



**Waterford
Chamber**
Advancing business together

Submission Retail Strategy Review for Tramore

July 2019

Summary

Waterford Chamber welcomes the Retail Strategy Review for Waterford and welcome any improvements and opportunities in this regard.

In particular, we welcome any investment into Tramore, which we see as a tourist hub for Waterford and sadly a town that has been largely forgotten in terms of funding for many years.

While there is, by and large, a positive response to the planned Urban Renewal works, concerns remain even after an extensive consultation period, particularly among our members who are trading in the town centre.

The purpose of this submission is not to address every point, but to focus on the primary concerns of the town traders that still exist, namely identifying increased retail opportunities for Tramore, as well as to highlight the opportunities as identified by our members.

Urban Renewal Works

According to the proposed plan, there will be a loss of existing car parking spaces along Main Street and the proposed new replacement spaces are not as conveniently located.

There is a fundamental fear, as evidenced in various traders' submissions, that the lack of parking will result in some businesses closing, particularly when coupled with extensive works and road closures.

The traders are anxious to address the parking issue before the works commence.

Waterford Chamber sees this as a positive move, as it could certainly alleviate the 'fear factor' that exists at the moment and will go a long way towards building relationships with those who fear their livelihoods are in jeopardy.

At present there are 35 parking spaces along Main Street, which unfortunately are predominately taken up by traders parking outside their premises. This is not something Waterford Chamber is supportive of and as such, we see it as much the responsibility of the traders to play their part, as it is the Council's.

Marketing

While Tramore is primarily viewed as a seaside resort, and rightly so in many respects, its retail offering is largely ignored in terms of marketing and promotion. Football continues to be an issue and the promotion of the offering must be addressed. Riverstown Business Park offers a hub of thriving businesses, yet in terms of signage and

promotion is quite literally a hidden gem. In terms of Main Street and surrounding off roads, Tramore has some of the best bridal and fashion boutiques in the region.

In a positive move, a number of restaurants and food producers have now come together to form *Taste Tramore*, which will highlight the incredible food offering in Tramore and will go a long way towards bringing people to the town. Any supports to develop this new initiative would be most welcome.

Parking

At this juncture, in consultation with a number of our members, and based on a survey conducted in September 2016, we are recommending the implementation of paid parking for the town centre.

As you will see from the member submissions below, there is a general consensus that a minimum of one hour free parking should be allocated to facilitate shopping with paid parking thereafter.

Michael Clarke of Cahill's Newsagents has committed to selling parking disc at 0% commission during a trial period, should parking meters not be a viable option in the short-term.

Conclusion

As a membership organisation, Waterford Chamber has to take the concerns of its members seriously and act in earnest on their behalf. We see this review as a genuine opportunity and we are committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of businesses in Tramore.

We are happy to work with John Spain & Associates and the Council to liaise with the traders to alleviate any additional stress they may be under, and with everyone collaborating together, we can work towards a brighter future for Tramore.

We look forward to a favourable response and again reiterate our commitment to working in partnership with all concerned.

For more information, please contact:

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What our members say

Sean & Cormac Quish, Quish's SuperValu:

"We see current the Urban Renewal Plan from Waterford City & County Council as a good thing and badly needed and agree with your position on people parking outside their premises.

"As far as the marketing of Tramore to customers for retail, that is essentially non-existent and a strategy needs to be formulated to present the myriad shopping options Tramore has to offer.

"More effort should be made to allow businesses in the town, by which we mean at the top of the town, to market to all the visitors down by the Prom. The council could do this by creating an area where businesses can place signs etc or relax policing of signage.

"To strengthen the offer however, the primary marketing strategy, in our view, should be targeted at large comparison retailers e.g. Penny's, H&M, Heaton's, etc or restaurant chains focusing on the large population base, which is currently unserved in a 15km radius.

"In relation to paid parking, we think a limit of two hours enforced might be a better idea. We would worry about a negative perception among customers and visitors that you had to pay to park in Tramore town centre acting as a disincentive to visit.

"The problem with retail in Tramore is that most people spend their working day in Waterford or elsewhere. To have successful retail businesses we need people and we should focus on bringing job growth into the town by attracting companies who can generate employment in the town. IDA and other state agencies should be mobilised into marketing Tramore as a great place to build your company, manufacturing facility etc."

