



# Retail Forum Working Group Minutes: Future of Retail – Town Centre First and Night-time Economy

**23 February 2023**

**Meeting 6**

**CHATHAM HOUSE RULES APPLY**

**Attendees:** Appendix A

**Minutes:** The minutes from this meeting are to be agreed under Silence Procedure and will be available on [www.enterprise.gov.ie](http://www.enterprise.gov.ie)

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## **Item 1: Welcome**

The Chair welcomed the Group.

## **Item 2: Update on Night-time Economy actions**

Ms Deborah Lawlor, Assistant Principal, Night-time Economy unit in the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media gave an update on the implementation of the actions in the Report on the Night-time Economy Taskforce. Highlights include:

- Development of Night -time safety charter with vulnerability training carried out last year
- Transport improvements with 8 x24 hour bus routes launched and 1200 new taxi licences granted last year – continue to examine what further can be done to improve night-time transport.
- Youth Forum to be held to hear the views of young people on what a night-time economy should offer
- Finalisation of a review into the Night-time Economy Support Scheme
- €6 million budget in 2023 for existing initiatives and new ideas
- 9 NTE pilot towns announced with open recruitment of NTE Advisors underway
- NTE Advisors to drive sustainable night-time economy activities in their assigned areas and will set up NTE committee to work with local businesses, communities and carry out extensive consultations with stakeholders etc.
- NTE advisors will also be tasked with identifying funding schemes for late night retail and other initiatives.
- DTCAGSM will provide some seed funding for these initiatives.
- A night-time safety audit is being carried out in Dublin (Capel St and Temple Bar) which will lead to an action plan and this can be replicated in towns across the country.
- A series of night-time markets are also planned for 2023 to increase footfall.



*Comments arising:*

- *Members welcomed the initiatives being implemented.*
- *Member stressed the importance of a linkage between the work of the TRO and the NTE Advisors to avoid duplication of efforts.*
- *A comment was made that the Night -Time Committee would need to be part of the Town Team being developed under TCF.*
- *Some members mentioned the good work being carried out by Purple Flag teams and to involve them.*

**Item 3: Town Centre First Update**

Ms Mairéad Hunt, National Co-ordinator, Town Centre First Office, gave an update on the progress of actions under Town Centre First Policy

- 26 Town Regeneration Officers to be appointed – 14 appointed to date.
- 11 Local authorities carrying out open recruitment competition
- Appointments made by end March
- Confirmed that there will be regular contact between the NTE advisors and town centre plans.
- Town Centre Plans – 10 progressing well and will meet June 2023 deadline; 12 behind due September 2023 and 4 still to commence.
- A Project Manager has been appointed to the National Town Centre First Office in February 2023 to support the Town Regeneration Officers and Town Team
- A Project officer will be appointed in March 2023 to manage information on a Town Centre First Portal
- Additional resource to be recruited to look at scaling the Heritage Council's Healthcheck model.
- Key priority actions in 2023 for TCF Office include:
  - Agree implementation plan with NOAG in April
  - development of information web portal
  - scale Health Checks
  - gather data

*Comments arising*

- *issues re hotels in contract impacting towns*
- *vacancies in town centres – main streets*
- *the need for larger towns to lead – under 10k is limiting – towns of 20-30k are the backbone of the country*

**Action:**

Retail Forum members asked to contact the TCF Office Project Manager directly with input into the *Guidance on Town Team Formation and Governance* [Project Manager contact details issued to Working Group members on 24 February 2023]

**Item 4: Digital Town Initiative Update**

Ms Oonagh McCutcheon, National Director .IE Digital Town Programme presented on the Digital Town blueprint.



- .IE & DCU are delivering a 'Digital Town Blueprint' report on each of the selected 26 towns under Phase 1 of the Town Centre First Initiative.
- The purpose of these reports is to allow stakeholders to better understand their town's digital readiness and digital competitiveness; compare their town against Irish and international benchmarks and to stimulate stakeholder engagement on digitalisation in their locality.
- The Digital Town Blueprint analyses digital readiness across seven dimensions, which includes:
  1. Infrastructure for Digital Connectivity;
  2. The Digital Economy and Digital Business;
  3. Digital Public Services;
  4. Governance of Digital Town Initiatives.
- One of the roles of the Town Regeneration Officer will be to collect data in their allocated town.
- The blueprints will be incorporated into the overall town plan

**Action:**

Retail Forum to link in with TCF and .IE re collection of data via TROs

**Item 5: Working Group Actions**

The Retail Forum Secretariat advised the Working Group that they will be contacted with updates on the actions under the Work Programme following the meeting.

**Action:**

Update on the 2022/2023 Working Group Actions to be forwarded to Working Group members [Progress Report on the implementation of the actions in the Retail Forum's Work Programme 2022/2023 issued to Retail Forum members and Working Group members on 10 March 2023]



## Appendix A

### Retail Forum Working Group: Future of Retail – Town Centre First and Night-time Economy

#### Attendees

| Organisation   | First Name | Surname          |
|--|------------|------------------|
| Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Chair) | Maedhbh    | Cronin           |
| DETE   | Deborah    | Dignam           |
| DETE   | Mary       | Cullen           |
| Chambers Ireland                                       | Margaret   | O'Brien          |
| Dublin Town  | Richard    | Guiney           |
| ISME/Sligo BID   | Finbarr    | Filan            |
| HABIC/ISME/Image Skillnet                              | Margaret   | O'Rourke Doherty |
| Retail Excellence                                      | Duncan     | Graham           |
| Retail Ireland   | Samira     | Nicolo           |
| TU Dublin  | Damian     | O'Reilly         |
| IPU  | Jim        | Curran           |
| .IE  | Oonagh     | McCutcheon       |

#### Apologies

| Organisation | First Name | Surname |
|--------------|------------|---------|
| RGDATA       | Tara       | Buckley |

#### Presenters

| Organisation                     | First Name | Surname    |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| DTAGSM – Night-time Economy Unit | Deborah    | Lawlor     |
| Town Centre First Coordinator    | Mairead    | Hunt       |
| .IE                              | Oonagh     | McCutcheon |