect privacy and minimise unnecessary disclosure. Access needs often overlap: a person may have mobility, sensory, fatigue-related and cognitive requirements at the same time, so provision must respond to their combined needs.

Address inclusion across the visitor experience

The survey also asks about welcome, discrimination, value for money and diverse identities. Training and planning should address respectful treatment across age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic and cultural background, including Traveller and Roma communities. Accessibility planning should recognise overlapping barriers without treating different experiences as interchangeable.



7. Visitor information, booking and accommodation

Reliable information and accessible booking

Require funded events, and events subject to relevant approval conditions, to publish clear access information before booking opens and keep it current. Build on Access Welcome Guides with maps, surfaces, distances, viewing and toilet provision, sensory information and an access contact. Describe limitations honestly. Set WCAG 2.2 AA as the proposed digital design benchmark alongside applicable legal requirements, and test real booking journeys with disabled users [8]. Provide a timely alternative contact route and explain companion or personal assistant ticket arrangements before purchase.

Digital accessibility for temporary events

Short-lived event websites and ticketing systems can sit outside long-term digital governance structures, allowing the same access failures to recur each season. Every event should identify who is responsible for accessibility across its website, embedded ticketing, booking confirmations and updates. Build testing and supplier requirements into commissioning, retain lessons between editions, and make essential information available through accessible formats and contact channels.

Accommodation that supports event attendance

Major events can concentrate accommodation demand. Publish accurate room and facility information, confirm agreed accessibility features and support person arrangements in writing, and honour those bookings during peak periods. If disruption is unavoidable, consult the guest and agree a genuinely suitable alternative rather than assuming another room is equivalent. Improve links between event information, accommodation providers and accessible transport.



8. Delivery and EIAI commitments

EIAI recommends that Fáilte Ireland establish a dedicated accessible events workstream, bringing together disabled people's organisations, industry representatives, local authorities, relevant departments, transport and tourism bodies, NSAI and suppliers.

The workstream should translate the consultation's findings into a funded programme with clear responsibilities, delivery milestones and measurable outcomes. Each action should have a named lead and accountable delivery partners. Where an issue falls outside Fáilte Ireland's direct remit, responsibility should be agreed with the relevant body so gaps between services do not remain barriers for visitors.

EIAI engagement in the next stage

EIAI requests inclusion in Fáilte Ireland's planned follow-up focus groups and welcomes discussion on industry representation in any relevant advisory group. This engagement would bring the operational perspective of the events sector into the development of policy and guidance, alongside the direct participation of disabled people and their representative organisations.

Proposed priorities for the first six months

The programme should test the proposed standard, guidance and visitor information approach through the pilots. Funding should support practical improvements and staff training, with disabled people involved in testing complete journeys from planning and booking through to participation and departure.

Fáilte Ireland should publish the findings and a phased implementation plan, identifying milestones, responsible bodies and the mechanisms for incorporating requirements into funding and applicable approval processes.

Evaluation and transparent reporting

Evaluation should establish whether accessibility arrangements work in practice. Measures should include the accuracy of access information, response times to assistance requests, delivery of funded improvements, opportunities to participate, visitor feedback, complaints and completed corrective actions.

Fáilte Ireland-funded activity should be subject to proportionate accessibility and inclusion audits, informed by disabled attendees' and participants' experiences. Where delivery falls short, the responsible body should identify the remedy, assign an owner and set a timescale for completion.

Dignity, independence and confidence should be assessed alongside physical provision. Training attendance and completed plans are useful indicators of activity, but do not establish that an event is accessible.

Pilot findings and accessible summaries of plans, delivery checks and corrective actions should be published, with appropriate protection for personal and security-sensitive information. Reporting should make clear what has improved, where barriers remain and what will happen next.



What success looks like

- Visitors can plan, book, arrive, participate and return with confidence.
- Organisers have clear expectations, competent guidance and funded supports.
- Accessibility is embedded in licensing, funding and supplier practice.
- Events across Ireland deliver consistent, predictable accessibility.

Conclusion

Accessible tourism cannot be achieved while barriers prevent people from attending and participating in Ireland's events. Festivals, parades, conferences, sporting and community events must be recognised as a core part of the national approach to accessible and inclusive tourism.

This consultation is an opportunity to turn that recognition into clear standards, dedicated funding and consistent accountability. Fáilte Ireland-funded activity should demonstrate that accessibility commitments are delivered in practice, supported by proportionate audits, transparent reporting and corrective action. Success must be judged by people's experience, from planning and booking through to participation and the journey home.

