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# Center Parcs announces plans for new €200 million holiday village in Ireland

Center Parcs, a leader in the UK family short break market, today announced plans to develop a holiday village at Newcastle Wood, five kilometres from

Ballymahon, County Longford, and 21 kilometres from junction 9 (Athlone) of the M6 motorway from Dublin to Galway.

The 375 acre site is currently owned by Coillte, the State forestry company, and Center Parcs have signed an option agreement with the company.

The new Center Parcs, which is expected to open to guests in 2019 (subject to receiving satisfactory planning permission), will create approximately 750 jobs during construction. Once open, the €200 million development will have capacity for up to 2,500 guests and will employ up to 1,000 people in permanent jobs. Many of these roles are expected to be filled by employees between the ages of 18 and 24, and the majority of employees are likely to live locally.

Center Parcs estimates that, when operational, the new holiday village will add approximately €32 million to Irish GDP per annum.

Center Parcs offers high quality short breaks in a secluded and natural woodland setting. The five Center Parcs in the UK are popular with families, with the business consistently exceeding 97% year round occupancy.

The new development will bring together the high quality features for which Center Parcs is renowned, including up to 500 lodges, designed with families and the environment in mind, more than 100 indoor and outdoor activities, a spectacular spa, a range of restaurants and cafés and the iconic Subtropical Swimming Paradise, with water rides and fun for all ages.

Over the last 28 years, Center Parcs has exhibited a proven track record of taking ecologically poor areas of woodland and, through careful forest management, transforming them into areas rich in biodiversity. Each village has a dedicated team of Conservation Rangers who protect and nurture the woodland.

Public consultation and information meetings will take place in Ballymahon for local residents in due course and a planning application to Longford County Council will be prepared.

Speaking at today's announcement, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD said:

*"The prospect of 750 construction and 1,000 permanent jobs is fantastic news for County Longford and the Midlands. Center Parcs will provide a massive boost to the area and contribute significantly to the local and regional economy. This project is a perfect fit with our recently announced Tourism Policy Statement which aims to create 50,000 new jobs by 2025.*

*Center Parcs' family oriented, high quality, year-round facility will be a major addition to our national tourism infrastructure and I wish it every success."*

Martin Dalby, CEO of Center Parcs, said:

*“We are thrilled and excited about the prospect of bringing the Center Parcs concept to families in Ireland.*

*This new Center Parcs will have all of the ingredients that have made us so popular with families in the UK for the last 28 years and I am certain that Center Parcs will be a great success in Longford.*

*We look forward to liaising closely with the local community during the next few months to fully share our vision and to explain the huge economic and social benefits that a Center Parcs holiday village will bring to the area.*

*I am deeply grateful to An Taoiseach, the Irish government, Coillte, Fáilte Ireland and Longford County Council for their encouragement and support for this project.”*

Gerry Murphy, Chairman of Blackstone Group International Partners LLP, said:

*“As owners of Center Parcs, Blackstone is delighted to be supporting this exciting project, which adds significantly to our investments in Ireland. We look forward to Center Parcs being built and to it generating substantial employment and economic benefits for the region and country as a whole.”*

Mark Foley, Managing Director of Coillte Enterprise, said:

*“Coillte is delighted to have been able to play its part in facilitating this major inwards investment opportunity through the sale of forest land to Center Parcs. Coillte is particularly pleased that this opportunity will deliver quality jobs in this exciting and sustainable tourism initiative. Tourism has been identified as a key sector for growth in jobs and Coillte, as Ireland’s largest provider of outdoor recreation, welcomes this major project.”*

**For media enquiries, contact:**

**Brunswick – 0207 396 7422/7447**

*cevans@brunswickgroup.com*

*athomson@brunswickgroup.com*

**Center Parcs Press Office – 01623 821733**

*simon.kay@centerparcs.co.uk*

*lizzie.jackson@centerparcs.co.uk*

1. Center Parcs operates five short break destinations across the UK: Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire; Elveden Forest, Suffolk; Longleat Forest, Wiltshire; Whinfell Forest, Cumbria and Woburn Forest, Bedfordshire
2. The business welcomes more than two million guests each year
3. The Center Parcs concept originated in Holland in 1967, with Sherwood Forest opening in the UK in 1987. Each Center Parcs is nestled within around 400 acres of protected and enhanced woodland, with the holiday village designed to complement and work with the forest environment
4. Center Parcs UK is a separate entity to Center Parcs Europe, and is owned by Blackstone, one of the world's leading investment firms
5. Center Parcs reported 97.2% year round occupancy in the last financial year
6. At Woburn Forest, our most recently opened village, 37% of employees are aged between 16 and 24
7. Center Parcs' investment in Ireland will be established and financed outside of its existing financial arrangements
8. Coillte is Ireland's largest land owner, managing 7% of the national territory and actively looking to deliver land solutions which are sustainable from an economic, social and environmental perspective. They manage their estate for commercial forestry, recreation and biodiversity as well as providing land for a range of uses such as renewable energy and other infrastructure developments, including local sporting and community groups, as well as commercial development

### **Forward-looking statements**

This press release contains statements that constitute forward-looking statements, beliefs or opinions, including statements relating to business, financial condition and results of operations of Center Parcs. These statements may be identified by words such as "expectation", "belief", "estimate", "plan", "target", or "forecast" and similar expressions or the negative thereof; or by the forward-looking nature of discussions of strategy, plans or intentions; or by their context. All statements regarding the future involve known and unknown risks and uncertainties and various factors could cause actual future results, performance or events to differ materially from those described or implied in these statements. Such forward-looking statements are based on numerous assumptions regarding Center Parcs' present and future business strategies as well as the environment in which Center Parcs expects to operate in the future. Further, certain forward-looking statements are based upon assumptions of future events which may not prove to be accurate and Center Parcs does not accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the opinions expressed in this press release or the underlying assumptions. Past performance is not an

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## Contacts



**Simon Kay**

Press Contact

Head of PR

[press.office@centerparcs.co.uk](mailto:press.office@centerparcs.co.uk)

01623 821600



**Emily Beaumont**

Press Contact

PR Executive

[press.office@centerparcs.co.uk](mailto:press.office@centerparcs.co.uk)

01623 821600