

Sligo BID

Night-Time Economy Taskforce Submission

2020 Submission





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SLIGO BID COMPANY DETAILS

Sligo Business Improvement District CLG, Sligo BID Office, Abbey St, Sligo, Co. Sligo. Registered in Sligo, Ireland.

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Background of Sligo Business Improvement District

Sligo made history in 2016 in adopting a Business Improvement District Scheme (BID), the first such entity located on the west coast of Ireland. There are currently five BID companies in Ireland. These existing five BID companies in Dublin, Sandyford, Dundalk, Drogheda and Sligo generate €23 million in BID contributions every five years term and collectively represent 7,500 cross sector businesses from multinationals to sole traders. This is a scheme common in the United States (over 1,500 BID companies) and the United Kingdom (345 BID companies) where the ratepayers of a designated geographical area contribute an agreed additional percentage of their rates to be ring fenced for particular actions and projects. Sligo is a Purple Flag award (internationally accredited award for reaching a standard of excellence in the Evening and Night-Time Economy - ENTE) winning town since 2015 and the Sligo cross sector team is held within the community of Place Management as an excellent example of a productive, engaged and informed town team. Sligo, along with 16 other award winning towns and cities, are members of Association of Town and City Management UK and Ireland, members of the Institute of Place Management and the CEO of Sligo BID represents the Republic of Ireland towns and cities (23 destinations) on the Advisory Council and Board of the ATCM. Sligo is a founder member of the Irish Town Centre Development Association (ITCDA).

The Evening and Night-Time Economy (5pm to 5am)

It is acknowledged globally that footfall within urban centres has declined, with many towns and cities experiencing the “doughnut effect” of residents and businesses moving out of town centres and relocating to peripheral housing developments and retail parks, and in doing so decimating the central core. As SMEs in Irish towns and cities are a cornerstone of a regional economy, they now find themselves under threat from changing consumer behaviour, higher consumer expectations and increased competition amongst each other in winning foreign direct investment, residents, start-ups and domestic and international visitors.

Purple Flag Award

Purple Flag accreditation is an international award for towns and cities for the Evening and Night-Time Economy (5pm to 5am). There are 65 Purple Flag destinations in the UK and 17 in Ireland and 30 in Sweden. New Zealand is the latest country to join the programme. Recommended by Fáilte Ireland as a signature award for the Evening and Night-Time Economy, it recognises destinations that reach a standard of excellence and offer a family friendly, safe, culturally diverse product offering and specifically caters to late night shopping and hospitality outlets. Sligo BID is the project lead for Sligo Town in the annual application necessary to retain the award.

Through the Purple Flag accreditation, we work to enhance our Night-Time quarters under the tenets of people movement, safety, wellbeing, and policy. Purple Flag has had a decade of experience in understanding the attributes that contribute to a holistic and positive Night-Time economy. The Purple Flag award winning destinations assemble teams drawn from a multidisciplinary pool of local stakeholder groups, comprising Local Authorities (including economic development, Local Enterprise Office, engineering and planning personnel), An Garda Síochána, business representatives (restaurants, hotels, pubs and clubs, education sector, resident and community groups, tourism representatives, arts, cultural and sports venues).

Sligo Town Centre

Sligo Town is the county town for Co. Sligo with a population of 19,199 (CSO, 2016). The town had, pre Covid-19, a thriving evening and Night-Time economy with 110 businesses operating in the hospitality and sector (2018). Sligo has a number of large 24/7 industry sites, a regional hospital and two third level institutions (IT Sligo and St Angela's College) that operate in the ENTE.



Composition Table 2: February 2018

| Purple Flag KPI's: Composition Categories | Number | Percentage (%) |
|---|--------|----------------|
| Traditional pubs | 23 | 20.9 |
| Café bars/coffee shops serving alcohol | 3 | 2.7 |
| Nightclubs & late venues targeting under 25s | 3 | 2.7 |
| Family restaurants & global cuisine | 14 | 12.7 |
| Coffee shops/sandwich shop/ice cream parlours/specialty deli/patisserie | 21 | 19.1 |
| Fine dining | 3 | 2.7 |
| Fast food & take-aways | 8 | 7.3 |
| Theatre, concert & dance | 2 | 1.8 |
| Cinema, bingo & casinos | 2 | 1.8 |
| Live performance: music & comedy | 6 | 5.5 |
| Late-opening shops & markets | 15 | 13.6 |
| Late-opening museum, art gallery, library, education & community venues | 5 | 4.5 |
| Sports, leisure & fitness venue | 5 | 4.5 |
| Total | 110 | 100 |

KPI 3 - Composition Table



1. What do you see as the key attributes of a positive night-time economy? What does the best case scenario for you (as a group) look like?