EIAI welcomes further engagement with Fáilte Ireland on these proposals. We urge Fáilte Ireland to give accessible events an explicit place in the resulting programme, with clear responsibilities and measurable outcomes. Every person should be able to experience Ireland's events with dignity, confidence and equal opportunity. That must become a consistent expectation of Ireland's tourism offering.



Appendix A: Survey theme reference table

This table shows where the submission addresses the consultation's areas of interest. Section references refer to the numbered sections in the main text.

Survey area	EIAI recommendation	Section(s)
Part 1: Information and planning (Questions 1–7)	Publish reliable access information; test accessible booking; assign responsibility for temporary digital systems.	7
Part 2: Travel and transport (Questions 8–11)	Connect arrival and departure routes, collection points and transport services; maintain access during dispersal.	3 and 5
Part 3: Accommodation (Questions 12–20)	Confirm accessibility features and support arrangements; honour agreed bookings during peak demand.	7
Part 4: Customer service (Questions 21–26)	Train teams; provide suitable equipment and support; clarify companion arrangements and complaint routes.	6 and 7
Part 5: Attractions and activities (Questions 27–31)	Apply the national framework to event sites, viewing, facilities and active participation.	3, 4 and 6
Part 6: Improving accessible and inclusive tourism (Questions 32–34)	Fund a coordinated programme, gather evidence through co-design, test pilots and measure outcomes.	2, 5, 6 and 8
Part 7: About you (Questions 35–44)	Include diverse lived experience in co-design; organisational membership figures are not a visitor response sample.	1 and 6



Appendix B: Plain language summary

Events should be open to everyone. People should be able to go to an event, take part and get home safely. This includes festivals, parades, concerts, sport, conferences and community events.

Why change is needed

An event can have an accessible viewing area but no usable route to it. A person may be able to reach the event but have no accessible transport home. Disabled people can also face barriers when performing, playing sport, speaking at conferences, volunteering or working.

What EIAI is asking for

Our three main requests are clear national rules and guidance for accessible events, a dedicated fund to pay for improvements, and consistent accessibility plans in relevant funding and approval processes. These should build on existing resources. Fáilte Ireland should check that the activities it funds deliver the promised access and inclusion measures and that any problems are put right.

Organisers also need training, reliable equipment and support from transport providers, accommodation businesses and local authorities. Websites and booking systems should be easy to use. Information should explain what is available and what limitations remain.

Who should help shape the changes

Disabled people and their organisations should be involved from the start. EIAI offers to hold a member focus group and nominate an industry representative. We ask to join Fáilte Ireland's follow-up focus groups.

What success means

People can plan, book, arrive, take part and return with confidence. Organisers know what to do and have the guidance and funding to do it. Accessibility is consistent across Ireland.



Appendix C: Glossary

Accessible route

A continuous route that people with different access requirements can use to reach and move between event spaces and facilities. Its usability depends on surfaces, gradients, width, crossings, obstructions and operating conditions.

Kerb-free access

A route without a kerb or stepped level change that prevents access. Kerb-free provision alone does not establish that the whole route is accessible.

Sensory-friendly provision

Adjustments and information that support people with sensory sensitivities, such as quiet spaces, managed lighting and sound, advance sensory information and opportunities to step away.

Changing Places toilet

A toilet facility designed for people who need additional space, equipment and assistance, including an adult-sized changing bench and hoist. It is distinct from a standard wheelchair-accessible toilet.

Accessible participation

Arrangements enabling disabled people to take part in an event's activities, performance, sport, volunteering or work, with appropriate adaptations, facilities and support.



References

- [1] Fáilte Ireland Your Voice, Your Journey survey September to October 2026 and consultation launch
- [2] Fáilte Ireland accessible and inclusive business supports including event checklists and Access Welcome Guides
- [3] NSAI Universal Design and Inclusion including I.S. 373 and ISO 21902
- [4] UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Articles 9 and 30
- [5] Government of Ireland A New Era for Irish Tourism National Tourism Policy Statement
- [6] Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 section 42
- [7] Dublin City Council Apply for an Outdoor Event Licence
- [8] W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2
- [9] EIAI organisational profile and membership
- [10] Fáilte Ireland Business of Tourism Report 2026 covering 2025
- [11] Fáilte Ireland Home of Halloween 2026 launch reporting 2025 programme results
- [12] Department of Culture Communications and Sport First NFL Game in Ireland Delivers 104.5 Million for Irish Economy 23 February 2026

