
Regional Press Cuttings (DFE)

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Desk Immediate

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Derry hotelier criticises Stormont over lack of investment in all-Ireland tourism body

A Derry hotelier has criticised Stormont for what he claimed is an 'embarrassing' lack of funding of cross-border body Tourism Ireland.

Howard Hastings, managing director of the Hastings Hotels Group, blamed "institutional resistance" for the failure to connect the North's Causeway Coastal Route with the Republic's Wild Atlantic Way.

Mr Hastings, whose group runs Northern Ireland hotels including Derry's Everglades Hotel, said tourism had been 'pigeon holed' as one part of the island's economic mix.

He singled out the Stormont Assembly for not 'putting its shoulder to the wheel' to endorse a cohesive, all-island strategy.



Howard Hastings.

He said: "Not only does tourism create employment in every nook and cranny of the island, parts where no other industry can reach, it does so year in, year out.

"In our fairs and our festivals, in its observed seasonal rituals, it is a source of social cohesion, it is a generator of mental health, it is a source of civic pride.

"My greatest regret is that as yet, our Northern Ireland (tourist) industry is so far ahead of the Northern Ireland government in embracing Tourism Ireland and what it does.

"It is a source of embarrassment to me that in a funding model where Northern Ireland is pledged to commit one third of the resources, at present, their contribution is barely 15%."

Tourism Ireland, established following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, is the body responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas.

Mr Hastings said Covid restrictions sparked an influx of tourists from the Republic to the North, 55% of them overnighting for the first time.



The Everglades Hotel in Derry is owned by the Hastings Group.