

How to protect and promote vibrant nightlife, economy and culture in our major cities.

Dublin City Arts Officer - Mr. Ray Yeates

The Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan convened a workshop of stakeholders to examine the area of the Night Time Economy. Representatives of the Arts Office and Economic Development represented Dublin City Council, - and my office have since been in contact with the relevant government officials on the matter.

The Night Time Economy refers to social, cultural and economic activity occurring between specified nighttime hours. For example, in London this is between 6 pm and 6 am – the broadest definition of any city.

We need to start by understanding Dublin's economy at night and replacing myths and perceptions of nighttime in the city with evidence of how Dubliners and visitors use the city at night. This would highlight the opportunities and indeed the threats or pitfalls involved in further developing a Nighttime economy. However, at present there is little in the way of research or information on Dublin in this area.

What we can do is look to the experience of other cities, and in particular London where the Independent Night Time Commission has carried out extensive research, for some insights.

The Mayor of London appointed the Independent Night Time Commission (INTC) in October 2017 to provide advice to the Mayor, support their Night Tsar in relation to London's nighttime economy, and ultimately help realise a vision of the city as a 24-hour city. It has commissioned extensive quantitative and qualitative research to gather a strong evidence base to inform its work. One of the things it found is that partnership with local authorities, businesses and residents is crucial to creating a successful night-time culture which benefits residents, businesses and visitors.

Research estimates that a third of all workers in London work evenings and nights, including health professionals, emergency services, officer workers, technicians and drivers. This rises to 50% of all workers in the cultural and hospitality sectors. However London research found that many of the workers in the nighttime economy are low paid.

As of Q2 2019 Dublin had a total of 717,000 workers, 56,000 of whom were employed in Accommodation and Food Services Activities. If we were to extrapolate London's experience this implies that about a quarter of a million people work in Dublin between 6 pm and 6 am, with about 10% of these employed in hospitality. To establish these numbers for Dublin further research would need to be carried out...

We also know that average hourly wages in the Accommodation and Food Service and the Arts & Entertainment sectors are lower than the overall average. Hospitality workers earn around 56% of average hourly earnings while culture workers earn about 80%. Like London evidence shows that the existing nighttime economy in Dublin is concentrated in the lower paid sectors.

In terms of transport, Night tubes, trains and buses are available for commuting in London, something that is more limited in Dublin or indeed any of the other cities in Ireland. There are

limited public transport options for those enjoying and/or working in the city at night who are reliant on own transport or taxis.

Little is known about the levels of demand for being active at night in Dublin and indeed, what are the barriers to enjoying a night out in the city. Is it cost? Is it lack of choice? Is it early closing hours? Without information on the demand side dynamics formulating policy or strategy is hampered.

On the supply side, the most documented issues facing venue operators are primarily related to licensing restrictions. But there are many other challenges from a city's point of view. The limitations in the public transport systems, safety concerns and night working conditions all require careful consideration by a wide range of stakeholders

From the Arts Office point of view, it would appear that audiences at cultural events ending at 10.30 pm and particularly for visitors to Dublin have very few options after 11 pm. This provides many opportunities for the Arts Community to extend their activities beyond 11 pm that could be beneficial to audiences and businesses alike, subject to economic viability. In addition, much like during the day, where there are clusters of cultural venues there could be opportunities for retail. A recent Your Dublin Your Voice survey carried out by Dublin City Council found that the Georges Street vicinity had risen in popularity to become the second most popular shopping district, albeit during the day, due to its vibrant mixed offering of retail and entertainment. However, that same survey identified in open questions that the two most important factors when it came to shopping were range and value. Longer opening hours did not feature either as an influencing factor or as suggested improvement. Dublin City Council will carry out a further Your Dublin Your Voice survey to gather more information to gauge appetite and interest in the nighttime economy

Research from earlier this year, again from London's independent Night Time Commission, found that making the most of underused spaces with exhibitions, live performance and pop-up markets could boost the high street. Indeed, we have seen the success of Culture Night but that is an annual programme of free events and so not directly comparable.

It must be stressed this is a new area of policy and expertise where Dublin City Council is in a learning mode. I recently attended the World Cities Culture Summit which was organised by the World Cities Culture Forum with Mary MacSweeney, where 38 cities shared learnings on all aspects of culture. There I attended a session on the Night Time Economy. Several cities notably London (as already mentioned) and Sydney have been engaged in the development of the nighttime economy for several years and they set out the priorities involved and the challenges they faced. As a first step in informing Dublin City Council, I have written to the cultural agencies I met at the conference seeking papers or research they engaged in.

In recognition of the potential of the NightTime Economy, the Chief Executive of Dublin City Council, Owen Keegan, received a request from Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan, to set up a "Local Committee for the Consideration of Night Time Culture in Dublin City" by 29th November. The nighttime economy was discussed at length by the City Council at a Special Meeting on September 23rd. Based on London's experience where an extensive period of research preceded the establishment of a stakeholder group, Dublin City Council decided that it was not possible to set up the Committee within the timeframe suggested. It would be our preference to adopt a similar model commencing with research that should be carried out by relevant sectors and stakeholders in Dublin before setting up a Committee.

It is obviously in the interest of residents and visitors alike that Dublin has a safe, productive and vibrant nighttime offering but that can only be achieved by evidenced based policies. Dublin City Council will endeavour to set up the Committee referred to above once a substantial body of research describing the current Nighttime economy and options for its future John O'Hara will now discuss some of the Planning related factors.

Dublin City Planning Officer – Mr John O'Hara

From a planning point of view, the City is informed by the City Development Plan 2016-2022 ("the Plan"), which is the statutory framework to guide physical development and land use in a sustainable manner for the City. Part of the core strategy of this Plan is to provide for a vibrant mixed use environment, whereby people can live, work and participate in the cultural life of the city whilst minimising carbon based transport. The Development Plan also emphasises the need for quality density and safe, active streets. In implementing the Development Plan, we work closely with other agencies to enhance walking, cycling and public transport to serve our growing city.

Paragraph 16.32 of the Development Plan recognises

"the importance of Dublin as a thriving and multi-dimensional capital city and the need to facilitate the concept of the 24-hour city, particularly in the city centre and other key district centres".

The Plan also states that Dublin City Council will encourage entertainment /Culture/music uses which help create an exciting city for residents and tourists alike, and which are capable of attracting people in key employment sectors.

There is a need to strike an appropriate balance between the role of these entertainment uses in the economy of the city and the following:

- To maintain high quality retail functions on the primary city centre streets and ensure a balanced mix of uses.
- to protect the amenities of residents from an over-concentration of late night venues.

Noise emanating from and at the boundaries of these establishments are issues which will need to be addressed in planning applications. Noise insulation and reduction measures, especially relating to any mechanical ventilation or air-conditioning, are required with any planning application.

Currently the Plan discourages 'superpubs' and the concentration of pubs will be restricted in certain areas of the city, where there is a danger of over-concentration of these to the detriment of other uses.'

In conclusion, the successful development of a night-time economy and cultural life requires a multi-faceted approach from the top down and the bottom up which builds on the character of Dublin. As such, it cannot be just about relaxing drinking licencing hours, but includes other aspects, such an appropriate night time governance, a safe , active, and tolerant public realm, a vibrant mix of residential and cultural uses, together with good public transport for all citizens including night time workers.