



Submission on the Night-time Economy

November 2020

Dublin Chamber welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Government's Night-time Economy Stakeholder Consultation Process. Dublin Chamber is the representative body for businesses in the Greater Dublin Area, with a cross-sectoral membership of over 1,000 firms supporting 300,000 jobs nationally. The Chamber is committed to improving the city's business environment and quality of life in tandem, and strongly supports a vision of Dublin with sustainability, urban density, and liveability at its core.

The night-time economy adds significantly to the recreational life of the city, and not only provides entertainment, culture and art but also significant employment in the Greater Dublin Area. Our nearest neighbours in the UK value annual revenue from their night-time economy at £66 billion and estimate that it accounts for almost 8% of employment.¹ Dublin Chamber supports this initiative and vision by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to support and improve the night-time economy. This could be transformative for the city centre in particular but also for the entire city region. It would enhance not only the lives of residents and the local economy, but the city's attractiveness as a place to live, work, study, visit, invest, and do business. We particularly welcome the proposals to examine and address the current bureaucratic challenges that face the development of a vibrant night-time culture and economy, including regulations, licensing laws, and transport among other issues.

The consultation questions paper briefly outlines the significant impact that the Covid-19 crisis has had on the night-time economy and the culture of our urban centres. We welcome the establishment of the night-time economy taskforce, the commitment to this area in the Programme for Government, and the consultation process. However we are concerned that many of the actors in this space, due to the significant impact of Covid-19 on their businesses, will be unable to engage fully with the consultation process due to its timing. The Chamber recommends that the Department consider a broader public consultation to establish what members of the public want the night-time economy to look and feel like.

Our Vision for the Night-Time Economy

Globally, cities are constantly being challenged to innovate and compete to attract both people and investment. With the significant population growth expected in the Dublin region in the

¹ NTIA, quoted in BBC News, 17 November 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-49348792#:~:text=The%20night%2Dtime%20economy%20is,the%20Night%20Time%20Industries%20Association>

coming years and an increasing urban population nationally,² there is a demand to address the factors that will sustain that urban future. Dublin needs to be an attractive city to sustain healthy population and economic growth. Mercer Global's *City Attractiveness Index* highlights 'the appeal of cities as a place to live, work and visit is a key aspect of a city's attractiveness and should be seen as the most important pre-condition for the future economic success of the city'.³ A thriving and diverse night-time economy is vital if that vision is to be realised in Dublin.

The night-time economy is a key aspect of life in Dublin, as the city is home to world famous theatres and bars and is internationally known as a great city to visit.⁴ However, Dublin Chamber recognises that the current regulations, licensing laws, restrictions and lack of supportive infrastructure have resulted in the night-time economy not being able to achieve its full potential.

The Chamber also recognises the challenges that the night-time economy and art and culture spaces have faced in recent years. With space in the city in high demand many cultural spaces and night-time economy venues have experienced the disadvantages of development, particularly in a city that has not prioritised the need for informal and cultural spaces. Our *Dublin: The 15 Minute City* report seeks to address this imbalance in development and calls for mixed development to be brought to the fore.⁵ The Chamber recognises the need for these spaces and sees them as a necessary part of what makes a city successful and liveable.

When it comes to quality of life, Dublin currently sits outside the top 30 cities in the world.⁶ Dublin Chamber wants to see Dublin rise up those rankings and challenge the world's best cities in terms of the standards of living on offer. Covid-19 has acted as a catalyst for change, particularly in relation to digitalisation, remote and flexible working. This trend will continue, with people placing an increasing emphasis on quality of life. This presents a particular challenge for Dublin which already faces infrastructure pressures in terms of housing and transport, coupled with a reputation for above-average prices.⁷ A thriving night-time economy would help the city to enhance its offering for its residents, and establish it as an excellent place to live, study, visit and to work in.

Based on our Vision for Dublin 2050 which involved a survey of over 30,000 Dubliners, we know that the residents of the capital want a city that has a responsive transport system, a thriving cultural scene, a multicultural population empowered to express individuality, and a

² Irish Government, Project Ireland 2040, *National Planning Framework*, https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/project_ireland_2040_npf_7mb.pdf

³ Mercer Global, *City Attractiveness Index*, <https://www.mercer.com/what-we-do/workforce-and-careers/city-attractiveness-index.html>

⁴ Dublin Chamber, *Dublin's Global Reputation Report*,

⁵ Dublin Chamber, *Dublin: The 15 Minute City*, https://www.dublinchamber.ie/DublinChamberofCommerce/media/banners/Dublin_The-15-Minute-City.pdf

⁶ Mercer Global, *Quality of Living City Ranking*, <https://mobilityexchange.mercer.com/insights/quality-of-living-rankings>

⁷ Irish Time, *Dublin most expensive place to live in eurozone due to high rents*, <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/dublin-most-expensive-place-to-live-in-euro-zone-due-to-high-rents-1.4273703>

city that is safe and open to all.⁸ However, in order to achieve this, Dublin needs to be ambitious and forward-thinking in planning to reform the night-time economy, with expanded late night offerings, enhanced public transport and a thriving late-night industry.

