

St. Patrick's Day



Business Feedback Report April 2018

St. Patrick's Day Business Feedback Report 2018

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In March 2018, Belfast City Centre Management undertook a comparative survey of retailers based within the city centre to gauge their opinions on the St. Patrick's Day civic celebration. We received 20 responses from businesses. This was to ascertain whether the event had an impact on a variety of issues ranging from footfall, sales, anti-social behaviour and inclusiveness.
- 1.2 The St. Patrick's Day celebrations took place on Saturday 17th March 2018, in conjunction with the 'Craic' 10k run. After consultation with businesses following the 2015 event, Belfast City Council agreed to hold the St. Patrick's Day celebrations on 17th March, rather than the closest Sunday to the 17th March as was the case in 2015.
- 1.3 The 'Craic' 10K run left City Hall at 9am, linking West and East Belfast as the route passed through the Gaeltacht and Cathedral Quarters, before finishing at Titanic Slipways. Temporary road closures were in place along the route from 8.30am with diversions, public hire taxis (normally located at Donegall Square North) were temporarily relocated to Donegall Square East. Chichester Street closed from 8.30am – 9.10am and Victoria Street closed from 9.00am – 9.15am.
- 1.4 The St. Patrick's Day parade took a new route this year leaving Royal Avenue at 11.30am, travelling down Royal Avenue, Donegall Place, Donegall Square and returning via Donegall Place to Royal Avenue again. The concert then took place at Custom House Square. Rolling road closures were in effect during the parade. See image below for parade route.

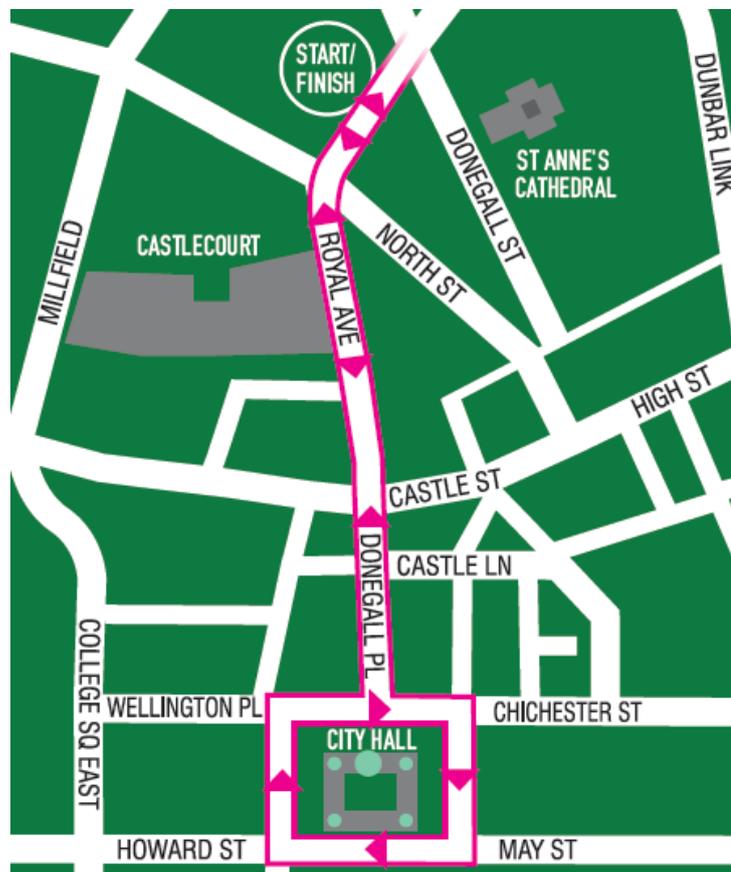


Figure One : St Patricks Day Parade Route 2018

2. Results

2.1 The businesses were asked whether they opened on St. Patrick's Day (Figure Two); 100% of businesses who responded were open on Saturday 17th March. This is an increase on previous years when only 84% who responded were open in 2017 and 86% in 2016.

2.2 Along with sales, the level of footfall was measured by each individual business compared with the same date in 2016.

- 75% stated there was a reduction in footfall compared with 52% the previous year and 50% in 2016.
- 25% stated there was an increase in footfall compared with 19 % the previous year and 32% in 2016.
- The average figure for sales on Saturday 17th March from those that provided their figures was -18% which is a similar figure to 2017 which was -19%.

2.3

Q3 Was there a significant increase/decrease in customers visiting your business on the day compared to St Patrick's Day 2017?

