

**EAP:** Will theming with Celtic myths and stories be the general concept for the further development of your park?

**CC:** We have the Cú Chulainn coaster, which is the wooden rollercoaster and has a corresponding design. Now we're moving into this new land. Coasters will get people to your park, but what really separates a good destination from a great one is theming. So anytime we install new rides from now on will be themed. Not necessarily with a Celtic story, but theming will be there for sure.

**EAP:** Will foreign guests also understand the storyline in Tír na nÓg?

**CC:** Yes, they will. The stories that we are going to tell are very immersive, but not complicated. There will be preshow areas to the rides transporting the story to the guests. You won't need to read anything, you can just enjoy. Who wants to follow the details is welcomed to do so, of course, but who doesn't will have a fantastic time as well!

**EAP:** For how long have you been working on this project now?

**CC:** We ourselves started working on this expansion in 2018. With our partners we first met just before the Covid-pandemic spread, actually. It was in February 2020 when Jora Vision first came over to the park. Without the pandemic, we might have been able to complete this project in 2021, but it turned out to be next year. Originally, 2024 was our goal, so that planned time period for opening turns out to be the final one.

**EAP:** How's the cooperation with your project partners – Vekoma, Jora Vision, Universal Rocks and Zierer?

**CC:** It's a really great one, also considering that we're working together in this constellation for the very first time!

There is this understanding of very different people, of the characters involved and things like that... For us it's a new experience working with all these people together. Jora Vision for

example did their own research for the theming of course, and our local team members then reviewed their great ideas and added their own perspectives, since they've grown up with the myth of Tír na nÓg. When it came to construction challenges due to our land conditions such as the high-water river running right through our park, everyone was pulling for the best possible outcome. It won't be our last cooperation, for sure!

**EAP:** In 2022, you welcomed some 750,000 visitors to your park. Is one million guests the target for next year?

**CC:** Our idea is to go up to some 850,000 to 900,000 guests and then gradually grow up to one million visitors. Welcoming an extra 100,000 people looks very achievable to us. If we already get one million next year, fantastic! But usually it's a gradual process over the years.

**EAP:** And how are operations going? Do you have to deal with any staff shortages?

**CC:** I'd say we're facing the same challenge like the rest of Europe, but we're very fortunate that as Ireland's only theme park and zoo a lot of people want to work with us. We get a lot of college students, actually there's a waiting list for them to board on the team. So there's no shortage for some kind of jobs in areas such as sales, but for skill positions there is. It's electricians, mechanical fitters, chefs... all those kind of professions are sought after.

**EAP:** Any plans for the future of Emerald Park you can already reveal?

**CC:** Our first task next year will be to make sure that the flow of people works well. Looking further ahead, there are many more sections of land so we have the capacity to expand the park in the future, maybe open a themed hotel, extend the season...

**EAP:** Charles, many thanks for these insights!

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