

Speech by Minister Catherine Martin at the launch of the Report of the Night-Time Economy Taskforce

From [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)

By: [Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#); [Catherine Martin](#)

Published on 15 September 2021

Last updated on 15 September 2021

Check against delivery

Imagine this: it is 11.30pm at night, you are in a gallery or a museum, with locally sourced foods, bespoke beverages, modern art, people dancing to some of the city's best DJs, fashion installations, talks and exhibitions, performers and multiple late night transport routes home.

Ireland is renowned for its culture, and often for its nightlife. That all changed during COVID-19. The announcement today sets out to reignite our night-time culture and economies and is about putting us on a par with European cities, which thrive after dark.

I am really pleased to be able to launch the Report of the Night-Time Economy Taskforce. And I would like to thank everyone who contributed to its development – those across the various government departments and agencies, the Lord Mayors of Cork and Dublin and Sunil and Robbie from Give Us the Night, representing key elements of the sector and those who contributed to the consultation process. I'd also like to say particular thanks to the chair of the Taskforce, the Secretary General of my department, Katherine Licken.

Ireland's nightlife is a critical sector, contributing to our economy and our cultural and creative sectors. But we must protect, support and sustain it –

particularly as we begin to emerge out of this pandemic and start to think about how and where we socialise and plan our city and town centres.

Ernest Hemingway once said that “the things of the night cannot be explained in the day, because they do not then exist.”

And he was right.

Look at cities like Berlin, where culture thrives at all hours, where the city’s heartbeat doesn’t end at night. Or New York, Montreal or Paris. These cities don’t close, their vibrancy continues well into the night in venues. And they have built their reputations on this.

When I established the Night-Time Economy Taskforce, I asked them to examine key challenges facing night time culture such as regulations, licencing laws, transport, and diversity of cultural activities with the aim of identifying solutions and new opportunities.

Many of the actions in the Report- noted by my colleagues in Government today- seek practical solutions to various obstacles and challenges for the Night-Time Economy or seek to explore new and better ways of doing things using existing structures. Some actions also recommend new initiatives and pilot projects.

The Taskforce met with a wide-range of stakeholders within the Night-Time Economy and their views are reflected throughout this report – diversification of night-time offering, better transport options, safer streets, better co-ordination, noise regulation and better planning.

It is about opening doors for our creative communities, turning the lights on in empty buildings, easing licensing restriction and costs for venues and above all offering audiences and patrons exciting new nightlife options.

We have brought together industry visionaries, creators and leaders in agencies and state bodies to gain insight into new, vibrant nightlife possibilities.

Recommendations include plans for night advisors within local authorities who can help oversee a new form of urban governance after dark.

These nightlife advisors will act as leaders in the sector in cities and large towns around the country. These already successfully operate in over 40 cities

around the world, managing nocturnal vibrancy but also mediating between people who want to work, party or sleep.

This week's Culture Night will also be supporting one of the recommendations within this Report by running an increased number of later night events into its programme.

I know that the need to modernise our licensing regime came up throughout the Taskforce's work process and I very much welcome today's decision for the Department of Justice to draft the general scheme of a Sale of Alcohol Bill 2021, in line with the Programme for Government commitment and the recommendation of the Night-Time Economy Taskforce to reform and modernise licensing law.

I support the Taskforce view that a modernised licensing system would play an important role in revitalising existing Night-Time Economy businesses such as pubs, clubs, hotels and restaurants. I also hope that the proposed legislative reform process is used as an opportunity for innovation in the licensing framework to encourage diversity and new economic opportunities. And we need to remove barriers to support this.

But of course it is also about keeping cafes and other venues open late. It is not just about alcohol and the report emphasises the need for those options too.

I also support the Taskforce's recommendation that an immediate review of the Special Exemption Orders (SEO) process and cost structure takes place. I know that this is a particular challenge for those operating right across the Night-Time Economy and I know my colleague Minister Naughton is committed to progressing this as a matter of urgency.

I was delighted also that the Taskforce recognised the importance of electronic music and club culture which have often felt excluded from the current arts and culture environment. This is generally a sector which involves young artists and young people. We need to recognise this and listen.

With regard to planning, I and my colleagues in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Minister O'Brien and Minister of State Burke have committed to hosting a workshop on issues in the report to examine

practical solutions to some of the challenges. I'd also like to see progress on some areas, including around the use of empty buildings for culture events.

I will be the first to say that the Report does not provide all of the answers and I know that the sector may wish to see a faster pace of change – particularly in the area of licensing and planning but this Report was developed in a spirit of practicality and also with the aim of continuing the conversation while getting results.

People want new offerings, to mix daytime activities in their free time at night.

Look at Toronto, where the Royal Ontario Museum holds unique nightly events. Live Fridays at the Museum are flagged as 'Expect the Unexpected as you Dance amongst the Dinos'. Party goers experience a moveable feast of food and beverages throughout the museum, pop up bars, tantalizing fare, artisanal foods, art installations, fashion, talks, performances and dance away to electronic beats.

Imagine our museums, our galleries, our unused buildings, our emerging and established musicians, DJs, our local food producers, all on show and offer alongside paintings, exhibitions.

And with extended late night accessible transport options, safe environments for patrons overseen by community plans or what about late retail openings that re-energise towns and areas or late night heritage site offerings with entertainment.

All of this is possible, we are looking at a rebirth of Ireland's nightlife. And it is within our power to achieve that, especially with people now assessing their lifestyles because of the pandemic.

Ernest Hemingway was right. Without the night, we never see the stars, without the night, there is no day and without the night, there are no dreams. So let's take back our nights.