The Purple Flag award is a reliable and proven method of measuring the key attributes of a positive night-time economy.

Purple Flag utilises a Core Agenda of standards complete with a 5 tier robust entry and assessment process. The component criteria were designed by industry experts, drawn from both the practitioner and academic realms. Key features of the design were that Purple Flag should be practically beneficial to participants and that it should provide a framework for local effort and be “owned” by participants. The award is flexible in that it can evolve to reflect the changing concerns and aspirations of Purple Flag holders.

Wellbeing: A primary hallmark of a successful Night-Time economy is keeping people safe and reducing vulnerability. Those living, working and visiting a destination between the hours of 5pm to 5am should expect a safe, family friendly atmosphere and be able to move across the destination unimpeded. Fundamental to a destination’s success is actively addressing the perception of safety in the ENTE. Annual town centre user perception of safety surveys of both daytime and Night-Time form part of the KPIs submitted with each annual application to win/retain the award. The recently completed CTCHC, Heritage Council of Ireland IPSOS Consumer Survey showed that 46% of respondents rated the feeling of safety and security as good/very good in the town centre at night.

Movement: Movement during the night is a keen concern which needs to be addressed by all Night-Time economies. Facilitating the movement of people in and out of a town at night is often quite different to during the day and with a different range of transport options available. Pedestrian movement and footfall can change dramatically after 5pm and there needs to be an awareness of the need for the allocation of additional resources where hospitality and entertainment venues are located. Often in Irish towns and cities these venues are clustered together, and management of access and egress can greatly impact a destination’s brand reputation - if left operating in isolation. Gaps/issues and concerns identified by the self-assessment conducted by the multi-agency Purple Flag team is reviewed and addressed in a collaborative spirit on an annual basis.

Appeal: Irish towns and cities are renowned worldwide for their warm, family friendly reputation and diversity of cultural offering that appeals to a wide demographic. Indeed, this reputation is one of the pillars that assists Tourism Ireland in ranking third in the digital platforms worldwide and enhances Ireland’s reputation in welcoming approximately (pre Covid-19) eight million visitors a year. Given that the consumer has a greater set of tools to access information on their choice of destination and that their decision making process is no longer solely formed on brochures and referrals, Irish towns and cities must now offer something for everyone at all times. This has placed increasing pressure on town centres whose retail footprint is shrinking (resulting in increasing vacancy rates) and a consumer that wants a greater multisensory experience. Town centres must now to offer a vibrant cultural offering across all genres, food and beverage offering to a standard experienced internationally by consumers, quality entertainment and value for money that can attract and entertain a wide demographic of residents and visitors. This means, urban centres must promote a healthy encouragement of arts, culture, cinema, theatre, music, events etc. This is not solely for the destination visitor but must also satisfy the local resident and business

investor/entrepreneur.

Place: Under Purple Flag, close attention is paid to the physical makeup of the place, such as public realm and infrastructure improvement projects. This has implications for how the town will be used and accessed. The improvements made to the asset base of a destination, can increase footfall, dwell time, increase destination brand equity. Sligo is fortunate in that the Local Authority has accessed funding under the URDF, HCI and Fáilte Ireland funding strands and has significant infrastructure improvements underway (O’Connell St refurbishment, installation of a new Civic Plaza). Sligo County Council has actively engaged with key stakeholder consultations including Sligo BID and the Purple Flag working group and this level of collaboration and cooperation will lead to a more informed and valued increase in the town’s asset base. Given the current climate of a pandemic, consideration should be given adapting ‘place’ to Covid-19 conditions that should include gathering data and measuring the impact of Night-Time performance through each journey of reopening and recovery, management of outdoor spaces, additional financial supports in adapting and enhancing the physical presentation of urban centres to attract footfall and increase dwell time.