Dublin should strive towards becoming a 24-hour city that is open to all: a city that embraces its culture, night-life, entertainment and multi-culturalism while not losing sight of its unique character. Dublin has so far avoided the dissolution of identity that has been the fate of many larger urban centres around the world. It is this unique character that sets it apart from other places, and this identity that must be honoured and enhanced as the night-time economy is expanded to embrace Dublin's modern identity as a European capital, a business capital and a world-leading smart, sustainable city where quality of life is to the fore.

Pilot Programmes

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a renewed focus on the need for collaboration between businesses and the Local Authorities across the city. The ability and desire to work together to come up with innovative solutions to enable businesses to trade will be increasingly important in the years ahead. The swiftness with which Local Authorities have responded, for example, to the need for changes to the public realm to facilitate walking and cycling in the context of social distancing, has been refreshing and eye-opening to the possibilities post Covid-19.

Trial runs and pilot programmes are an excellent and engaging way of establishing the positive potential of a new policy initiative, as well as its potential problems, without having to be subject to the same scrutiny as a permanent process. Pilot programmes and trials should be used in relation to some of the significant changes proposed in relation to changing current licensing laws, SEOs, and restrictions on businesses and late night venues. Ireland has some of the most restrictive licensing laws in Europe⁹ and in order to embrace Dublin's role as a modern city with a world-class night-time economy it is important that ambitious and creative thinking is brought to bear on this area. In expanding the night-time economy, pilot programmes and trials should be embraced as a way to learn what works and what does not, allowing for flexibility and creativity in relation to all sectors involved in the night-time economy.

Supporting Infrastructure

The success of the night-time economy will depend on ensuring that the urban infrastructure required to support changes and developments is included in the planning process.

Dublin Chamber has long advocated for the rollout of 24-hour and late-night transport facilities, recognising the need and demand for such services. The Chamber has previously welcomed the rollout of a 24-hour service on the 41 (City Centre, Airport, Swords) and the 15 (Ballycullen Road, City Centre, Clongriffin) Dublin Bus routes. The current way in which our transport system operates does not reflect how our city functions. Dublin Chamber would like to see an enhanced roll-out of 24-hour and late-night transport services across the city where appropriate.

⁸ Dublin Chamber, *Dublin 2050*, <https://www.dublinchamber.ie/getattachment/Business-Agenda/Dublin-2050/Dublin-2050.pdf?lang=en-IE>

⁹ Independent, *Do you back campaign to extend nightclub opening hours?*, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/haveyoursay-do-you-back-campaign-to-extend-night-club-opening-hours-36555590.html>

With the expansion of the night-time economy, both consumers, students and late-night workers will need to have access to these services to commute to and from home, places of employment, and entertainment and cultural venues. In particular, late night workers in the hospitality industry already face significant pressures in this area, as the lack of housing in the city has compounded the issue and has increased commute times for many workers. An often overlooked sector is that of night-time education, i.e. night courses and students who undertake study in the evenings or on a part-time basis. According to Nightcourses.com there are currently almost 6,000 night time courses¹⁰ listed across Dublin. Dublin's transport infrastructure, whether it is Bus, Luas, DART and even DublinBikes, currently only caters to the traditional day-time commuter patterns and a shift in thinking and vision will be required to ensure that the night-time economy has the necessary infrastructure in place to support it.

At Christmas time for the last number of years the Luas and DART have both operated late-night services to meet increased demand at that time of year. This is in response to the significant build-up in demand and inability of taxis to cope with the later retail opening times and boon in the night-time economy at this time of year.¹¹ It is clear that in order to expand the night-time economy, the infrastructure deficits currently in existence will have to be addressed. Dublin Chamber would like to see increased focus on the possibility of more late-night services or possible 24-hour services to support the vision of a vibrant and diverse night-time economy in Dublin.

Managing and Promoting the Night-Time Economy

Currently the night-time economy in Dublin is not something that is actively managed, promoted or co-ordinated, rather operating on a somewhat ad hoc basis. There is no single person or agency in charge of promoting the night-time economy in the city, or of addressing its deficits and challenges. Alongside our support for a Directly Elected Mayor for Dublin, Dublin Chamber strongly supports the establishment of a Night Mayor/Czar or Night-Time Commission for Dublin. In London, the Night Czar takes on functions beyond those of co-ordinating and promoting the night time economy, taking a holistic approach that involves engaging on social issues such as transport, public realm, and safety.¹²

However, it is essential that if such a role is created it has the executive powers to address the issues within the night-time economy. In the absence of a directly elected Mayor for the Dublin region, there is a question as to where the functions of such an office would sit. The Chamber would caution against the introduction of executive functions that fall under the separate Local Authorities. A co-ordinated all-of-Dublin response is vital in transforming our approach to the night-time economy.

