

# Assessor's full renewal report

2025



*Excellence in managing the  
evening & nighttime economy*

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# Purple Flag assessor full renewal report

Details of entry		Overnight assessment
<p><b>Location of entry</b> <i>Belfast</i></p>	<p><b>Date of assessment</b> <i>22nd November 2025</i></p>	<p><b>Night of the week</b> <i>Saturday</i></p> <p><b>Anomalies</b> (things to be taken in account for i.e. weather, seaside town) <i>Mostly dry, with heavy rain starting at 1.30am</i></p>
<p><b>Name of assessors</b> <i>Jade McCauley-Deehan</i> <i>Kevin O’Sullivan</i></p>	<p><b>Times covered</b> (<i>tick or colour circles</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Entrant’s presentation</li> <li> Early evening: 5–8pm</li> <li> Late evening: 8pm–11pm</li> <li> Night: 11pm–2am</li> <li> Late night: 2–5am</li> </ul>	<p><b>Members &amp; roles of local partnership present</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Chris McCracken – Linen Quarter BID – PF coordinator</i></li> <li>• <i>Damien Corr – Cathedral Quarter BID</i></li> <li>• <i>Martina Connolly – Belfast One</i></li> <li>• <i>Michael Stewart – Belfast Night Czar</i></li> <li>• <i>Emma McCausland – McCausland Group / Value Cabs</i></li> <li>• <i>David McKinley – Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)</i></li> <li>• <i>Natasha Thompson – Belfast Chamber</i></li> <li>• <i>PC Donna Tolan -PSNI Licensing Officer</i></li> <li>• <i>Sarah McCann -Translink GCS Duty Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>AM Moxy Hotel</i></li> <li>• <i>Andy Pidgen, Market Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Oisin, Haymarket duty manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Cllr Micky Murray (Previous Lord Mayor)- Chief Executive SOS Bus</i></li> <li>• <i>Community Rescue Service</i></li> <li>• <i>Street Pastors</i></li> <li>• <i>Community Wardens</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Author of report</b> <i>Jade McCauley-Deehan</i> <i>Kevin O’Sullivan</i></p>		
<p><b>Date of report</b> <i>December 2025</i></p>		

		<p><b>Resilience and continuity</b>  <b>Who is the delegated PF Co-ordinator back-up to cover absence or position change?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chris McCracken, Managing Director of Linen Quarter BID</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documents reviewed</b> (<i>tick or colour circles</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Entry form</li> <li> Map of area</li> <li> Purple flag full renewal chart</li> <li> Overnight check chart</li> </ul>	<p><b>Guidelines</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attach the itinerary for the assessment</li> <li>To achieve an overall standard met no standards should fall within the grey shaded boxes and no more than one attribute in any theme must be below standard.</li> <li>Please can you explain any significant differences in scoring between yourself and the centre e.g. if a town/city scores themselves “excellent” and you score a “standard met”, why is there such a margin?</li> <li>Please show entrant’s and your recommended standards on the same chart:</li> </ul> <p> Your recommended standards</p> <p> The entrant’s standards</p>	

Core agenda and attributes	Assessment	Significantly below standard	Below standard	Standard met	Above standard	Excellent Outstanding
<p><b>Wellbeing</b> (<i>welcoming, clean and safe</i>)</p> <p>Threshold standard: per capita crime and anti-social behaviour rates that are at least average and show an improving trend, or how any declining trends are understood and being managed – taking both residents and visitors into account (see KPI’s).</p>						
<p><b>1. Safety</b></p> <p>Proportionate level of visible, effective policing and active surveillance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCTV coverage of the PF area is excellent with 120 cameras which are monitored live 24/7 in the Local Police Station.</li> <li>Police were very visible (mostly in vehicles) on the streets throughout the night of our assessment.</li> </ul>				<p>X</p> <p>O</p>	
<p><b>2. Care</b></p> <p>Responsible guardianship, customer care and concern for community health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Door staff were present at many of the bars and especially at the late-night venues.</li> </ul>					<p>X</p> <p>O</p>

- SOS Bus provides crisis intervention and support for vulnerable persons on the streets of Belfast. Their 200 highly trained volunteers provide welfare support, first aid, mental health intervention and community safety. They operate 7 days a week including late nights Fridays and Saturdays.
- Belfast Street Pastors operate on street on Friday and Saturday nights giving assistance where needed.
- The safety initiative ‘Ask for Angela’ is being rolled out to bars, clubs and other licensed businesses across Northern Ireland. In a recent Purple Flag survey 59% of people recognised or had heard of the Ask for Angela scheme.
- Defib units have been funded by the 3v BIDs in their respective areas in 2025.