Policy Envelope: The final and most important part of the Purple Flag assessment is the Policy Envelope. This seeks to understand how the other four attributes work together as one holistic package rather than as silos. It demands that every Purple Flag destination develops an evidence-led strategy which takes account of the current performance, strengths and weaknesses of the destination and that work to build on issues and concerns discovered in the self-assessment exercise. Part of the role of the independent assessors (stage 4 of 5 of the application) is not only an assessment of the destination itself but includes an assessment of the partnership. Genuine partnership takes work and moving to a coordinated, holistic policy environment takes time, trust, and credibility. Too often, strategic plans are developed – often in direct contradiction to other plans or are developed without the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances which results in limiting their relevance and potency.

With the current crisis we are experiencing, measures to mitigate against the spread of COVID-19 will formally become a key part of the assessment process to retain Purple Flag. This may necessitate the expansion of Purple Flag partnerships to include more engagement with public health. Ensuring Night-Time economies are COVID-Secure will dictate the composition of the Policy Envelope in coming months.

As can be seen, the Purple Flag is a reliable and proven method of measuring the key attributes of a positive night-time economy.

2. What cultural, creative or other activities are currently missing from the Night-Time economy?

The installation of a Civic Plaza in the heart of the town has the potential to positively impact the economic vibrancy of the immediate and surrounding area. Care and diligence will need to be applied in the management of this space that as a year-round open-air venue it realises the expectations that exists amongst the stakeholders. Sligo BID and the Purple Flag working group visited the Milk Market in Limerick and the Apple Market in Waterford. As the three destinations are members of the ATCM and hold Purple Flag status, the teams were able to engage in a productive and realistic conversations on issues, challenges and learned

experiences.

Capacity to accommodate pop up shops with a focus on the creative/artistic sector and engage in a scheme similar to that in operation in Waterford and Leitrim in utilising vacant properties (particularly in the core) with reduced rent, rates waiver to attract artists under clearly defined terms and conditions.

The ENTE within the town centre should have a similar level of support as that of the daytime that includes rubbish removal, street cleaning and garda presence to encourage the county population to visit the town centre during the ENTE. Currently it can cost approximately €25 each way for a taxi into town within a 15km radius and, whilst there is a limited and extended evening service during the summer months to Strandhill (5km from the town centre), there is no other service available to the residents of the county that is readily available to visit the town centre in the ENTE. This may become an issue in the current climate as businesses continue to adapt to changed trading conditions – such as the need to extend/alter opening and closing hours.

A mechanism to deliver a real time information digital platform for town centres users as to business opening hours and entertainment venue details. Sligo had sought funding for a 50” totem and additional lighting installations but given the narrow parameters of the funding stream both were rejected, yet both initiatives are recommended by the authors of the Global Night-Time Recovery Plan (nighttime.org/recoveryplan), in which the formation of the Irish National Night-Time Taskforce is referenced as a positive intervention.

Relax regulations on building use and assist businesses to pivot to an alternative use and adjust trading hours – fully realising that there needs to be a critical mass of businesses to present a viable and attractive offering to the consumer.

The 5 BID companies and 17 Purple Flag destinations and towns and cities holding membership with the ATCM are in regular biweekly contact with each other. Information, initiatives, successes, and failures are freely shared across the network. All are conducting regular consumer and business surveys which collectively give insightful information from both the consumer and business perspective. It would be useful to have an established link the Night-Time taskforce that this information with a geographic spread across the country can be collated and passed for consideration by the taskforce. Conversely, if the taskforce is seeking to gauge the temperature of a particular issue, the 23 teams are best placed to assist.

3. What are the challenges for your particular group and others? Any suggested solutions?

Issue No 1 – Lack of Economic Data

The economic value and impact of the ENTE in the Republic of Ireland has to date not been measured and therefore its value in terms of revenue generation, employment and role in raising a destination's brand equity remains unknown and undetermined. The ENTE is valued at £66 billion to the UK and £2.1 billion to the City of Glasgow (with 16,200 jobs). Within Northern Ireland a 2014 report identifies that the ENTE is worth £41 million per annum to the town of Armagh, sustaining 950 direct jobs in the process.

Solution: Evening and Night-Time Economy Scoping Study.

