



THE VOICE OF THE NIGHTTIME ECONOMY

DIAGEO

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN THE NIGHT TIME ECONOMY:
A "SHINE" GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE**

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The Community Engagement Project

For the last few years we have been working closely with Diageo on the Shine Award – a corporate social responsibility initiative which was presented at our annual awards ceremony. A key part of this award focused on community engagement.

Having discussed the Shine initiative at length with Diageo, we were very keen that this element of the award should form a separate, much more wide-reaching initiative.

At the same time, we were having a very large number of conversations with local councils and police around the late night sector's role in the wider community.

The third factor which influenced the future direction of what has become the Good Practice Guide was the emphasis of "Safe, Sensible, Social", the Government's 2007 Alcohol Strategy. As the strategy states:

"Working in partnership with the local licensed trade is intrinsic to an effective alcohol strategy"

[Safe, Sensible, Social 2007, p26](#)

During the summer of 2008, four locations throughout the UK were visited (Bournemouth, Leeds, Birmingham and Glasgow) and a large number of operators of late night venues, council officials and police officers were asked to offer their informed views on community engagement with regard to the late night sector.

This document represents a distillation of those views into an easily digestible format. We are especially grateful to those many individuals in the four locations who gave their time and expertise so generously.

Paul Smith, Executive Director, Noctis, January 2009
www.noctisuk.org

What is community engagement?

Community engagement is about shared priorities, regular contact and constructive communication. It is about inclusiveness and about respect for the opinions and views of others. Crucially it is also about fostering a positive view of the night time economy (NTE).

At Noctis we strongly believe that responsible operators of late night venues are great assets to their communities. Not only do they provide major venues for top class entertainment, they also provide important jobs and training.

Community engagement is about making sure that venue operators work effectively with their local police and their local councils. It is about ensuring that operators deliver a quality offer and that the authorities assist in providing the maximum amount of help and support they can.

We know from experience that operators who do not work closely with their police and local authorities are much more likely to fall foul of either or both of these agencies. We therefore strongly recommend that operators create the best relationships they can and allot a decent amount of their time to engaging in this kind of community engagement activity.

From the point of view of police and local authorities we suggest that responsible operators deserve respect for the businesses they run. Often the NTE businesses contribute greatly to the positive reputation of an area.

From a wider community point of view it is important that an agreed set of principles are considered when creating effective community engagement for the night time economy.

The key principles behind good community engagement will help to:

- **Create shared priorities**

Allows all concerned to understand common goals and objectives in order to be better able to achieve them. Effective partnership working is key to any successful outcomes, so developing a set of shared principles or priorities is extremely important.

From a venue operator's point of view, having better collaborative working arrangements helps to engage with the local residential community. This can help to ensure that their enjoyment (of living in the vicinity) is not compromised. It also helps with the wider businesses community as well as with the artistic community – especially if venue operators provide a place where new artists can experiment and perform.

- **Develop and maintain channels of regular communication**

Good communication is about working efficiently to common ends, and helping to build trust and respect for all sectors. This allows for positive outcomes to be achieved, for all concerned. In turn this encourages faster decision making processes and better quality decisions. It also leads to information sharing and the building up of knowledge for all participants.

Principles of good community engagement

Following on from an agreed set of principles, having a better structure of communications, with key people passing information on to relevant parties, helps to ensure that efficient communication is maintained. It also ensures that misunderstandings between key stakeholders do not take root and become future problems.

- **Create opportunities for diversity and inclusiveness**

The night time economy should be for all and all partners need to be included in it. The best, most effective community engagement happens when a wide variety of voices are included in the discussions.

- **Foster a positive outlook**

At the heart of any community engagement policy for the sector has to be a recognition that the NTE is an asset – or at least represents a potential asset. Having a structure where numerous parties can converse regularly as partners also helps to banish any of the negative perceptions associated with the sector.

- **Enforcement**

All stakeholders accept that problem venues need enforcement activity and this should be supported and endorsed by the wider community. It should also be acknowledged that blanket enforcement can cause major problems as it seriously demotivates responsible operators and leads to divisiveness.

Benefits of community engagement

There are significant, practical benefits to be got from better collaborative working:

- **Better atmosphere, fewer problems**

Better communication leads directly to more joined-up policy, which in turn engenders a desire to create safer, more vibrant and inclusive night time economies.