### 3. Regulation

Positive and proactive licensing and regulation.  
Please reference here as to whether certified for the Surveillance Camera Code of Practice.

- The PSNI enforce the licence requirements and communicate regularly with licensed premises.
- The Surveillance Camera Code of Practice ceased in 2025 and relevant to England and Wales, however the city’s CCTV system complies with ICO guidance and relevant policies can be easily viewed online

### 4. Services

Appropriate levels of public utilities including public conveniences or alternative schemes.

- Public toilets are available within the PF area in 5 separate locations with various opening times between 9.00am and 11.00pm. All have disabled toilets and two of them are APC’s (Automatic Public Conveniences).
- Public litter bins are plentiful throughout the area with a small number of solar “big belly” type bins. However, on the evening of assessment, some were overflowing near City Hall where the Christmas market was taking place.
- Street sweeper trucks were noticed on the street after midnight, and all streets were clean to European standards the following morning. Some streets contain gum deposits.
- Lighting within in the PF area is 100% LED.

### 5. Partnership

The active involvement of business in driving up standards.

- The Radiolink scheme operates to enable regular on street communication between the various relevant groups including Police, door staff and outreach and charities. This system is useful to alert the CCTV room to any anti-social behaviour or vulnerable people within the PF area. Co-ordinated by the Chamber, there is clear ownership of the scheme, and it has increased usage particularly across the partnership.

			X	O
		X	O	
			X	O

- There is a partnership approach between the BIDs, PSNI and businesses helping tackle ASB and other crimes ensuring information is shared and reported correctly and efficiently.

**6. Perceptions**

A valid and positive presentation of the area to customers.

- The three BIDs commissioned CARD group to conduct market research amongst visitors to Belfast City Centre, with a focus on the NTE. The survey was undertaken on Thursday 3rd July to Monday 7th July 2025. Fieldwork took place each day between 5pm and 10pm.

**Core agenda and attributes**

**Assessment**

**Movement (a secure pattern of arrival, circulation and departure)**

**Threshold standard:** some form of appropriate late-night public transport provision (see KPI's) appropriate to each individual destination (size/location etc).

**1. Public Transport**

Safe, affordable, well-managed late night public transport.

- The new transport hub, The Belfast Grand Central Station, is now open to the public with additional retail and hospitality for the city and this has created significant additional journeys into the city by both train and bus.
- Private taxi sector - there is an ongoing shortage of drivers and work is ongoing to remedy this situation.
- The pilot for late night buses starting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025 for a period of one year will result in extra buses running on Friday and Saturday nights with additional bus journeys up to 1.15am. The introduction of this service follows lobbying by the Night Czar.

**2. Car parking**

An appropriate provision of secure late night car parking.

- There are 16 late night secure car parks in the PF area operating until 11pm or 24 hours. 9 of these have the Park Mark accreditation (low crime reports and measures in place to ensure the safety of people and vehicles).

**3. Pedestrian routes**

Clear, safe and convenient links within the centre and homeward.

- The PF area is well linked and relatively easy for pedestrians to walk around all areas.
- The Grand Central Station is very centrally located and means that visitors travelling to the city by bus or train arrive very centrally for shopping, dining, entertainment etc. within the PF area.
- Regular city centre audits notify defects to the Department of Infrastructure.

Significantly below standard	Below standard	Standard met	Above standard	Excellent Outstanding
			X O	
			X O	
		X O		
		X O		