Encouraging Diversity in the Night-Time Economy

In building up the night-time economy it is vital that in the early stages we support diversity of events and offerings. A specific fund, aimed at encouraging those in the arts and culture scene to run events or open up their venues later would help to ensure a diverse range of offerings where alcohol is not to the fore. The arts and cultural sector is currently struggling

¹⁰ Nightcourses.com, *Find Courses*, <https://www.nightcourses.com/course-search/#byLocation>

¹¹ The Journal, *Been waiting on Taxis? Hailo says last weekend was their busiest ever in Ireland*, <https://www.thejournal.ie/hailo-taxis-christmas-2514666-Dec2015/>

¹² Greater London Authority, *Night Czar*, <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/24-hour-london/night-czar>

in the wake of Covid-19 restrictions, and supporting innovation and new offerings in this sector would be of significant benefit.

A diverse range of events, spaces, focuses and themes will attract a more diverse audience and encourage those of all ages and backgrounds to embrace their city at night. The National Art Gallery last year trialled a new offering in their 'Thursday Lates' aimed at encouraging those working 9-5 to visit the gallery.¹³ This was met with much success. Funding for pilot programmes or trial offerings for venues that will be suffering significant cash deficits following the impact of Covid-19 will be essential in enabling them to be inventive and embrace the opportunities that come with the expansion in the area of the night time economy.

Safety and Public Realm

We know from previous research, including Dublin Chamber's award-winning Global Reputation Project and Vision for Dublin 2050, how important safety is in enhancing Dublin's reputation. The Global Reputation report found that fewer than a third of respondents would describe Dublin as a safe city, while one in seven believe it is not safe.¹⁴ In enhancing the night-time economy, the Chamber recognises that significant investment will be needed in ensuring that our streets and spaces are and feel safe. Improvements to the public realm can play a significant role in how safe people perceive an area to be; excellent street lighting, open spaces and pedestrian-focused spaces enhance the city's overall look and feel, as well as its safety. Specific investment and co-ordination in terms of greater street policing and CCTV should also be examined.

Recognising Excellence

The importance of the night-time economy from a business perspective cannot be underestimated and businesses that excel in this area should be recognised. The Purple Flag initiative, which is largely seen as a UK endeavour and has been introduced to some extent in Ireland, works by awarding a Purple Flag to a location that meets or excels in managing the night-time economy.¹⁵ The creation of a similar standard for recognition of excellence in the night-time economy in Ireland would be welcome. The aim should be to give recognition to areas that are not only culturally vibrant and full of thriving bars, cafés and theatres but also put safety and public realm to the fore.

Opening Up Our City Spaces

In re-thinking the night-time economy, opening and closing times for city spaces that are currently closed at night should be reviewed. At present, key civic spaces in our city centre, such as Stephens Green and Merrion Square close before dark. This is no longer the norm in other modern cities; for example Central Park in New York is only closed from 1:00am to 6:00am¹⁶ and Hyde Park in London is closed from Midnight to 5:00am. Investment in lighting

¹³ Image, *Have you been to the new Thursday Lates in The National Gallery?*, <https://www.image.ie/life/thursday-lates-in-the-national-gallery-139793>

¹⁴ Dublin Chamber, *Dublin's Global Reputation Report*, <https://www.dublinchamber.ie/getattachment/Business-Agenda/Dublin-s-Global-Reputation/Dublin-s-Global-Reputation-Report.pdf?lang=en-IE>

¹⁵ Association of town & city management, *Purple Flag Status: How it Fits Place Management Policy*, <https://www.atcm.org/purple-flag>

¹⁶ Centralpark.org, *Central Park FAQ*, <https://centralpark.org/faq-2/>

is vital to open up these spaces in winter for recreational use but could also assist in opening up these spaces as possible venues for late night concerts or theatre performances, for night markets or other cultural uses that would enhance the night-time economy and the city.

Recommendations

This consultation comes at a critical time for the sectors and groups involved in the night-time economy in the Greater Dublin Area. The Covid-19 crisis has been devastating to these industries. However, as the economy opens up and restrictions are lifted, the industries and actors involved in this space need to be ready to not only bounce-back to pre-Covid levels, but to enable them to grow and develop a strong and vibrant night-time economy in our city.

Dublin Chamber recommends:

- An ambitious and forward-looking approach to the changing of licensing laws and regulations to achieve the vision of a modern 24-hour city;
- Supporting innovative thinking and policy creativity through pilot programmes and trials to establish learnings as we grow the night-time economy;
- Ensuring that the supporting infrastructure required to enhance the night-time economy is in place;
- Significantly enhanced late-night public transport offerings and increased introduction of 24-hour services where necessary;
- Ambitious re-thinking in relation to our cities' public and civic spaces and how they could be used to enhance the night-time economy;
- Establishment of a Dublin Night Mayor/Czar or Night-Time Commission whose role is promote, co-ordinate and enhance the night-time economy;
- Establishment of a fund to promote and increase engagement in the night-time economy from the arts and culture sectors;
- Recognition of the role that the public realm plays in ensuring safe open spaces and ensuring that services, such as street policing and CCTV are invested in to improve safety in the city.