Based on the figure from Armagh, we suggest that Sligo ENTE value is higher both in terms of revenue generation and employment numbers. To address this lack of data, Sligo BID is committed in undertaking an Evening and Night-Time Economy Scoping Study in partnership with IT Sligo and under the supervision of Dr. Carol Moran, School of Business and Social Sciences. Dr Moran is a team member of the CTCHC, HCI project in Sligo.

This study will produce a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by business owners who are operating in the ENTE sector and will seek to identify additional businesses opportunities that may exist for current or potential enterprises. The establishment of the Night-Time Economy Taskforce by national government indicates the significance of this sector, but national policy is unlikely to have meaningful impact on local businesses in the short term. This project will ensure that business owners and leaders in this region can provide their perspectives of the current barriers and obstacles they face in this sector; as well as offer insights into initiatives that are working well and could be replicated in other areas. The data gathered will serve as a point from which any interventions either locally or by national government can be measured and evaluated – a fundamental component of any intervention. Furthermore, the study will seek to identify opportunities to enhance this sector for the economic, social and cultural benefit of our region.

Sligo would be the first town/city in the Republic of Ireland to undertake such a study and could assist other towns and cities in establishing baseline data on the ENTE performance and economic impact and value.

Issue No 2 – Vacant Stock in the Town Centre

Sligo joined the Collaborative Health Check Programme with the Heritage Council of Ireland in 2018.

Having recently completed the 15 steps Health Check report, survey data on the store street was collected on approx. 1,150 units – both occupied and vacant. The unit uses were classified using the GOAD Classification of Land Use and mapped using the CTCHC GIS colour coding system. The survey established that there were approx. 200 vacant in buildings in the historic town centre giving an occupancy rate of 83% and a vacancy rate of 17% and a retail vacancy rate of 18.4%. (link to report included in this submission).

Solution:

Active engagement with key stakeholders on the repurposing of this vacant stock. Sligo is now entering phase 2 of the CTCHC programme focusing on following established methodology in addressing vacant stock that includes updating land registry, identifying building clusters using CTCHC Building Survey Methodology for repurposing and to enable development. Sligo BID is supportive of the 'Town Centres First' policy within the Programme for Government and the commitment towards a wider collaborative action at all levels to regenerate our historic town centre as a place of vibrant activity.

Issue No 3 – Pubs, Nightclubs, Extensions and Licensing Laws

We may have to accept that Covid-19 has impacted the public's appetite to gather in large numbers for events (both indoor and outdoor) and that Covid-19 may leave an imprint of changed behaviour that ENTE operators will be dealing with for the foreseeable future. Under the current licensing laws, applying for an exemption attracts a €410 fee per night. Additional costs include time taken to attend court and in engaging a solicitor. Considering the onerous impact of Covid-19 on the licensed premises sector, this is an ideal opportunity to review existing practices.

Solution:

1. Place application process online. This would improve efficiency and reduce cost to the ENTE licensed operators in the SME sector. Dispels the operators need to attend the courthouse for a routine issuing of a license during a pandemic and will free up first responder time and resources.
2. Pay an annual entertainment fee in lieu of individual applications that would include x number of exemptions. This would offer a more cost-efficient model to the sector and account for duty of care in Covid conditions.

Issue No 4 – Access to Covid Adaptation Funding for Place Management/Animation Initiatives

The recently released 'Global Night-Time Recovery Plan' ([see link here](#)) makes many recommendations for attracting footfall back to towns and cities that include street animation, additional or enhanced illumination, increased safety protocols and dissemination of information in a real time environment that reassures consumers as to what businesses are open and what entertainment is available. The recent funding made available via the NTA for executing Covid-19 responses to streetscape that addressed social distancing, queue management and additional seating capacity in the form of parklets, now need a broader application in addressing Irish urban centres physical presentation and continuing adaptation to an outdoor seating that takes account of weather conditions. Here in the North West, we average 220 days of rain a year and therefore outdoor settings and covered spaces is now a priority consideration as consumer demand and preferences (as detailed by Fáilte Ireland consumer research) has increased as we have journeyed through Covid-19.

Solution:

Additional funding streams made available to local authorities that addresses managing and enhancing outdoor spaces including lighting, sound, seating and cover.

4. What in your view is a best practice example of a successful night-time economy internationally and/or are there international examples we can draw from?

