



## **Submission to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports and Media**

**10<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

### **Introduction**

Established in 1966, the Irish Hospitality Institute is the professional body for managers, aspiring Managers and students within the Hospitality & Tourism Industry in Ireland. Our members are represented across all areas of industry and education.

Throughout the Covid crisis, our main objective at the IHI has been to provide support to members and industry colleagues. We have done so by providing informative and educational webinars, sharing relevant training and providing platforms for our professionals to come together to share knowledge and support each other.

### **Overview**

Pre- covid Tourism and Hospitality was the largest indigenous industry on our island, employing some 260,000 and generating over €9 billion for the economy in 2019. Tourism and Hospitality is significant contributor to regional and local economies, and pre-pandemic represented 70% of the jobs outside of Dublin. Globally, Hospitality and Tourism is the world's largest employer.

The re-opening of the industry in the summer highlighted the critical staffing shortages across the sector. Many businesses could not provide full service due to the lack of available trained staff. As we continue to battle this pandemic, the stop/start nature of the restrictions and uncertainty for the sector continues to have a devastating impact on talent. It has made the attraction and retention of talent very challenging in a very competitive employment market.

In the past nine months, the industry has worked extremely hard to retain and attract new talent. A significant amount of time and resources has gone into the training and development of new team members, now only to find ourselves again in a time of uncertainty due to the most recent restrictions.

The impact of these changes is now causing many current and new team members to start re-assessing their jobs and looking to other industries for greater job security.

In an employer's market, tourism and hospitality professionals are highly recognised and sought after by other industries for their team engagement, communication, resilience and soft skills.

We understand from our members there is also a significant drop off in job applications; we believe this is in anticipation of further restrictions being imposed if the current covid situation does not improve. This further underlines the uncertainty of the long-term viability of a career in Hospitality and Tourism.

Over the past number of months, we have spoken with colleagues internationally, and what we are experiencing in Ireland is being replicated internationally. Like us, they too are developing similar initiatives to attract and retain talent.

## **Executive Summary**

Tourism and Hospitality continues to be the most impacted industry by the pandemic, with pre-pandemic business levels not expected to return until 2026. Talent within the sector has been disseminated with little or no replacement pipelines available.

We believe the recovery of the sector will need to be addressed twofold (1) Rebuilding sustainable business levels (2) Rebuilding & developing sustainable talent pipelines.

Focusing on retention and rebuilding talent, the IHI is working on initiatives with stakeholder colleagues and the Careers Oversight Group to collectively address the issues facing the sector and explore avenues to attract and retain talent.

Unfortunately, for too many years, the industry has not been recognised as a career of choice by schools, careers guidance teachers and parents. This lack of recognition and understanding of the career opportunities has also led to a severe decline in student numbers within our third-level institutions, with some programmes cancelled.

To develop future sustainable pipelines of talent to the sector, creating awareness and sharing the positives of careers within the industry will be critical for the industry's sustainability. Long-term planning and oversight will also be critically important, and this needs to happen collectively at an industry and government level.

Ireland is recognised for its unique tourism hospitality experience. Our people are a vital component of that experience. Therefore, it is incumbent on us as a sector, with the support of the relevant government bodies, to ensure that as an industry, we have the necessary pipeline of talent and training in place to provide the quality visitor experience we are world-renowned for.