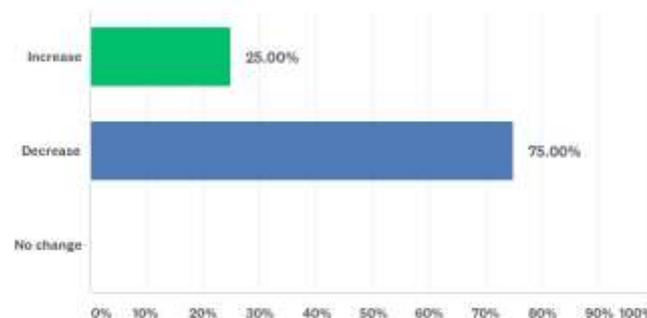


Figure Two : Footfall on Saturday 17th March 2018

2.4

- 21% of businesses recorded an increase in their sales compared to 10% in 2017 and 31% in 2016.
- 79% recorded a decrease in sales compared to 52% in 2017 and 48% in 2016.
- The average figure from stores which provided their sales figures indicate that on average sales was down -14% compared to -22% in 2017.

2.5

Q4 Was there a significant increase/decrease in sales in your business on the day compared to St Patrick's Day 2017?

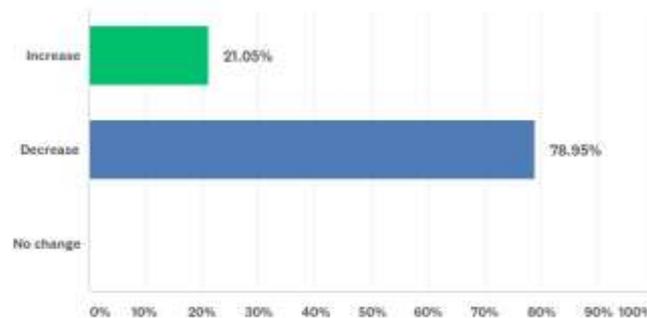


Figure Three: Sales from St. Patrick's Day 2018

2.6 Belfast City Council strive to make the St. Patrick's Day celebrations a family event that is inclusive and comfortable for everyone to participate in and enjoy. 55% agreed that the event was inclusive which is an increase on the previous year when 22% of respondents felt it was inclusive and 37% felt it was inclusive in 2016. 30% of respondents felt that the event was not inclusive which is a decrease from the 43% of respondents in 2017 and 57% in 2016. 15% of respondents did not see the parade which represents a decrease from the previous year's figure of 35%. The figure in 2016 was 6%.

Q5 The Council attempts to ensure St Patrick's Day in Belfast is as inclusive as possible and one at which everyone would feel comfortable. Do you think this was achieved?

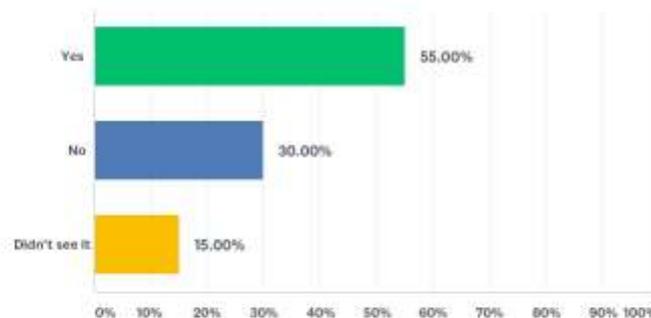


Figure Four : Do you think the event is inclusive?

2.7 Businesses were asked whether they witnessed anti-social behaviour during the event; 55% stated that they did. This is a decrease from 83% in 2017 and 87% in 2016.

2.8 Businesses were asked the types of anti-social behaviour they witnessed. Of the 55% of business who reported having witnessed anti-social behaviour;

- 90% of these stated that they witnessed on street drinking,
- 70% witnessed people causing annoyance,
- There was 0% reporting witnessing illegal street trading.

- Most the comments from businesses reported witnessing under-age drinking by crowds of teenagers coupled with intimidating and unruly behaviour.

Q7 If you answered 'yes' to question 6 did you witness instances of;

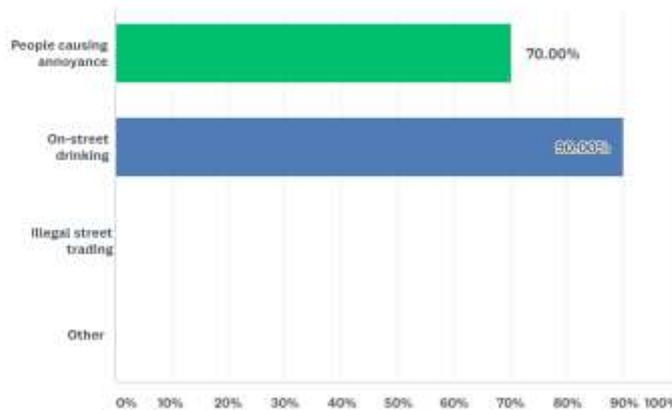


Figure Five: Types of anti-social behaviour recorded by businesses

2.9 There were similar results from the 2017 report in relation to businesses requiring the assistance of, or contacting, the PSNI on the day. 15% of businesses were required to do this whilst 85% of businesses did not. In 2017 14% of businesses were required to contact PSNI and 13% in 2016. Businesses requested help with removing large groups of youths from areas in the city centre in the afternoon.