<p><b>4. Crowd management</b> Measures to deal with overcrowding, congestion and conflict between those on foot and moving vehicles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no overcrowding or congestion issues visible on the evening of assessment. Police were visibly travelling through the area at regular intervals and CCTV coverage can immediately pinpoint any issues.</li> <li>• Plans are coordinated by PSNI and BFF and all relevant agencies for major events.</li> </ul>			X O		
<p><b>5. Information</b> Provision of practical information and guidance to town centre users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is widespread wayfinding signage throughout the area including map, historical interest points and directions.</li> <li>• The outreach charities such as SOS Bus and Street Pastors offer advice and support and can transport vulnerable city centre users back home/reunite them with friends and family.</li> </ul>			X O		
<p><b>6. Partnership</b> Business, venues and transport operator commitment and participation to support the safe movement of people and vehicles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 1,000 businesses and organisations signed an open letter/petition calling for increased nighttime transport in Belfast that was delivered to the Deputy First Minister in June 2025. This was coordinated by the Night Czar and has resulted in additional late-night buses for a 1-year pilot from 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025.</li> <li>• Value Cabs have shown strong commitment to driver recruitment and training with 740 drivers now available.</li> <li>• The Safer Transport Team branch of the PSNI continue to patrol public transport locations including on board transport.</li> </ul>				X O	

Core agenda and attributes	Assessment	Significantly below standard	Below standard	Standard met	Above standard	Excellent Outstanding
<p><b>A Broad appeal</b> (a vibrant choice and a rich mix) Threshold standard: an evening and late night offer that is broader than youth-oriented and alcohol-based activity (see KPI's).</p>						
<p><b>1. Food and dining</b> A choice of eating venues and a commitment to good food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belfast has a huge variety of restaurants with various food options, and all were busy on the evening of assessment. There are also many take-away type food outlets, offering alternative choices to customers.</li> <li>• 2025 saw the opening of many additional eating establishments, including top class restaurants but also popular coffee/break spots.</li> <li>• Belfast Restaurant Week was held in October and funded by the 3 BIDs with over 50 restaurants participating, putting on special menus, deals and showcases.</li> </ul>					X O

<p><b>2. Pubs and bars</b></p> <p>Well-managed venues, to meet varied tastes, and offering more than just alcoholic beverages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a great selection of pubs and bars for customers to choose from within Belfast PF area. Many of these serve food and all have alcohol-free options. Some also have music/entertainment including games such as virtual shooting, interactive darts, and even a “stock market” bar.</li> <li>• Some are on narrow laneways and have outdoor type seating within their own premises.</li> </ul>					X O
<p><b>3. Late night venues</b></p> <p>A late-night offer that complements the diverse appeal of the centre as a whole.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSNI regularly carry out inspections and hold briefings with door staff and licence holders of the late night venues to ensure compliance. PSNI Licensing officer holds monthly briefings with the SIA Security Industry Authority.</li> <li>• Recent changes have allowed licenses to extend until 1/2am with up to an hour “drinking up time” when previously 11pm was standard. This seems to be a positive extension and dispersal was managed effectively.</li> </ul>			X O		
<p><b>4. Early evening activity</b></p> <p>An active early evening period, including late opening shops, sporting and leisure opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new Grand Central Station is a tremendous addition to the city and including in the early evening time when shops there are open and events take place from time to time.</li> <li>• HALT which was the old transport station has been turned into a vibrant new space for entertainment, street food, art and entertainment. When we visited it in the early evening, it was very busy with live music being performed.</li> <li>• Many cafés were open and busy in the early evening time.</li> <li>• The Christmas market @ City Hall was very busy and open until 10.00pm, visited just before closing it was popular with a food and drink zone</li> <li>• Culture Night 2025 was a great success after an absence of 7 years - events were all venue based offering an opportunity to shine a light on the abundance of businesses and unique venues that Belfast has to offer.</li> </ul>			X O		
<p><b>5. Public buildings</b></p> <p>Creative and imaginative use of public/civic buildings in the evening and at night.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several key buildings within the Purple Flag area are illuminated at night.</li> <li>• Belfast One commissioned artwork on an entire building which is part of the stalled Tribeca regeneration site at Royal Avenue entitled ‘Our City’ which is an imaginative way to address dereliction. Plans are also underway to illuminate this building to showcase the artwork.</li> <li>• Animation is delivered from time to time in Grand Central Station including musicians and quirky entertainment. Music and other festive entertainment will take place here at Christmas.</li> </ul>			X O		
<p><b>6. Arts and culture</b></p> <p>A vibrant, inclusive arts and cultural scene.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In September 2025 Culture Night returned to the city after a pause since 2019. A new format of venue-based, free, and inclusive events from 4 –</li> </ul>					X

10pm consisted of family friendly events, including workshops, performances and exhibitions.

- The Belfast Purple Flag area enjoys over 100 events and festivals annually, including Belfast Comedy Weekender, and The Imagine festival and React Festival (workshops/talks/events focussed on the future and sustainability of Belfast).

