

**MANIFESTO  
FOR THE  
NIGHT TIME  
ECONOMY**

**PHILIP KOLVIN QC**

# INTRODUCTION

At the heart of every great town or city is a great night time economy.

The NTE is worth £66 billion to the UK economy. It provides jobs for over 1.3 million people.

But its benefits go far wider.

Cities are among the finest achievements of humankind: they are highly evolved and complex spaces in which people live, work and play. But take away one element, and no city is worthy of the name.

The leisure economy is a big part of the reason why people move to cities, including workers and students.

It is fundamental to the tourist draw of the UK. It is the inspiration and foundation for much of our creative industries – fashion, music, media and performance.

It is the driver for supply chains of vital importance to local economies including food and beverage, transportation, retail and security.

As shopping progressively moves online, it is fundamental to the vitality and viability of our high streets. Without it, many of our city centre streets would be lonely and dangerous places at night. Without it, many streets would enter spirals of decline.

Most importantly, the leisure economy is where, after the stresses of ever longer working days, we meet, eat, socialise, drink, dance, learn, laugh, fall in love, celebrate, and behave as we were born to behave, as social animals.

But night time economies are like gardens. They need to be planned and tended. Otherwise they may grow wild or even decay.

This manifesto lays down some simple messages for the development of vibrant, sustainable night time economies.

# A NIGHT TIME ECONOMY FOR ALL

Whether in a major capital city or a small market town, there are key features of a great night time economy.

First, it attracts every sector of the population, regardless of age, race, gender, sexuality or physical or mental ability.

Second, it caters for every interest, whether that is eating, drinking, dancing, music, performance or merely gathering.

Third, it is attractive to all income groups. Nobody should be excluded from the night time economy on grounds of wealth.

Fourth, it should be accessible, whether by public or private transport, or on foot, at all hours.

Fifth, it should be safe and amenable, through good signage, lighting, access and security; for a diverse range of users throughout the day and night.

The principles are easy to state. The goals can only be attained through partnership, planning and investment.

# THREATS

In recent years, there have been some key trends which threaten our night time economies.

First, there has been an increasing trend of drinking at home, fuelled by price differentials between the on- and off-trade.

Second, the ability to purchase leisure services on-line, whether films, sporting events or gambling services, has increased the relative attractiveness of home consumption of leisure.

Third, increasing parking charges and reduced night transportation services are impediments to city centre use at night.

Fourth, increased habitation of city centres, which ought to help the night time economy, has threatened it. Where dwellings are built near to leisure premises, whether with planning permission or as a result of permitted development, local authorities come under pressure to reduce the hours, impact or even existence of the leisure facilities. Increasingly, leisure premises are being closed and sold off for housing, so reducing the number of facilities while increasing the local population wishing to use them.

Fifth, and most important, the key regulatory tool of the night time economy is licensing, which tends to be a reactive tool, whereas the main tool in the day time economy is planning, which works proactively. While planning is about place-making, licensing is about place-keeping. This must be resolved, for otherwise great night time economies will happen in spite of rather than because of the work of public authorities.

That is why the purpose of this manifesto is to restate the value of the night time economy and the principles necessary to foster it.

# VISION

A great night economy is unlikely to happen and will never be sustained by accident. It must be planned. And to be planned there must be a vision. The vision must then be translated into action by gathering the power and talents of all the agents of change – public authorities, investors, leisure operators, transport providers and residents representing all population sectors and interests.

The partnerships must have access to all levers of control – planning, regeneration, licensing and policing, to drive the economy towards the shared vision.

## **Manifesto pledge 1:**

**Every town and city shall have a vision for its night time economy.**

# NIGHT TIME CHAMPIONS

Every town and city should have a night time champion. In some cities it is called a night mayor. In others, there is a night time economy commission. In some, there is just a highly effective individual, be it a mayor, a leader or a local authority chief executive, who is invested with the power and authority, or who simply has the leadership and charisma, to bring parties together to develop the vision and then drive towards it.