With these comments in mind, 30% of businesses stated that they had a need to close their stores earlier than planned. This is a similar figure to 2017 when 29% of businesses were required to close before 6pm and the figure was 35% in 2016. The large number of drunk people and potential for trouble were stated as the main reasons for closing early. Areas such as Arthur Street reported low footfall throughout the afternoon which caused them to decide to close early.

2.10 Businesses were asked whether they believed the event was organised and marshalled properly;

- 60% stated they did believe this to be the case which is an increase from the 48% of businesses in 2017 and 58% of businesses in 2016.
- 15% believed that the event was not marshalled properly which is an increase on 4% of businesses in 2017 and 13% in 2016.
- Only 25% of businesses stated that they did not see the parade which is a decrease from 48% in 2017.

Q10 Do you think the event was organised and marshalled appropriately?

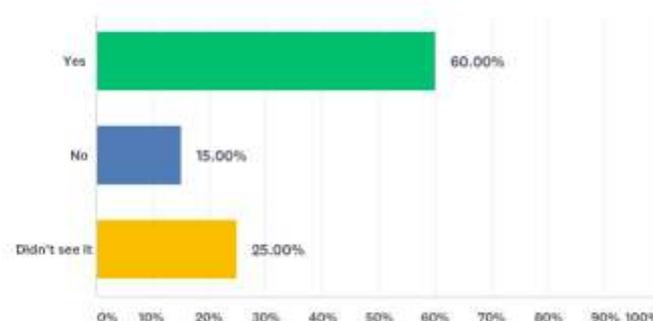


Figure Six: Did Retailers believe the event was organised and marshalled properly?

- 2.11 Business were asked their opinion on the revised St. Patrick's Day Parade route which this year started at Royal Avenue, Donegall Place, Donegall Square returning via Donegall Place to Royal Avenue. The majority of businesses are in favour of this route with businesses welcoming the larger, better quality parade as it created a good atmosphere in the city. However, there are some businesses who feel that the parade is disruptive to trade, it shouldn't return along Royal Avenue and it puts customers off coming into the city due to perceived access issues around road closures.
- 2.12 Feedback on the concert however is mixed. Businesses feel that Custom House Square is a good location for another event but the type of event, i.e a concert aimed at teenagers, creates issues for the city centre.
- 2.13 The 'Craic 10K' run took place for the fourth year, leaving City Hall at 9am and finishing in the Titanic Quarter. Businesses were asked if they supported additional events like this on St. Patrick's Day. This year only 50% of businesses were supportive of this event compared to 83% in 2017. Comments included that the 10k coupled with the parade taking place shortly afterwards meant that the access into and around the city centre was severely disrupted. There were reports of staff not being able to get to work on time and customers unable to access city centre car parks due to restricted access.

3. Year on Year Comparison

- 3.1 The St. Patrick's Day celebrations in 2018 represented the 13th consecutive year that Belfast City Council has organised the event. Table 1 show comparisons of previous surveys carried out from 2008–2018:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Retailers that saw an increase in customers visiting their shop	48%	16.6%	28%	17.6%	31%	8%	40%	22%	32%	19%	25%
Retailers that saw a decrease in customers visiting their shop	31%	66.6%	48%	41.1%	63%	75%	20%	61%	50%	52%	75%
Retailers that saw an increase in sales at their business	34%	16.6%	16%	11.7%	31%	0%	55%	29%	31%	10%	21%
Retailers that saw a decrease in sales at their business	24%	60%	44%	41.1%	63%	80%	18%	65%	48%	52%	79%
Retailers that thought the event was inclusive	69%	90%	76%	47%	50%	30%	33%	31%	37%	22%	55%
Retailers that witnessed anti-social behaviour	61%	36.6%	44%	64.7%	53%	70%	82%	65%	87%	83%	55%
Retailers requiring PSNI assistance	0%	20%	4%	6%	6%	10%	9%	11%	13%	14%	15%
Retailers that believed the event was organised and marshalled properly	90%	96.60%	44%	100%	44%	40%	45%	50%	58%	48%	60%

Table One: Comparative results from 2008 – 2018 (inclusive)