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## Core agenda and attributes

## Assessment

### Place (a stimulating destination and a vital place)

Threshold standard: a mix of pleasing and functional spaces. A convenient and attractive destination at night (see KPI's).

#### 1. Location

Appropriate location, clustering and capacity of venue types.

- The Purple Flag zone is compact and easily walkable; the collaboration of the three BIDs supports the Purple Flag area. The range of venues on offer is second to none and well placed to suit their target audiences.

Significantly below standard	Below standard	Standard met	Above standard	Excellent Outstanding
			X O	

#### 2. Diversity

A successful balance of uses and brands.

- Belfast has well-established institutions that have built a reputation over years of trading. Significant investment and pride have gone into preserving the tradition plus curating the newer offer in this city – the new and the old operating in harmony.
- Independent businesses particularly in the food scene have bloomed in Belfast due to spaces like Halt and Common Market offering a trendy hotspot for small businesses to grow - consideration for move-on-space needed when the redevelopment of the old bus station takes place.
- Majority of the NTE is independent but the offer is still over and above the traditional Irish pubs that are plentiful.
- Victoria Square is home to many international names; you can see Belfast has become a place to be for some of the best-known retail brands with several impressive stores opening in the last year.

			X O	
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#### 3. Clarity

Well-designed links and visible signs.

- The use of festive lighting and decoration, particularly in alleyways supported the movement around the zones. Year-round installations could support this.
- Wayfinding is being picked up by the PF working group, particularly to support the influx of tourists for the Fleadh Cheoil.

			X O	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas of redevelopment, particularly around the Grand Central Station are taking into consideration pedestrian friendly links between zones</li> </ul>					
<p><b>4. Animation</b> Attractive, well-used public places, active streets and building frontages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The festive lighting in the city was impressive and added to the vibrancy of the night, it is clear some significant investment has been put into the scheme.</li> <li>• Businesses have made real effort to animate the frontages and surrounds of their premises adding vibrancy to their streets. Even alleyways and side streets had been lit or decorated to allow for outside drinking/dining space</li> <li>• In Belfast you are never more than a few feet away from a mural, the range of artwork across the city is outstanding and incorporates both culture and heritage.</li> </ul>				<p>X O</p>	
<p><b>5. Design</b> Thoughtful and imaginative design for the night.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BIDs invest into seasonal activations to enhance the area.</li> <li>• There is minimal residential within the city centre/Purple Flag zone that has supported NTE business growth, particularly the use of outdoor locations (despite the weather!). As residential developments possibly emerge in future, design stages need to take into consideration the existing businesses offer that are thriving, especially those with live music.</li> </ul>				<p>X O</p>	
<p><b>6. Identity</b> The appropriate use of natural and built features to reinforce appeal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you could bottle the “Belfast Pride” and sell it, you’d be a millionaire. From the cultural venues to the modern-day bars repurposing historic buildings, the home-grown talent and effort put into curating each business was evident throughout, making this unique city arguably top spot for a weekend break whilst also remaining packed with “locals”. There has been so much recent development but the use of existing buildings e.g. Printworks has kept the place bursting with character.</li> </ul>				<p>X O</p>	

Core agenda and attributes	Assessment	Significantly below standard	Below standard	Standard met	Above standard	Excellent Outstanding
<p><b>The Policy Envelope</b> (a clear aim and a common purpose) Threshold Standard: a momentum of collaboration between sectors, agencies, service providers and policy-makers (See KPIs’).</p>						
<p><b>1. Data</b> A sound statistical base for policy-making and action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The research provided as supporting documents adds weight to the KPI data provided. The NTE research has provided figures for the GVA added</li> </ul>				<p>X O</p>	

by the NI Nighttime Economy. This can support further investment into the NTE.

## 2. Strategy

Positive strategic objectives and targets.

- Strategies are supportive of growth and take into consideration the existing NTE applying the “agent of change” principles. This was evident on the night with the number of improvements and new developments either recently opened or underway.
- The DFE research and Card Survey have been used to support the extension of later night public transport.

## 3. Coordination

Public policy coordination and focus.