Ashley McCarthy, McCarthy's Homevalue:

"Signage and promotion of the Business Park is something which I think is lacking. There is a lot of emphasis put on promoting tourism in Tramore, which has its peak for only three months of the year, while local business and services try to stay open and operate for 12 months of the year, providing much needed local employment.

"Parking is certainly an issue along Main Street and Queen Street and there is also a lack of loading bays for deliveries, meaning trucks have no choice to block the road while unloading (the loading bay that is there is constantly used for car parking)."

Padraig & Micheál Cunningham, Innovation House:

"We would like to suggest more unbiased parking spaces in the town centre and recirculate on-street parking as has been done in Dungarvan, where they have 30 minutes free and payment thereafter. For people who want long-term parking, SuperValu car park is hopefully available."

Ger Murphy, Murphy Larkin Timber Products:

"While Tramore is ultimately a tourist destination, we certainly are not a one-trick pony. The Riverstown Business Park is a 12-month per year industry-driven area and has received very little in the way of support from our Council. Our beach brings thousands of people into Tramore for the summer season so signage should be evident on the main road highlighting what's on offer in the business park. However, this is not the case and it seems such a shame not to capitalise on the massive volumes of passing trade. The location of the Business Park, set amongst residential areas, is a massive challenge in terms of marketing for all concerned. The Council should be pro-active in supporting us in this regard.

"In addition, Council's maintenance of the Business Park has been lacking if not non-existent. Some of the roads are in need of repair, speed limits need to be addressed along with general grass cutting etc. The Council should support Tramore businesses in all respects, not just the hospitality sector. There are as many businesses in Riverstown as there are on Main Street!

"While we encourage the long overdue Retail Strategy Review, we would feel that the introduction of parking fees in the town would be a negative move and affect footfall for retailers there. This has been evident time and time again in towns all across Ireland, where the smaller owner-run retailers are always the ones to feel the pinch, and small businesses are the backbone of Tramore. Surely a better solution can be found, and if not, it would seem reasonable to offer the owner-run business free parking at a destination off the main street.

"Tramore is a fantastic place to live, the Council should support us all in making it a fantastic place to do business."

What our members say

Barrie Rogers, Chia Bia, bia+brew, Cove Stores:

"Tramore has an adequate population to be self-sufficient and does not need to solely focus itself as a tourism hub. While tourism needs to be pushed to capitalise on the amazing asset we have, we also have a 10,000+ population in a few miles radius to support what the town has to offer in the off-season months. The people of Tramore need to be able to avail of new and existing retail, café & restaurants in Tramore, ease of parking is critical to attract the large population to the centre and other areas. We need to educate local, in addition to attracting visitors through awareness initiatives like Taste Tramore and other community activities. Support is vital to market Tramore and to support all employment creating businesses year-round."

Nicola Crowley, Mezze:

"We are thrilled to become one of the latest businesses to open on Main Street and see huge retail potential for the town. We are excited about the urban renewal project as it is very much needed to bring a central area to the town and upgrade how it looks. I'm hoping too that buildings in the area will be encouraged to upgrade their appearance too, although I see a lot of this happening already. As a member of Taste Tramore we see ~~the renewal project as an essential element to bringing~~ more people and events to the town using the newly renovated space for festival activities or markets. I'm hoping the plans allow for a level space for this and power points.

Tramore has a large population of over 10,000 people which we believe offers a huge potential for retail but we need a good mix of retail offerings in the town centre which should be supported by the Council when possible. We need to draw Tramore residents and tourists to the town centre through a strong offering and convenient parking. I agree that there should be a limit to parking time in the town to allow for spaces not to be tied up however unlike the model of Dungarvan, retail in Tramore is not thriving; it faces competition from Waterford City which is in close proximity and has a limited retail offering. Therefore I don't think customers should be charged after 30 minutes. I think 2 hours would be more beneficial. That gives the customer enough time to visit the local shops (not just one) and leave so as not to hold up places."

Catherine Keighrey, RedLane Boutique:

"Having been trading ourselves on The Cross since 2005, it's great to finally see some quality independent businesses arriving on Main Street recently, a trend which will hopefully continue. I believe that these openings, as well as the Urban Renewal works, will make the historical town centre of Tramore an even more desirable place to visit and do business.

"My opinion is that we should be targeting independent retailers and artisan food producers to offer an experience that you can't get anywhere else, making it 'the' ultimate day out for seaside, food and retail in the south of Ireland as well as increasing the frequency of visits, and dwell time of local residents.