Establishing baseline performance and evidence-based data for Irish towns and cities in the ENTE.

- Comprehensive data for both Local Authority, existing and in-coming businesses (e.g. footfall data and land use survey data, perception surveys, consumer surveys, business surveys (by sector and issue))
- Improved structures for professionally organized and adequately funded events adapted to current conditions
- A focus on the repurposing of vacant stock within town and city centres as proposed by the CTCHC programme that includes updating land registry, identifying building clusters using CTCHC Building Survey Methodology
- Focused marketing of the town's strengths, with organized promotions that target key market segments both domestic and international
- Identification and adoption of retail and hospitality vehicles such as loyalty and coupon programmes, destination voucher cards and active shop local campaigns
- Recognition that business opening hours may adapt to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and ensure active engagement with businesses affected in providing business supports and maximizing every opportunity for revenue generation
- Resources applied to improve the physical presentation of the ENTE setting (lighting, seating, covered outdoor multipurpose spaces)
- A healthy mix of indigenous and multiple business offering
- A visible recognition of the destinations USP's that promotes competitive advantage nationally and internationally
- Purple Flag tenets at the heart of the destination's ENTE modus operandi
- Improved communication between all stakeholders of the town, ratepayers, and local authority

International Examples:

Aston Lane – Glasgow: <https://www.whatsonglasgow.co.uk/listings/ashton-lane/>

A good variety of quirky bars, cafes, restaurants, cinema with inventive events all year round.

Bristol: New docks area has managed to keep its character despite new development. Great choice of night venues and boat parties. Uses outside space very well to direct flow of pedestrians. Proudly incorporates its industrial and agriculture heritage.

<https://visitbristol.co.uk/blog/read/2019/08/the-best-places-to-eat-al-fresco-in-bristol-b1117>

Belgrade: The river front featuring boat night clubs

<http://www.tt-group.net/en/visit-serbia/best-party-boats-in-belgrade/>

Tbilisi: The city has two pedestrian streets either side of the river for day and night time dining. Art galleries and museums are located just off both streets. The street furniture and street lighting used creates a lovely ambience for dining and people watching. In the old town at a nearby junction they also have a large neon sign spelling out I Love Tbilisi which is a tourist attraction in itself.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/destinations/asia/georgia/partner-content-georgia-tbilisi-bohemian-city/>

Links to Sligo Publications, Images, Footfall Data, Social Media Metrics

Link to Sligo Sales Book

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/okzjepydfa825yy/Sligo%20Tours%20A5%20booklet%202018-email.pdf?dl=0>

Link to Consumer and Health Check reports 2019 and 2020 CTCHC Programme, Heritage Council of Ireland

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/objje6my5fmjduc/19-068523-Heritage%20Council-Sligo%20Town%20Centre%20Health%20Check%20%2818.11.19%29%20%281%29.pdf?dl=0>

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/g8iynre8ef9ucj3/Sligo%20Collaborative%20Town%20Centre%20Health%20Survey-A4-brochure-Final.pdf?dl=0>

Purple Flag team photo

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/gyg2br4o0ij2u8v/PF%20team%20Sligo%20%28SligoBID%20Dropbox%27s%20conflicted%20copy%202020-01-06%29.jpg?dl=0>

Link to Sligo Purple Flag town banners

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/wey1xek3vys1r6n/Purple%20flag%20banner%20signs.zip?dl=0>

Town Images

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/msi6imijfe7ealy/AAA6H5bA0EGU5cpsnQ4Suuxxa?dl=0>

Sligo Summer Festival

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/w68270icqkdc07i/AAB1btBAFQ8dYxhh0L8cg98ua?dl=0>

Sligo Summer festival Video

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/k62miqew6dv4fef/Christy%20Crazy%20Across%20River.mp4?dl=0>

Footfall sample data

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2xfwxetmyuebp6y/AAAZuigS8wKi3Z-70LTJfuhra?dl=0>

Sligo GIG guide Sample 2016

https://www.dropbox.com/s/_____f3krt92rw2mpp8e/Sligo%20BID-Town%20Gig%20Guide%202016.pdf?dl=0

Social Media Metrics Summer Festival

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/p5zvmvcpf7evpwi/Social%20media%20stats%20Summer%20Festival.PNG?dl=0>





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