

## **TOURISM BUSINESSES HONOURED AT FÁILTE IRELAND OPTIMUS AWARDS**

**Business innovations the key to profitability,  
competitiveness and excellence – Fáilte Ireland**

**Around 200 firms participating in Optimus in 2006**

Improved competitiveness in the tourism industry can be realised from best practice innovations and need not be separate from improved profitability, Fáilte Ireland's Director of Enterprise and Skills Development Aidan Pender said today. A total of 14 hotels were honoured at the Fáilte Ireland national Optimus Awards, in recognition of their achievements in pursuing business excellence.

Optimus – Achieving Business Excellence, which was launched in 2004, is an independently audited, continuous improvement programme for the tourism industry. It was born out of the Tourism Policy Review Group and has been developed as a staged approach to excellence in consumer service and supporting tourism businesses in becoming more profitable, more efficient and ultimately, more competitive. By the end of 2006, it is estimated that 200 tourism businesses will be participating in Optimus programmes.

The Optimus Programme structure comprises three distinct yet inter-related levels, enabling businesses to progress through the different levels, building their capabilities at each stage and gaining recognition as they make progress. The three levels are either partially or fully aligned to the EFQM Excellence Model and this is reflected in the assessment and scoring criteria.

The first level, the Service Excellence programme, leading to the Ireland's Best Award, recognises the commitment and capacity of the tourism business to provide service excellence to its customers on a consistent basis. The Mark of Best Practice, the second level, requires businesses to review each of its key processes and standards and to develop and implement an improvement plan across the entire operation that will deliver tangible benefits to the customer, the staff and the business.

A number of hotels that have previously been accredited to Ireland's Best Award and the Mark of Best Practice are currently working towards the Business Excellence accreditation. It is expected that these will be joined by more than 50% of the recipients of the Optimus Mark of Best Practice at this awards ceremony. The Award of Excellence is based on the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Excellence Model. This model is the primary business improvement tool used by thousands of leading edge organisations in more than 37 countries and in most sectors of industry.

The award recipients were:

**Ireland's Best Award**

Atlantic Coast Hotel, Westport, Co. Mayo  
Fitzpatrick Castle Hotel, Killiney, Co Dublin  
Gleneagle Hotel, Killarney, Co Kerry  
Hilton Dublin Airport  
Hotel Westport, Co Mayo  
Inchydoney Island Lodge & Spa, Clonakilty, Co Cork  
Knock House Hotel, Co Mayo  
The Brehon Hotel, Killarney, Co. Kerry

**Mark of Best Practice – Hotels**

Castlecourt Hotel, Conference & Leisure Centre, Westport, Co Mayo  
Clarion Hotel Dublin IFSC  
Clontarf Castle Hotel, Dublin  
Crowne Plaza Dublin Airport  
Radisson SAS Hotel & Spa Galway  
Faithlegg House Hotel & Golf Club, Faithlegg, Co Waterford

All award winners were subjected to a rigorous assessment process, independently managed by Excellence Ireland Quality Association (EIQA) and the Optimus Approvals Committee, chaired by Klaus Kobjoll, owner of the famed Schindlerhof Hotel in Germany and winner of the EFQM European award for excellence.

“Today’s winners reflect the wonderful customer service ethic that is so deeply embedded in the tourism industry. Undertaking a scheme like this while running a busy enterprise is no small achievement. It is not just a management project, but something that must work across the organisation, with commitment and participation from every employee. The results will be long-lasting and will give the Irish tourism industry that strategic advantage necessary for success in the today’s global marketplace”, said Mr Pender.

Further information on the Optimus Awards is available online from [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie) or from [info@optimus.ie](mailto:info@optimus.ie)

**Ends**

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**For further information contact:**

**Fáilte Ireland**  
**Mary Cosgrave**

**01 602 4000**  
**01 602 4103 / 087 226 0411**