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Galway stopover confirmed

Volvo Ocean Race firm up the latter stages of their event

Galway on the the west coast of Ireland will be a stopover for the 2008-09 Volvo Ocean Race following the Irish Government's announcement this week that it had agreed to make funding available to help bring the race to Ireland for the first time.

Race organisers welcomed the Irish commitment of up to eight million Euros to secure the stopover. Negotiations have been under way since late last year with a Galway-based group, 'Let's Do It Ireland', and the Irish Government tourist agency, Forge Ireland, aimed at making one of Ireland's fastest growing cities the first European port of call.

"This is great news for the race and a just reward for the enthusiasm and commitment shown by Galway," said Glenn Bourke, the Volvo Ocean Race CEO. "Everyone will be looking forward to the famous Irish hospitality and craic (fun) when the boats arrive after a high-speed dash from the U.S. port of Boston."

John Killeen, Chairman of 'Let's Do It Ireland', was in no doubt that the world's premier offshore ocean race would bring huge benefits to the Galway region.

"It will not only bring benefits to the local economy and to the tourism industry but it will also spur development of the infrastructure of the port," he said.

The race has consistently reaped economic benefits running to millions of Euros for the ports of call. The 2005-06 start from Vigo in northwestern Spain generated 61 million Euros for the Galicia region, according to a Deloitte's report on economic impact.

Both Boston and Galway have been excited by the historic connection linking the two cities. "Our association with Boston is phenomenal," said Killeen. "A number of Boston companies have their European headquarters here. We have already been in contact with Boston and they have been eagerly awaiting this decision."

David Baddeley, Managing Director of Volvo Cars Ireland, added: "This is clearly fantastic news for Ireland and is the conclusion of a lot of hard work behind the scenes by the team in Galway. Volvo has been involved in the Irish sailing scene over many years, but the Volvo Ocean Race coming to Galway just takes this involvement into a different league."

Race organisers are predicting a possible 24-hour speed record between Boston and Galway as the boats race along the Gulf Stream in the late spring of 2009.

In announcing the 8 million Euro funding, Arts, Sports and Tourism Minister John O'Donoghue, said in a press release that independent analysis of the potential benefits of the race showed a significant economic impact on the local West of Ireland region and for Ireland as a whole. "I am very pleased to be able to put the support of the Government behind the Galway bid," O'Donoghue added.

In the past month, port stopovers have now been confirmed in Galway, Boston, India and China.

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