Without a champion, action happens in silos, initiatives fall on stony ground, apathy and frustration set in, and so the seeds of decline are sown. With it, results can be rapidly achieved, as the city, harnessing all talents, acts as a magnet for investors, creative operators and new city centre users, and so great spaces are born.

## **Manifesto pledge 2:**

**Every town and city shall have an identified night time champion.**

# PARTNERSHIP

A successful night time economy both serves and protects at least three groups of people – those who work in it or one of the industries serving it, those who use it and those who live and work around it. Some people fall into two or even all of these groups.

The industry is driven by creative and entrepreneurial people, investors and landowners.

The urban fabric comprising the night time economy is driven by statutory planning authorities and regeneration agencies.

The industry is regulated by policing, planning, licensing, environmental health, health and safety and trading standards authorities.

For an economy to be planned in which creativity finds its outlet, entrepreneurship is rewarded, investment is made worthwhile, users are stimulated, workers are employed and residents protected, all of these constituent elements must be brought together in partnership, clustered around the vision, sharing the goals, finding the balance between vibrancy and protection.

However visionary the makers, a regulatory system which is geared to squeezing out growth will cause their vision to fail. However idealistic the vision, unless it is tethered to realistic economic planning it will remain unrealised.

Partnership is therefore at the root of a successful night time economy.

## Manifesto pledge 3:

**Every town and city will bring together a partnership of planning and regulatory authorities, operators, entrepreneurs, landowners, residents and users to drive and realise the vision.**

# NIGHT TIME ECONOMY STRATEGY

Every town and city has a housing strategy, a retail strategy, a regeneration strategy, even a waste strategy.

Yet, despite the important role and function of the night time economy, few towns and cities have a leisure economy strategy.

To have a vision is commendable, but without a strategy to attain it, it is a chimera.

While licensing policies set out the principles by which the leisure economy is to be **regulated**, few set out the principles by which it is to be **promoted and developed, let alone protected**. For example, what uses are to be developed in which places, according to what management policies over which hours?

This must change.

Every good strategy starts with:

- A baseline assessment of current provision.
- An assessment of needs.

There are many ways of assessing needs. But a starting point may be to survey not only the population which visits the centre at night, but the population which doesn't. Why not? What is the constraint? Diversity, cost, safety, access, rival centres?

From the assessment, the strategy must then set out the practical steps by which the vision for the centre is to be attained.

## Manifesto pledge 4:

**Every town and city will produce a leisure strategy, to attain the vision for its night time economy.**

# PLANNING

The planning system is key to the promotion of sustainable leisure economies.

At a central level, national planning policy must reinforce the cultural and economic value of the leisure economy.

The local planning framework must:

- Translate the leisure strategy into practical planning policy.
- Identify the zones for development of leisure facilities.
- Promulgate policies to encourage such development.
- Identify leisure assets of value to the community.
- Protect such assets against loss or threats from incompatible development.

In recent times, planning policy has encouraged the development of residential uses in town and city centres. This is a positive trend.

However, leisure uses are now being lost to residential development, and new residential users are pressurising authorities into preventing new leisure uses or curtailing the rights of established uses. Planning authorities have a key role in ensuring that an appropriate balance is maintained between the development of residential uses, the protection of established leisure uses and the development of new leisure uses. The success of our towns and cities depends on the needs of one group not being permitted to predominate over the needs of another.

In the case of new residential uses, the planning system can assist by effective spatial planning so that residential uses are not planned next to late night facilities, by requiring construction measures to minimise nuisance, or by requiring developers to waive rights to complain of nuisance.

## Manifesto pledge 5:

**National and local planning policies shall recognise the value of the night time economy and be oriented to promote and protect it.**

# DESIGN

Urban design is fundamental to the creation of attractive and safe spaces and buildings for people to visit at night.

This depends not only on set-piece central squares, but attractive places to dismount, the access routes to the centre, the lighting, the interaction with vehicular traffic, the signage schemes, the architecture of new developments, the sense of arrival in the centre, the drama and excitement of the layout and the treatment of facades.

