A strategy for the management of Cheltenham's evening and night-time economy

Introduction

Cheltenham has successfully developed and maintained a thriving evening and night-time economy (ENTE): the largest night life scene between Bristol and Birmingham, exceeding towns comparable to Cheltenham in terms of population size and demographics. This is largely the result of the broad appeal of the night–time offer and the town's reputation as a good and safe night out, confirmed by Cheltenham's status as a Purple Flag town since 2016.

(Purple Flag is a national accreditation scheme managed by the Association of Town & City Management which on an annual basis assesses and recognises town and city centres that are committed to raising standards and broadening their appeal, specifically between the hours of 5.00pm and 5.00am).

https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/info/62/community_safety_and_crime/1167/our_town_at_night_-_purple_flag_status

The evening and night-time economy is crucial to Cheltenham and never more so than now. With the shopping experience progressively moving online, a thriving evening and night-time offer will be fundamental in sustaining the vitality of our town centre. It will attract visitors and residents to the centre and will encourage business growth within the sector. Spending by visitors and residents makes a substantial contribution to the economy of the town. A thriving ENTE will be a key element in plans to promote Cheltenham as a festival town and leisure destination.

Cheltenham Borough Council will act as lead partner for this strategy but it is intended that the strategy will form part of a cohesive approach by all partner agencies and groups in promoting the responsible use of alcohol, minimising the effects of crime and disorder and the associated impact on the police, health and other public authorities and ensuring that our evening and night-time economy continues to thrive.

Assumptions

Much of Cheltenham's evening and night-time activity is concentrated within the town centre and whilst this is a strategy for the whole Borough of Cheltenham the focus will be on the area of the town centre designated as being within the Cheltenham Purple Flag zone (see appendix for map).

This strategy has adopted the Association of Town & City Management's Purple Flag definition as being economic activity occurring between the hours of 5.00pm and 5.00am.

Vision

Cheltenham's evening and night-time economy should be a place that is accessible and appealing to every sector of the population, catering for all ages, interests and income groups and above all it should be safe.

Ambitions

1. A safe night out for all

A safe evening and night-time economy is pivotal to its success and sustainability. It is important that visitors, residents and those working within the sector are safe and also perceive the town to be safe. The public perception of town centres at night can sometimes be quite negative and at odds with reality. These negative perceptions can impact the ENTE, contributing to a lack of footfall in the town centre and an absence of family focussed early-evening activity.

What we will do:

- We will work with statutory, voluntary and other relevant partners to undertake a public realm audit of the town centre to identify improvements and security enhancements.

- We will invest in the town's public realm CCTV system ensuring that it is maintained to a modern standard that is resilient.

- We will keep abreast of best practice across the UK and promote local and national best-practice schemes amongst our ENTE operators and regulators.

- We will celebrate and promote our own good practice.

- We will adopt a code of practice for all non-statutory partners operating in Cheltenham's ENTE to develop agreed service standards and operational boundaries.

- We will work with businesses in the ENTE to develop training pathways for staff working in the sector.

- We will be proactive in addressing negative perceptions of Cheltenham's ENTE through an adopted marketing strategy and proactive campaigns highlighting Cheltenham's Purple Flag status.

- We will review public transport arrangements in the ENTE to ensure they are safe and accessible. We will do this through adopting a programme of regular enforcement, regulation and inspections, reviewing taxi rank provision, rolling out safeguarding, equality and diversity training for taxi/private hire licence holders.

- We will explore funding opportunities to promote safety in the ENTE.

- We will maintain the town's Purple Flag status.

2. Well managed: an ENTE that works for everyone

We want Cheltenham's ENTE to work for everyone – businesses, residents, visitors and higher education students. An accessible and inclusive Cheltenham that is well managed will contribute towards a safe and sustainable town. The shared demands of the environment will have contrasting requirements. Whilst this strategy cannot meet all of these contrasting requirements, we will work on measures that will seek to find a reasonable medium.

Historically the evening and night-time economy has been synonymous with the consumption of alcohol. Whilst a large number of late opening businesses within the town centre are licensed to sell alcohol, a successful ENTE should welcome and cater for the increasing proportion of the population who choose not to drink alcohol for personal or cultural reasons.

We recognise that a partnership approach is vital to creating an ENTE that works for everyone.

Firstly, regulators should adopt regulatory approaches that support business in achieving an acceptable level of compliance and responsible operation but also recognising that in some cases enforcement action may be appropriate.

Secondly, businesses and operators in the ENTE also have a role to play to ensure they operate responsibly, are receptive to the sensitivities that may come with operating in the town and work proactively with regulators to support a well-managed ENTE. This should include active participation in good practice schemes such as Purple Flag and Best Bar None.

Finally, the council has an ambition to encourage people to live in the town centre. This will inevitably create a tension between the ENTE's offer and the ability of residents to live in reasonable peace and quiet. To this end, we must also be mindful of this in our measures to ensure Cheltenham's ENTE is one that works for everyone.