With regard to parking, I think that a time limit rather than the ½ hour free option would be more suitable for the hairdressers on Main Street, as the latter would make their clients the only customers visiting the Main Street having to pay for parking.

"Tramore is such a unique town with unrivaled assets already, I believe that with increased and continued funding which has been lacking for so many years, it could be marketed as one of Ireland's best towns to visit, live in and to do business."

Conor and Sarah Richards, Seagull Bakery:

Parking:

"It is essential this issue is resolved as it is the biggest issue facing Tramore town centre. We agree with paid parking on Main Street, with 1-2 hours free. 30 minutes free parking would not be sufficient for someone to visit 2-3 businesses. We don't want the paid parking to be a deterrent for customers but rather an incentive that they know there is a good flow on parking spaces, and they will likely find a parking spot. The issue we are trying to solve is people parking for the day in the one spot (staff). The only way to stop this issue is paid

parking, but obviously staff need to be accommodated somewhere else to park in close proximity to Main Street. For people not from the town it would be easier if parking meters were on the street rather than trying to locate where they can buy parking discs. For people from out of town they will be going from business to business trying to see where they can get parking discs.

Just to emphasise the parking issues and how they are a deterrent for customers, I am repeatedly hearing from our customers that they picked up a parking ticket near our premises. On Saturday mornings the Gardaí are frequently handing out tickets to cars around our premises and the post office.

From our own experience when we were looking at opening a premises on Main street, one of the major deterrents was parking. We were worried that there was not enough parking for our customers whereas in other potential locations we looked at there would have been more accessible parking. So, the parking issue can act as a deterrent to attracting new businesses also."

Retail Strategy:

"We would like to reiterate what other businesses have stated in their submissions. Tramore has a population of 10,000+ and as per recent CSO report stands at 19th in Ireland for income for towns larger than 10,000 population and is number 1 in South East beating Kilkenny. It is all Dublin and Cork commuter towns in the top 15. This emphasises that our main focus should be on people living in the town and the surrounding areas.

Our main customer base is Tramore locals and Waterford City and surrounding areas. From our experience the holiday season is really 6/7 weeks and you can't base a business solely on that. Yes, we should capitalise on the influx of tourists, but our strategy should be focused on people living in Tramore, and also on attracting people living in the South East to Tramore for the retail offering rather than them viewing it solely as a tourist town.

Focusing on attracting certain retail types will help also as unique independent retail offerings add another dimension to the town. From our own experience we see people travelling from neighbouring counties and further afield to our shop, these people are not tourists but people travelling for our product. We have customers coming from Wexford, Tipperary, Cork, Kilkenny who are specifically coming for our product. These are not beach tourists but people living in the region coming for a specific retail offering. This emphasises the need to attract the right businesses where possible as this brings in more people. We welcome the Taste Tramore initiative as a very positive step, as it would be fantastic to have Tramore as a food destination, and we are starting to see this already, which is massive for the town."

Urban renewal works:

"It is great to see Tramore get some investment and we hope this revamp will really improve the town centre. As regards the construction itself, can we have a detailed structured timeline for the works so that businesses will know when major work will be happening near their premises so that they can make informed and advised decisions concerning their business? Each business should have a good indication as to when they will be most affected and have a time frame on it so that they can plan ahead for this.

Also, will there be a Council Liaison Officer for the works so that the businesses can contact if there are issues with construction? As the Council are the client for the contractors, any feedback/complaints from the Council directly will likely get more traction than us contacting the builders directly.

There is a real worry that the construction works will impact business so a structured detail plan/timeline of the works will help us plan ahead and make informed decisions.

Also, is the new car park at the back of the library, where Council depot is still part of the new plans?"

Grant suggestion:

"We feel there should be an initiative available where funding can be sought to upgrade/renovate old town centre buildings for retail and possibly residential (upstairs). We experienced huge costs when trying to bring our rented building up to a suitable level as a lot of these buildings are hundreds of years old. This is a beautiful thing and I feel other towns around Ireland that were sympathetic to their old shop fronts and original details on buildings have a lot more soul and richness to them than the ones that did not. As regards the upstairs as residential offering there are a lot of upstairs spaces vacant in town centre buildings which could be utilised for the current housing crisis. Utilising these upstairs as residential will in turn enrich and bring more life to the town centre."



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