

## Rise in American Visitor Numbers

Last year was a great year for The Gathering with more tourists coming to Ireland for the thousands of events that were staged.

New Ross won The Gathering event of the year for hosting the 50th anniversary of the American President John F Kennedy visit.

American tourists are up on last year and as Failte Ireland reported recently in Waterford with Niall Gibbons CEO, overall numbers are up nine per cent and 30,000 more Americans.

In 2012 American visitor numbers to the south east were: 74,000 in Kilkenny, 62,000 in Waterford and 25,000 in County Wexford and this is growing with the new Viking Quarter in Waterford and the Kennedy Emigrant Trail in Wexford.

In fact Wexford with the port of Rosslare has the sixth most tourists in Ireland at 229,000 in total from 2012.

In 2012, Waterford's revenue from overseas visitors was €55 million.

Wexford gained €65 million while Kilkenny had €36 million.

Tara Kerry of Tourism Ireland said that the Kennedy name means a lot and she praised the quality of the product and how the story is outlined at Dunbrody at the park and homestead.

Mr. Hore of Wexford County Council reckons that they can grow revenue by 3 million euro per annum as the Wexford Emigrant Trail becomes more popular.

This would bring in 30 million euro over ten years.

Already, 20,000 visitors have come to the newly opened exhibition at the old family homestead in Dunganstown.

Reference was also made at the event on New Ross Quayside of the very popular Emigrant Flame on the Quayside, which is the most photographed object in Wexford.

Regrettably, Mr. Hodnett, the creator of it, passed away only recently and could not share in the glory of his creation last week on the Quayside.

The Minister of State spoke and was praised for his commitment to the project by new CEO Sean Connick of the JFK Trust, who succeeds the likeable Sean Reidy, who worked tirelessly for years on the project.

He is now working on an Irish/American project with Savannah, Georgia, where many from the south east also emigrated with Graves Shipping in the 1840s.

Sean was presented with a painting as was Minister Paul Keogh and also Tramore public relations woman, Ann Power, for her commitment and work on the JFK 50 year event, which drew 100 media people to New Ross including the top three US TV networks and RTE over that weekend in July.

The value of the publicity for the area was put at nearly 4 million euro.