What we will do:

- We will set-up a multi-agency governance group (including trade representation) to provide a strategic oversight of Cheltenham's ENTE including the implementation of this strategy and monitoring its impact. This group will be responsive and reactive to the changing wants and needs of the night-time economy and its users.

- Cheltenham Borough Council will continue to support the sound management of public safety in Cheltenham's evening and night-time economy through the employment of a night-time economy coordinator who will also coordinate Purple Flag.

- We will strive to ensure appropriate levels of public utilities and that street cleansing arrangements continue to be adequate for the ENTE's needs and requirements.

- Statutory regulators in the ENTE will work towards adopting a regulatory approach that, where appropriate, seeks to support businesses to achieve an appropriate level of operational compliance but equally recognising that in some cases formal enforcement will be necessary and proportionate.

- We will work to improve engagement with and the involvement of residents and resident's groups in the management of our evening and night-time economy, creating space for greater local ownership.

3. Sustainable: An evening and night-time economy that will last

Nationally, evening and night-time economies have gone through difficult times in recent years. The prevalence of pre-loading (drinking alcohol at home before going out),

competing with the off-trade, behavioural shifts towards drinking and socialising at home and cultural shift towards more healthy choices have all played a part in creating a difficult trading environment. A successful and sustainable ENTE is one that recognises and adapts to these changes.

The growing realisation and acknowledgement of the social and economic importance of the ENTE has led to increased competition from other towns and cities across the region. People who might previously have travelled to Cheltenham for a great night out now have a greater choice of destination. In light of this, it is important that the council and its partners work proactively, to ensure that Cheltenham's ENTE remains resilient in the current climate and continues to thrive.

Cheltenham Borough Council is committed to making the town carbon neutral by 2030. Reducing carbon emissions will deliver positive environmental benefits and minimise Cheltenham's contribution to further climate change.

What we will do:

- We will work with Marketing Cheltenham, Cheltenham Business Improvement District and other relevant partners to develop a marketing strategy and plan for Cheltenham's ENTE.

- We will appoint an ENTE champion for Cheltenham with sufficient political influence to effectively represent the ENTE.

- We will work with partners to find effective and sustainable ways to support businesses operating within the ENTE.

- We will proactively work to address negative perceptions about Cheltenham's ENTE.

- We will adopt and implement strategies to ensure the availability of safe and environmentally sustainable transport access to and from the town centre.

- As licensing authority, Cheltenham Borough Council will explore the feasibility of implementing a forward limit on emissions and a move to electric vehicles for taxis and private hire vehicles licensed to operate within the Borough of Cheltenham.

4. Accessible & inclusive: An ENTE for all to enjoy

Cheltenham's evening and night-time economy should offer a vibrant choice of leisure and entertainment for a diversity of ages, groups, lifestyles, cultures and incomes. It needs to be inclusive and accessible to everyone. To this end it is important that the council and its partners work toward an ENTE offer that is diverse; both in its *offer* and *appeal*.

The town has largely been able to sustain a healthy and diverse offer in its ENTE. The current numbers of late opening businesses within the designated Purple Flag area (March 2019) indicate that alcohol based venues account for little more than a third of all businesses.

Category	Number	Percentage of total
Alcohol based venues		**36.8%**
Traditional pubs	14	7.6%
Food-led bars, café bars & branded food pubs	41	22.1%
Nightclubs & late venues	13	7.10%
Food venues		**44.8%**
Family restaurants	53	28.6%
Fine dining	6	3.2%
Fast food & takeaways	24	13.0%
Culture & entertainment		**4.4%**
Theatre, concert & dance	4	2.2%
Cinema, bingo & casinos	2	1.1%
Live performance: music and comedy	2	1.1%
Retail & public buildings		**14.0%**
Late opening shops & markets	19	10.2%
Late-opening museum, art gallery, library, education & community venues	2	1.1%
Sports, leisure & fitness venue	5	2.7%
Total	**185**	**100%**

In terms of its offer, we want to maintain this wide range of choice for residents and visitors in terms of places to eat, drink and other activities such as theatres, cinemas and other leisure facilities.

It terms of its appeal, we want Cheltenham's ENTE to be inclusive to everyone and we recognise that not everyone who visits the town at night wants to drink alcohol. As such, we want to work to promote more alternative choices and options such as alcohol free venues.

What we will do:

- We will work with elected councillors and policy makers to ensure licensing and planning policy reflects this strategy's ambition to maintain the ENTE's diverse offer and appeal.

- We will use opportunities to raise the profile and ambitions of this strategy, particularly with members of regulatory committees, as key decision makers that could influence the success of this strategy.

- We will work with the Cheltenham Business Improvement District and adopt council strategies to ensure Cheltenham continues to be a place where businesses are welcome and where innovative approaches are welcomed and encouraged.

5. Data: An evening and night-time economy we understand

A well-managed evening and night-time economy needs a sound statistical base for policy-making and action. An understanding of the needs and problems of Cheltenham's ENTE through collaboration between sectors, partner agencies, service providers and users will enable policy makers to develop a clear aim and common purpose for the future development and management of our evening and night-time economy.

