

Fáilte Ireland Accused of 'Cop Out'



Brownstown Cliffs: Waterford's stunning coastline has been omitted from the Wild Atlantic Way.

Fáilte Ireland's response to Waterford's omission from the Wild Atlantic Way has been labelled a 'cop out'.

The tourism agency attracted stinging criticism last week for failing to include Waterford's coastline in the high profile new initiative which stretches from the Inishowen Peninsula to Kinsale.

"They have been caught with their pants down," said local tour operator Jim Falconer who spoke out about Waterford's exclusion.

Fáilte Ireland said a "similar unifying tourism proposition" was being explored for the south-east and east of the country.

However, Mr Falconer said this was not good enough.

"We are in Munster, we're not part of Leinster," he said.

"We're known as the gentle county but we need to stand up. Howlin looks after Wexford, Hogan looks after Kilkenny, we have to look after ourselves."

Mr Falconer contacted the Ordnance Survey Office in the Phoenix Park and the Coast Guard Search and Rescue at Waterford Airport who both confirmed that Waterford borders the Atlantic Ocean.

"It's either black or white, we're on the Atlantic or we're not. Waterford borders The Celtic Sea which is part of the Atlantic Ocean. In fact, the Celtic Sea stretches South West to Kerry. We want to be included, and furthermore we want an apology for being excluded," he said.

Mr Falconer plans to write to all local representatives on the newly elected Waterford council asking them if they support Waterford's inclusion on the Wild Atlantic Way.

He plans to reveal details of the responses received to the local media.

Some local TDs have responded to claims made by Mr Falconer that they have been 'apathetic' towards Waterford's exclusion from the Wild Atlantic Way.

"I don't accept the contention that I have been apathetic in respect of this issue, my contributions in respect of tourism are on the public record and this is an area that this government has given a huge amount of support to since coming to office," said Fine Gael Deputy Paudie Coffey.

"This is an issue (the Wild Atlantic Way) that I have raised several times in recent times. I raised it in the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications on the 18th June with representatives from Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland."

During the Joint Oireachtas meeting, Deputy Coffey highlighted the tourism offerings in Waterford and the South East.

"We commend all those involved in the Wild Atlantic Way, but we have very important tourism initiatives in our regions. In my region, we have the Deise Greenway and the Mount Congreve Gardens. We also have the Comeragh Mountains and the coastline, and the weather is often better than in other parts of the country. We must encapsulate all of that," he said.

Mr Coffey was assured by those promoting the Wild Atlantic Way that Waterford and the South-East could look forward to an alternative tourism offering.