- Michael Stewart the Night Czar has driven forward the NTE and publicly promoted the priorities for the year and shown progress by the delivery of the NTE transport improvement. The 25/26 priorities have been set and communicated clearly - need to maintain motivation and build on positive progress already made. The Three BIDs Co-ordinating the focus ensures all local business views are taken into consideration.
- Cllr Micky Muray is heavily involved in the NTE via SOS bus, this seems to be a positive benefit.

## 4. Leadership

Clear responsibilities for policy and action.

- The appointment of the Night Czar gives clear leadership and accountability for the NTE. The publicity achieved through this role with Michael acting as the face of the industry shows the public and businesses there is ownership for the development and management of the NTE with clear direction.
- It is great to see organisations working well with the same goals in mind, despite three BID's there was no conflict/competition evident, the NTE was at the forefront, and everyone is working to the same mission.

## 5. Partnership

Multi-sector endorsement and commitment.

- The range of organisations available to speak to on the night was a brilliant selection with strong dedication to the NTE, especially from volunteers. Everybody present at the presentation were familiar with the PF initiative and all organisation representatives clearly knew each other well; this is a clear indication that the partnership gels together and meets regularly.

## 6. Community

A dialogue with consumers and residents.

- The local businesses visited, even if not previously briefed were accommodating and were aware of the PF initiative and the Night Czar.
- Awareness of the new transport changes was strong across the city.
- Purple Flag media coverage was really strong at renewal in February, continue the narrative year-round and include within NTE venues. Consideration for PF logo to appear on event promotion e.g. Culture Night, Cocktail Week.

		O	X	
			X	O
		O	X	
			X	O
		X	O	

# Purple Flag summary chart

Purple Flag core agenda		Significantly below standard	Below standard	Standard met	Above standard	Excellent Outstanding
1. <b>Wellbeing</b> Welcoming, clean and safe.					X	
2. <b>Movement</b> A secure pattern of arrival, circulation and departure.				X		
3. <b>A broad appeal</b> A vibrant choice and a rich mix.						X
4. <b>Place</b> A stimulating destination and a vital place.					X	
5. <b>Policy envelope</b> A clear aim and a common purpose.					X	

NOTE. All five Themes must be at least 'Standard met' if the area is to be recommended for a Purple Flag.

# Assessor's conclusions

## Panel comments are added in purple

### Recommendation



#### Purple Flag accreditation

- Standard met or exceeded on all five core agenda themes.



#### Not yet ready for Purple Flag accreditation

- Standard not met on one or more core agenda themes.

Any matters to be referred to accreditation panel before a final decision is made: N/A

Guidance to applicant on any priority issues to address prior to purple flag renewal: N/A

Guidance to applicant on any general issues to address (*please note that any issues noted will be reviewed in the next interim renewal assessment*):

1. *Monitor/review the additional late night transport to be introduced on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025 on a pilot basis for one year, to ensure that it is working at its best and to ascertain if improvements are warranted*
2. *Look at extending the position of Nighttime Czar from May 2026 when it is due to expire.*
3. *Encourage BCC to look at installing more “big belly solar “bins throughout the PF area.*
4. *Encourage BCC to start nighttime cleansing staff earlier when major events such as the Christmas markets are taking place or to have market management (for events such as the XMAS Market @ City Hall) ensure that the surrounds up to 0.5 mile are monitored regularly while the event is taking place. This could be achieved by locating additional temporary beach type bins in the surrounding area*
5. *Look for student representative to join PF working group*
6. *Follow up on how the introduction of the BCRP is going*
7. *Use of the Purple Flag logo on promotion and year-round narrative*
8. **Following the rejection of the ‘Independent Review of the Liquor Licensing system’ report by the Department for Communities, the panel would look for analysis from those involved in Purple Flag for their perspective on this matter at the next interim renewal.**

Specific policies and actions that are excellent or outstanding, and especially worthy of note:

- *The appointment of the Nighttime Czar by the 3 BID companies.*
- *Introduction of later night transport.*
- *Businesses effort to animate the spaces surrounding their properties, use of alleyways to enable them to become inviting Instagram worthy destinations.*

# Need help?

ATCM wants to help all those who are going for Purple Flag, or are thinking of it, to be as successful as possible. That way everyone wins. If you have visited the Purple Flag website or have attended an ENTE event and would like further support, a range of workshops are also available for different stages of the application process.

Full details of all the workshops can be found by contacting the Purple Flag Team:

**For further information contact  
the Purple Flag team:**

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