What we will do:

- We will work to developing a robust approach to assessing the value, needs and problems in the ENTE through partnership working, intelligent use and interpretation of data and finding sustainable and creative solutions to issues.

- We will use existing Purple Flag data sources as a basis for assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of our ENTE.

- Develop clear and robust evaluation criteria to measure the impact of the ENTE strategy including setting a baseline to measure against.

- We will work with the police and other relevant partners to adopt a methodical approach to identifying crime and disorder hotspots and to put in place interventions to address this.

Evaluation

Existing Purple Flag performance indicators provide a sound statistical base for evaluation of the progress and success of this strategy. These can be supplemented by additional performance indicators identified by the ENTE governance group.

Cheltenham Purple Flag designated area

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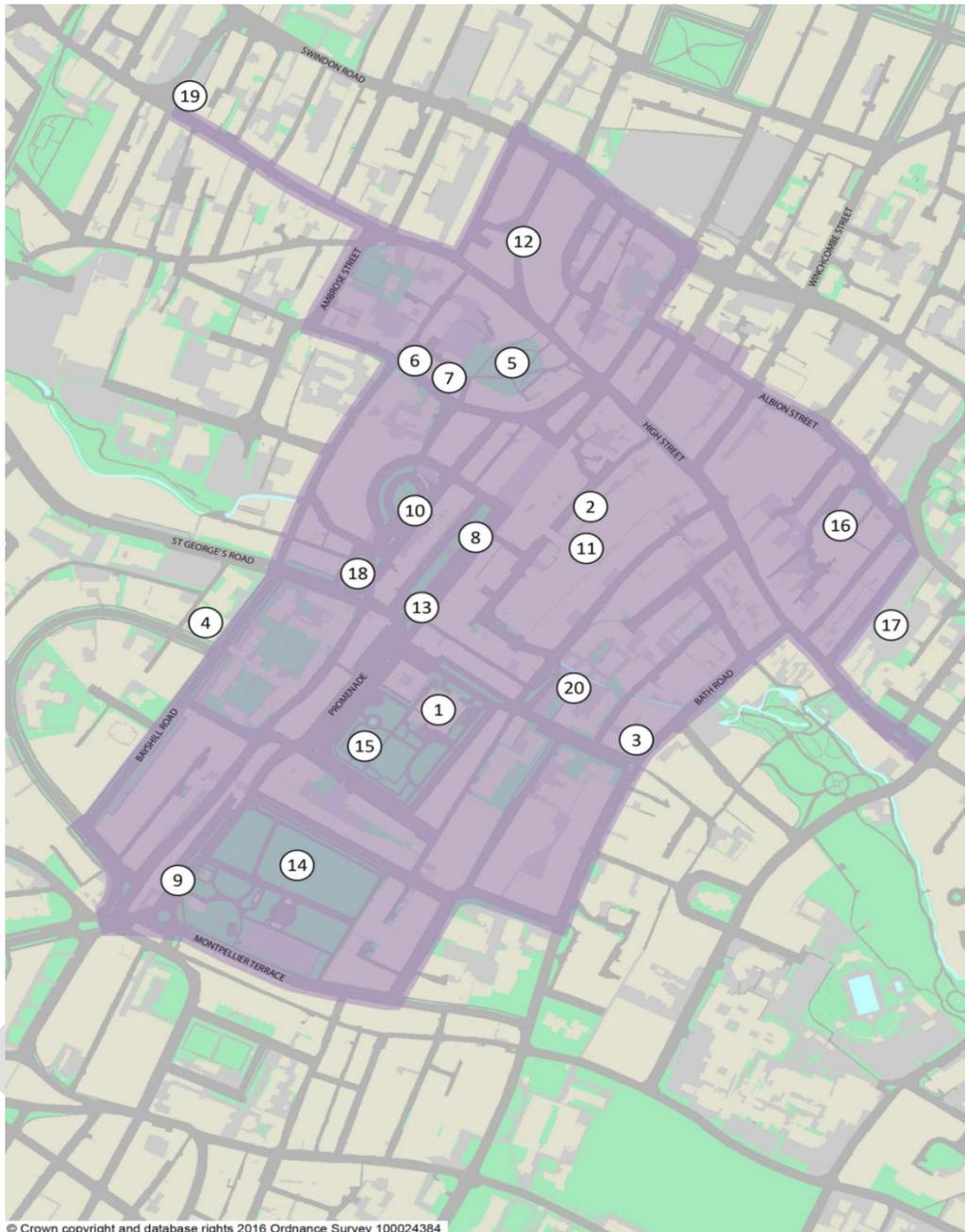
1. Cheltenham Town Hall	8. Promenade taxi rank	15. Imperial Gardens
2. Everyman Teatre	9. Montpellier taxi rank	16. Town Centre East car park
3. Playhouse Theatre	10. Royal Well bus/coach station	17. St. James Street car park
4. Parabola Arts Centre	11. Regent Arcade	18. Royal Well car park
5. Cheltenham Minster	12. The Brewery Quarter	19. West End car park
6. Cheltenham Library	13. The Promenade	20. Rodney Road car park
7. Art gallery & museum		