Even where there is little to spend, much can be achieved by modest upgrades to the street scene, planting and lighting schemes and signage, to bring a sense of care and unity to an otherwise neglected centre.

## **Manifesto pledge 6:**

**Every town and city centre will be designed, so far as possible, to enhance the experience of users of the night time economy.**

# VOLUNTARY MEASURES

Increasingly, the industry has come to recognise that the regulatory system is a safety net to ensure that operators do not fall below minimum standards. Minimum standards are necessary but insufficient to create great, safe customers experiences.

And so, voluntary measures have been developed which define new standards of excellence in the industry and which create mechanisms to attain such standards. And other groups and agencies have worked to increase the standards and protections within the night time economy. These include:

- Best Bar None.
- Purple Flag.
- Pubwatch.
- PASS.
- Business Improvement Districts, including Night-Time Bids.
- Taxi marshalling schemes.
- Street pastors.
- Approved Contractor scheme for security providers.

Such schemes improve the standards of each operator subscribing to them. Widespread operation encourages the remainder to raise their standards through peer and customer pressure.

## **Manifesto pledge 7:**

**Night time operators will promote and support voluntary local schemes raising standards of operation and protection.**

# LICENSING

The licensing regime is designed to further the licensing objectives (prevention of crime and disorder, prevention of public nuisance, public safety and the protection of children from harm) through a system of premises and personal licensing.

Individual decisions are made having regard to local policy and national guidance.

In general, the licensing system is not managed so as to recognise the value of the night time economy, or to translate vision or strategy into decision-making. Where there are policies dealing with the locality, these tend to be negative (such as cumulative impact policies) rather than positive, recognising the importance of the area to leisure provision in the centre concerned, or the importance of particular assets in the life of the community. The concept of proportionality, whereby the regulatory objectives of the authority are balanced against the cultural, community, economic or employment value of the asset or proposal, is often misunderstood or ignored.

In order for licensing to be aligned with the leisure strategy for the centre, it is essential that licensing policy recognises the value of the night time economy, states what it supports as well as what it opposes, translates the leisure strategy into practical licensing proposals including zoning and other measures, and commits the authority to regulating in the least intrusive manner so as to promote and not stifle investment in the leisure economy.

## Manifesto pledge 8:

**National and local licensing policies shall recognise the value of the night time economy. Local licensing policies shall aim to promote the vision for the night time economy, translate the leisure strategy into policy, and advocate regulation by the least intrusive measure consistent with promotion of the licensing objectives.**

# REGULATION

The system of regulation, whether through licensing, policing, environmental health or health and safety, is an indispensable means of protecting the public through recognising and enforcing against non-compliant practice, and rooting out the worst operators.

However, over-used, the regulatory system can impose unsustainable costs on businesses, deter investment and drive out operators. The aim must always be to recognise and take a light touch with good operators, aim to improve the management practices of other operators and seek to close or curtail operations only as a matter of last resort.

Before enforcement action is taken, there should be a documented partnership process to improve management practices, including formal action plans and audits of compliance with such plans. Licensing authorities should make clear that, except where urgent action is necessary, they are unlikely to take regulatory action except where documented action plans have failed.

Authorities should also commit to taking measures to improve management in preference to action to curtail or close operations, unless draconian action is genuinely needed on the facts of the individual case.

Authorities should recognise that, since leisure facilities admit members of the public, and particularly where alcohol is sold, there will always be some crime and disorder, and some level of intoxication. Furthermore, it is inevitable that there will be some level of disturbance of residents who live in town and city centres where night time uses occur. These facts are not by themselves sufficient reasons to review, let alone curtail or close, night time operations. The litmus test is usually whether venues are managed appropriately to control such occurrences.

