

## Minutes

### Retail Forum Working Group Future of Retail – Town Centre First/Night-time Economy (TCF/NTE WG) Meeting 1 - 04 April 2022

#### **CHATHAM HOUSE RULES APPLY**

**Attendees:** Appendix A

**Next meeting:** 10am, Tuesday 26 April 2022

**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)

---

**Objective:** The **Future of Retail – Town Centre First/Night-time Economy** working group is tasked with identifying a set of achievable actions to feed into a Retail Action Plan that will be presented to the Minister for Retail, Damian English T.D. at the Retail Forum meeting on 08 June 2022.

#### **1. Agenda Items**

The Chair welcomed the members of the working group and thanked them for their participation. Three meetings of the working group will be held in advance of the 08 June meeting and will focus on:

- **Town Centre First**  
*Action 15 - Promote existing exemplars and current models which illustrate successful Town Centre living and explore how to encourage behavioural change*
- **Night-Time Economy**  
*Action 15 - Work with the Retail Forum to examine the types of interventions required for late retail opening. Establish a Retail Forum working group to discuss this along with the Town Centre First initiative*

A tour de table followed where each member outlined their ideas and suggestions and issues that they believed were important priorities for the group to work through.

DETE outlined its participation in the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media working group on developing alcohol free activities in the NTE and its proposals. Working group members were invited to contribute to the proposals to feed into the Working Group – particularly from a retail perspective. DETE will continue to update members on developments in relation to the NTE including details of any intended Schemes.

#### **2. Issues/Challenges raised**

##### **Town Centre First (TCF) Policy**

- 2.6 million on the development of Town Centre Plans in 26 towns is welcome however, concerns exist that the TCF model will result in disparate plans for towns around the country. Consistency in approach throughout the country is required.
- The process of implementing the TCF policy, including recruitment of Town Regeneration Officers (TROs) needs to be business-led.
- Town Regeneration Officers (TROs) will have a demanding role and an important one and will need to have the appropriate skills.

- A suggestion was made to establish a not for profit body akin to Scotland's Towns Partnership to lead on TCF
- It was suggested that the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme could be funded and rolled out nationally and the programme could develop and manage a portal and the collection, collation and management of the data and all TCF initiatives.
- 

#### Data (including vacancy rates)

- Lack of data an ongoing issue in Ireland – it needs to be addressed urgently.
- A dynamic coherent inventory of vacant buildings is required.
- The Vacant Properties Indicators Model in Philadelphia could be considered. Registry in Ireland is expensive – this information should be free.
- Not all vacant premises can/should be re-purposed as retail – there are too many retailers in some towns.

#### Innovation

- The use of vacant properties in towns requires reimagining for the daytime and night-time economies.
- Promoting the experience economy is important – both during the day and at night-time.
- Innovative ideas are needed to bring people, foreign companies, and entrepreneurs into towns.
- Hospitality draws people into towns. Retail can benefit from this by remaining open later and diversifying their offering.

#### Building on Success

- It is important not to reinvent the wheel -The Purple Flag initiative was commended as an initiative that has worked.

#### NTE and TCF

- Ensure that the retail sector collaborates jointly with NTE and TCF offices to avoid duplication.

### 3. DRAFT Actions

	Lead	Action	Detail	Timeline
1.	All Members  DETE	<b>Town Centre First</b> Retail sector to engage with the Town Centre Office (TCO) at an early stage to contribute to the development of town plans and any skills programmes/capacity building programmes for town teams that might be developed under TCF.	TCF/NTE WG to invite TCO office via Town Centre First National Oversight and Advisory Group/ DRCD to outline how retail and locally traded businesses can input into town plans/capacity building programmes	Short-term

2	DETE/BID WG member	<b>Town Centre First</b> Consider how the Retail sector can be directly involved in the recruitment of Town Regeneration Officers (TRO), e.g., have a business representative on the evaluation committee that appoints a TRO.	DETE to consult with the TCO on process of recruitment of TRO	Short-term
3	DETE	<b>Collaboration between NTE and TCF initiatives where appropriate</b> Ensure linkages between offices.		ongoing
4	Chambers/BID /Town team lead  All members	<b>Current initiatives that work</b> Consider the development of a pilot Night-time Economy (NTE) project for independent retailers on one day a week from 6pm to 8pm and roll it out in a few Purple Flag towns (e.g., cultural companion programme for over 55's)  Consider establishing a second Culture Night	Engage with NTE DTCAGSM unit re funding.	Medium-term
5	DETE	<b>Innovation</b> Encourage members to submit proposals to the Night-time economy WG.	Invite Working Group members to submit ideas.  DETE to find out what support is available.	Short-term
6	DETE lead  All members	<b>Data</b> Consult with OGCIO to better understand what data sets are in existence and what data policy going forward is to open up Gov data.  Should TRO lead on data collection?  Development of a gap analysis for data required for town centres.	Consult with OGCIO, TCF.  <a href="#">National Land Register - Dataset - PSB Data Catalogue</a>  Members to identify what data the Health Check gathers and if feasible to gather any of that data which is collected manually through digital means.	Medium term  Long-term  Medium term

### TCF Implementation

Lead	Action	Detail	
TCF	Establish a not- for - profit body akin to Scotland's Towns		

	Partnership to lead on TCF		
<b>TCF</b>	Fund the national roll out of Collaborative Town Centre Health Check Programme	CTCHC Programme to develop and manage a portal and the collection, collation and management of the data and all TCF initiatives.	

Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment  
April 2022

## Appendix A

### Attendance List:

Organisation	First Name	Surname
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) (Chair)	Maedhbh	Cronin
Chambers Ireland	Margaret	O'Brien
Dublin Town	Richard	Guiney
Hair and Beauty Industry Confederation	Margaret	O'Rourke Doherty
ISME	Finbarr	Filan
Retail Excellence	Duncan	Graham
RGDATA	Tara	Buckley
TU Dublin	Damien	O'Reilly
UCD Centre for Irish Towns	Philip	Crowe
Retail Ireland	Samira	Nicolo

DETE Officials	Deborah	Dignam
	Mary	Cullen
	Niamh	Martin
	Sandra	Mullen
	Susan	McNamee

### Apologies:

Organisation	First Name	Surname
IPU	Jim	Curran
LGMA	Michael	Quinn