

## The beauty of the Copper Coast



Beautiful Boatstrand.

THE recent spell of good weather showcased the beautiful scenery we have on our own doorstep here in County Waterford.

When you consider we possess such gems as the Comeragh Mountains, Coumshingaun, Lismore, and Dunmore East to name but a few, you realise that Waterford is without doubt a special place.

Out of all of our many scenic gems, my personal favourite is the ruggedly beautiful Copper Coast area.

The good weather presented me with plenty of opportunities to cycle along the entire stretch of the coastline and admire the stunning vistas, while stopping off to cool down with a dip in the sea along the way.

Stretching from Tramore to Dungarvan, the entire area encompasses a beautiful landscape including quaint villages, dramatic cliffs, panoramic views of the majestic Comeraghs, and gorgeous coves and beaches.

It was great to see areas such as Stradbally, Bonmahon, Annestown, Boatstrand, Kilmurrin, and Kilfarrasy experiencing an influx of visitors (both tourists and locals alike) during our recent balmy spell.

With beautiful Dungarvan harbour and the greenway out to Clonea; pretty Fenor with its bog and impressive playground; and the hauntingly beautiful deserted mine site at Tankardstown, the Copper Coast has something to satisfy everyone and ranks among the most beautiful stretches of coastline in all of the country - maybe even the world! Therefore, I was surprised to learn that the area hadn't been included in the newly formed, and much talked about, Wild Atlantic Way which stretches from the Inishowen Peninsula, County Donegal, to Kinsale, County Cork.

As far as I'm aware, Waterford also borders the Atlantic Ocean (unless the storms of January and February caused extreme erosion that we've yet to learn about).

Why go to the effort of constructing such an ambitious project and then ignore a sizeable area of the country which also borders the Atlantic Ocean? One again, Waterford and the South East (as Wexford fails to feature in the Wild Atlantic Way either) seem to be forgotten about.

The Wild Atlantic Way is billed as “a route that showcases the sheer magnificence of Ireland’s West coast from stunning headlands and beaches to colorful villages and towns all infused with the history, heritage and tradition of this rugged coastline” - everything that exists on the South East coast also.

I may be biased, but I genuinely love Waterford and think we live in one of the most scenic counties in Ireland.

So it’s time to proudly wear the blue and white jersey and proclaim all that is great about Waterford and, if excluded from something which other counties are benefitting from, we need to have the audacity to ask questions and demand answers.

I recently found myself in the company of a group of Dubliners who were informing a group of Spaniards of the many things to do in Dublin.

I soon found myself defending the rest of Ireland, and in particular Waterford, as I extolled the beauty of the Déise.

Tourists don’t get a true feeling of Ireland by solely visiting Dublin and never venturing beyond The Pale.

Due to ease of access, it’s easy to understand why many tourists from overseas spend their entire visit to Ireland anchored in the capital.

When Irish tourists visit popular European ‘city break’ destinations such as Amsterdam, Prague or Budapest, they rarely venture out into the surrounding countryside so this is not a problem which is confined to Ireland.

The Wild Atlantic Way is a much welcome sign that areas outside the capital are experiencing a renewed focus when it comes to attracting tourists, but that’s of little consolation to us here in Waterford when we’ve been left out in the wilderness.

Many groups of journalists from around the world have been brought on media tours of the Wild Atlantic Way, ensuring that the new tourist attraction will receive plenty of exposure worldwide.

There are rumblings which suggest that an ‘East/South East’ type route may be unveiled later this year, but whatever chance we in the Déise had of eating into more of the tourism pie is now surely in jeopardy because of the sheer scale and size of the Wild Atlantic Way and the recognition factor which it enjoys.

On the flip side, I recently read an article in a national newspaper where a journalist holidaying in an area along the Wild Atlantic Way was surprised to see so many tourists in a particular area which was usually very quiet.

He normally frequented this specific spot because of the peace and tranquility found there, but this time round the area was awash with tourists.

Our omission from the Wild Atlantic Way means we can continue to enjoy what's on our doorstep without an extreme number of tourists disrupting our peace and quiet.

So, sit back and enjoy all that others have yet to learn about and smugly proclaim 'told you so' when everyone hopefully starts to realise the magnitude of what we have.