# REGULATION

Examples of poor regulatory practice are reviews, summary reviews or closures based on:

- Single incidents of violence which occur without fault on the part of management.
- Crime statistics produced without:
  - ~ Analysis of whether the crime occurred.
  - ~ Analysis of whether the crime has been correctly classified, e.g. GBH or common assault.
  - ~ Analysis of whether the crime occurred at or because of the venue, or is merely the reported landmark.
  - ~ Analysis of whether the level of crime is excessive having regard to the hours and days of trade and the average footfall.
  - ~ Analysis of whether the levels of crime are a function of diligent reporting or bad management.
  - ~ Consideration of whether it is appropriate to base reviews upon them. For examples, levels of reported theft are rarely if ever a relevant basis for a licence review.

Regulatory action is often taken on the basis of minor assaults which have gone unreported or because a minor crime scene has not been preserved. Practice and police requirements in these regards vary significantly across the country. Each police force should publish its reporting and crime scene preservation protocols in partnership with the industry.

## Manifesto pledge 9:

**Regulatory action should not be taken before partnership measures have been exhausted, except in urgent cases. Such action should be based on transparent, consistent and agreed evidential standards.**

# CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

The heightened attention placed on regulation in recent years, together with negative press attention, have conspired to cast the night time economy in a poor light, deterring many who would otherwise be occasional or even regular users. This helps to perpetuate a user monoculture which then perpetuates the same negative image.

Local authorities, land-owners, investors and operators must work together to change the perceptions of town centres through social marketing and positive press relations. To begin to lure back those who otherwise avoid centres at night, partnerships should create positive city centre events such as late night shopping, night markets, food markets, civic celebrations, light nights, illuminated park nights, carnivals and fairs.

## **Manifesto pledge 10:**

**The public and private sector must work together to change the perception of town and city centres so as to build the diversity and spending of night-time users.**

# INTEGRATION

Many who leave their work in town and city centres do not come back in at night. Some who use centres during the day, e.g. to shop, do not come in at night at all.

A successful strategy for town and city centres involves a high degree of integration between leisure and other uses.

For example, there is no reason why services such as shops, medical facilities, libraries and art galleries cannot operate on one or more nights per week so as to produce greater synergies with the leisure economy.

The effective abolition of happy hours has meant that fewer people occupy town and city centres during the crucial "bridging" hours between the end of office hours and the start of night time hours. But not all happy hours are undesirable, and permitting leisure facilities to attract workers based on price will help to create a bridge between day time and night time businesses, retain a diverse customer base in the centre, and reduce pre-loading at home.

## Manifesto pledge 11:

**Town and city centres must aim to integrate leisure and other uses so as to promote customer cross-over and create bridges between the day- and night-time economy.**

# TRAINING

UK leisure is the powerhouse of our economy. It lies at the heart of our tourist draw, the employment of our youth, our creative and cultural industries, the regeneration of our towns and cities, and our reasons for living there in the first place.

As such, the lack of a harmonised, unified system for qualifications is an enduring lacuna, which would not be tolerated in any other regulated industry. While there are disparate training courses offered by a vast range of employers and training providers they often lack external validation and benchmarking, duplicate resources, and leave hospitality workers as mere workers when they ought to be a respected profession.

Worse, there are no national vocational qualifications for regulators, whether licensing or police officers, councillors (who are the policy- and decision-makers), or magistrates.

The development of common standards of training and education in the industry needs to be a priority, so that all those involved, whether as employees, licensees or regulators, are working to a common set of standards.

## **Manifesto pledge 12:**

**The industry will participate in a set of qualifications forming a path of career development for all those working in, regulating or otherwise involved in the night time economy.**

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## PHILIP KOLVIN QC



Philip Kolvin QC is Head of Cornerstone Barristers and a Patron and past Chairman of the Institute of Licensing.

He is the editor of a number of books on the leisure economy, including Licensed Premises: Law, Practice and Policy; Sex Licensing; and Gambling for Local Authorities, Licensing, Planning and Regeneration.

For more information, email: [philipk@cornerstonebarristers.com](mailto:philipk@cornerstonebarristers.com).