Collaborative working between licensees and the police often leads to a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour and therefore leads ultimately to a shift away from enforcement-led activity.

- **Bridges the gap**

In many locations throughout the UK, there is an entirely different atmosphere between towns and cities during the day and at night. This leads to a view that there needs to be entirely different solutions for the day and night time economies. The daytime demographic is typically portrayed as significantly wider one than its night time counterpart – often seen as exclusively for the 18-24 age group.

However by placing some collaborative building blocks in place, it can help to build connections between these two trading periods. This evolving attitude can in turn lead to a wider demographic being encouraged to use the night time economy. For the local resident, it therefore leads to a greater range of entertainment options.

We argue strongly that the night time economy does not just have to be about licensed retail, but can instead encompass a wide range of entertainment, cultural and retail opportunities.

By creating vibrant night time activities, this in turn, should lead to appropriate transport and other infrastructure being provided. Though, of course, this infrastructure should, ideally, be put in place alongside developments in the NTE.

- **Feedback**

Having avenues of communication which are open, can provide the perfect route for feedback to be given. This, in turn provides a vehicle for the feedback of information, in order to determine people's needs and wants when developing the night time economy.

- **Further Opportunities**

By providing a collaborative platform this can lead to further opportunities to build good business practices and professional procedures as well as new income streams.

- **Reduces complaints**

Having good community engagement leads to a reduction in complaints if all

stakeholders are properly engaged. Furthermore, such complaints can be identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity – removing the need for more formal intervention.

The downsides to not engaging

- Personal interest, not the community interest drives agendas
- Gives a great deal of scope for miscommunication and misunderstanding
- Means all concerned are not working as efficiently as they could be
- Key stakeholders are isolated and uninformed
- Opportunities to develop the night time economy are either not optimised or missed altogether.
- Positive outcomes are much more difficult to achieve

Useful tips:

- Clear points of contact for all key stakeholders need to be established
- Expectations of what can be achieved need to be practical, realistic and appeal to all parties
- A schedule of meetings and other engagement activity needs to be monitored – possibly by a working group or nominated facilitator
- Forums need to be flexible to admit new participants – whilst at the same time keeping a clear eye on the objectives
- Talk must be backed up with action by all participants – it is not enough just to turn up to meetings
- All participants need to be proactive – you get out what you put in
- All participants need to listen and respect the views of those other stakeholders
- Agreed solutions must be tailored to local needs – not just a “one size fits all”

Useful additional resources and initiatives

- Local Licensing Forums: contact your local licensing department or town centre manager to see if there is a forum in your area.
- Pub/Clubwatch: go to www.nationalpubwatch.org.uk for advice, information and news on groups across the country.
- Best Bar None: go to www.bbuk.com for information on existing local schemes and establishing BBN in your area.
- Purple Flag: a new initiative coming soon to recognise and reward best practice in the management of the nighttime economy.
- Business Improvement Districts: the way to deliver sustainable funding for partnership work; www.ukbids.org offers advice on implementing the BID process.

This short guide is designed to offer a useful template to anyone working in (or with) the late night sector to help deliver better partnerships between local authorities, local police and venue operators.

Noctis has produced a series of other short policy and operational guides which can be found on our website: www.noctisuk.org/Policy/

About Noctis:

Formed in 1952 as the Association of British Ballrooms and previously known as the Bar Entertainment and Dance Association and the British Entertainment and Discotheque Association, Noctis (re-named in February 2008) represents the interests of businesses operating in the nighttime economy. Over time our membership base has shifted from dancehalls to discotheques and we now count clubs, bars, dance, live music, student and hybrid venues amongst our growing membership.

Noctis represents a heavily-regulated group of businesses and we perform a strong advocacy role with local and national government, the police and many other key stakeholders. Noctis engages with all these bodies - promoting good practice and lobbying against poor proposals. We have a solid track record of success and a growing membership base on which to build. In addition we continue to offer active input into pertinent legislation which impacts on all operators in the nighttime economy.

Noctis believes that the night time economy is a crucial part of the wider economy and needs to be recognised as such. Given that our industry is sometimes negatively perceived and portrayed, we encourage our members, the UK's responsible operators, to engage with their local stakeholders. In turn we encourage key stakeholders in police and local authorities to treat our members fairly and with respect.