

Thursday 4th November 2010

Oxford city centre awarded Purple Flag

Oxford city centre has been awarded the prestigious Purple Flag for the evening and night time hospitality.

The Purple Flag recognition means that Oxford city centre has been nationally recognised as having an excellent night-time economy and is only one of 12 cities to be recognised with the honour.

The award was presented to Oxford at an awards ceremony in Nottingham last night (Wednesday 3 November).

Councillor Bob Price, Leader of Oxford City Council, says: "I am delighted that our city centre has been recognised as a place that welcomes people in the evening.

"There is a wealth of things to do in the city centre, like visiting the theatre, or going to the cinema as well as enjoying a meal from the hundreds of different restaurants.

"The Purple Flag will mean that we are highlighted nationally as a place to visit and enjoy. I hope it will encourage more tourists and residents to visit the city centre at night."

Association of Town Centre Management Chief Executive (ACTM), Martin Blackwell, says: "It's a real pleasure to be awarding Purple Flags to Oxford. It demonstrates that our towns at night can be places for everyone that are clean and safe, with great public spaces, cultural attractions and unique identities."

Oxford was awarded the Purple Flag after assessors from ATCM came to visit the city centre and experience the night-time offering. They were shown the wealth of facilities on offer for the evening visitor including wide variety of restaurants, cinemas, theatres as well as the pubs and clubs.

They were able to walk around the city centre and shown the high quality public transport provision as well as the city centre car parking and railway station.

They also undertook research about Oxford city centre and interviewed various parties before they conducted their overnight inspection.

Polly Cole, Deputy Director at Oxford Playhouse, says: "Oxford Playhouse is pleased to be a part of such a thriving and exciting city, and is delighted that Oxford has been recognised for the wealth of cultural opportunity offered to all residents and visitors to the city.

"Oxford Playhouse is proud of the contribution it brings to the city, with the firm belief that it's a Playhouse for everyone, and aims to continue to provide memorable, moving and entertaining experiences for everyone who visits us."

Gordon Reid, City Centre Manager led and co-ordinated the application process and worked in partnership with the Police, Oxfordshire County Council and local businesses. He also received the Purple Flag at the awards ceremony.

He says: "I took the assessors around Oxford city centre and they were particularly impressed with the strength of our partnership approach and the enthusiasm of the partners.

"They highlighted the commitment to a clean and safe public realm and the achievement of high standards via the Cleaner, Greener Oxford campaign, Nightsafe and the strict licensing policies that the city centre uses."

Nightsafe, which help to keep the city a safe place to visit, was formed in 2004 to support the evening economy by ensuring that Oxford is a safe place for all members of the community to visit in the evening.

Cleaner, Greener Oxford was launched in November 2009 with the aim of clearing up the city centre of litter, cigarette butts and chewing gum.

Street cleaning takes place until 8pm every evening in the city centre and trade waste removal takes place up until 9pm

The Purple Flag initiative was developed by a team of industry experts in 2003 and is an accreditation process that helps tackle prominent issues associated with night-time economy. It is supported the Home Office, Association of Chief Police Officers, Local Government Regulation (LACORS), NOCTIS, Diageo and many other high profile national bodies.

The initiative aims to improve perceptions of places, address imbalances in activities, tackle anti-social behaviour, and encourage a diverse evening offer; providing significant recognition for councils and partnerships who deliver key services associated with the night-time economy.

ENDS

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NOTE TO EDITORS

ATCM is Europe's largest membership organisation dedicated to helping town and city centres realise their natural roles both as prosperous locations for

business and investment, and as focal points for vibrant, inclusive communities.

The Purple Flag programme was developed following the Civic Trust Night Vision report in 2006. Purple Flag is:

- An accreditation process similar to Green Flag Award for parks and Blue Flag for beaches. It leads to Purple Flag status for town centres that meet or surpass the standards of excellence in the evening and night time economy.
- A comprehensive set of standards, management processes and good practice examples designed to help transform town and city centres at night.
- A research, training and development programme, to help towns and cities improve their evening and night-time economy.