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 4.1 75% of business recorded a reduction in footfall with 79% recording a reduction in sales. These figures are quite high and businesses haven't recorded such a high figure since 2013. However, the weather on the day may have prevented people staying in the city after the parade. The temperature on the day had highs of 5°C and lows of -1°C.
- 4.2 55% of businesses believe the event is inclusive which is an increase on the 2017 figure of 22%. However there were lower numbers of businesses stating that they felt the event was not inclusive in comparison to last year. 30% still believe the event is not inclusive in comparison to 43% in 2017.
- 4.3 Over recent years businesses have consistently reported their concerns over anti-social behaviour, even though it is associated with the period post-parade rather than the event itself. 55% of businesses reported witnessing anti-social behaviour on the day. This is a lower figure than 2017 where 83% of businesses reported having witnessed anti-social behaviour. On street drinking remains the biggest concern with businesses reporting having drunken teenagers draped in tricolours on the streets of the city centre which also was off putting for any families in the city centre.
- 4.4 There were similar figures reported in 2018 regarding businesses requesting the assistance of or contacting the PSNI with 15% in 2018 and 14% in 2017. This was mostly to deal with intimidating and drunk/disorderly behaviour. Also similar numbers were required to close their store early with 30% of businesses in 2018 and 29% in 2017 citing lack of footfall and disorderly behaviour as the main reasons.
- 4.5 Generally the businesses are content with the parade route and businesses commented on how the parade had grown in size and quality and created a great atmosphere in the city. Businesses once again cited the presence of drunken teenagers in the city coming in for the parade and concert which was off putting for families. However many businesses described the road closures for the 10k and the road closures for the parade as a 'double whammy' in terms of disruption for businesses.
- 4.6 Feedback from businesses regarding the concert at Custom House after the parade has mixed reviews. Some businesses think this is a good idea as it attracts people over to Custom House Square, utilising another part of the city centre and attracting crowds away from the main shopping area. However, several businesses have suggested that this is held further away from the city centre, e.g. Titanic Slipways, to allow the city the time to trade freely without disruption. Businesses have again called for a reconsideration of the post parade events to create some much more family focused events which do not attract groups of teenagers into the city centre. Smaller events happening across the city centre have been suggested.
- 4.7 The 'Craic 10K' run has now taken place for four years. There continues to be support for such events associated and held on St. Patrick's Day however some feedback included the disruption caused by the early road closures for the event affecting access for staff. Feedback from the business surveys and also from the Retail Steering Group which meets once a month has suggested that the timings of these road closures are reconsidered to avoid the city centre being disrupted for such a long period of time.

Appendix 1.

Following the St Patrick's celebrations parade and concert event in Belfast city centre, we would appreciate your feedback on a number of issues relating to the day. Belfast City Centre Management will treat all comments in the strictest confidence.

1. Name of business and location

2. Did your business trade on Saturday 17th March? If 'no' go to question 11.

Yes

No

3. Was there a significant increase/decrease in customers visiting your business on the day compared to St Patrick's Day 2017?

Increase

Decrease

No change

Please advise of % change

4. Was there a significant increase/decrease in sales in your business on the day compared to St Patrick's Day 2017?

Increase

Decrease

No change

Please advise of % change

5. The Council attempts to ensure St Patrick's Day in Belfast is as inclusive as possible and one at which everyone would feel comfortable. Do you think this was achieved?

- Yes
- No
- Didn't see it

Comments

6. Did you witness anti-social behaviour on the day?

- Yes
- No

7. If you answered 'yes' to question 6 did you witness instances of;

- People causing annoyance
- On-street drinking
- Illegal street trading
- Other

Comment

8. Was there a need for your business to request the assistance of the PSNI?

- Yes
- No

Comments

9. Generally it was agreed that the city centre opening hours for St Patrick's Day would be 9am - 6pm. Did you have reason to close earlier than this?

- Yes
- No

Comment

10. Do you think the event was organised and marshalled appropriately?

- Yes
- No
- Didn't see it

Comment

11. What are your views on the new parade route (Royal Avenue, Donegall Place, Donegall Square and return to Royal Avenue)?

12. What are your views on the event being managed by Belfast City Council and held in Custom House Square?

13. The 'Craic 10k' took place for the fourth year in a row on the morning of Saturday 17th March with over 1,200 participants running from the City Hall at 9am finishing at Titanic Quarter. Do you support additional events like this taking place on St Patrick's Day?

- Yes
- No
- Comment

14. Do you have any suggestions or comments on future St Patrick's events in Belfast city centre?

Thank you for participating in this survey. All views will be collected and presented in the form of a report. No individual's views will be identified.