

Friday 9 December 2011

Oxford awarded the Purple Flag for a second year

Oxford's city centre has been awarded the prestigious Purple Flag for the management of its evening and night time services and entertainments for the second year in a row.

The Purple Flag award means that Oxford has been nationally recognised as being an outstanding place to visit in the evening and to enjoy a night out.

The award is backed by Government, police and the business community, and is funded by Diageo GB. In order to receive the award, towns and cities have to show that they are welcoming to visitors and residents alike, and provide a good mix of leisure and entertainment facilities, restaurants and bars which can meet the different requirements of the various sections of the community and all ages.

They must also ensure that there are good and safe ways for visitors to travel home after a night out. The Purple Flag is much prized by towns and cities that are seeking to attract visitors and to assure residents that excellent partnerships are in place between the police, the local councils and businesses to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour levels.

Councillor Bob Price, Leader of Oxford City Council, says: "I am very pleased that our city centre has been recognised for a second time as a real asset to the community, providing a huge range of outstanding evening entertainment meeting every taste and interest.

"The theatres, cinemas, concert and music venues, as well as the night-clubs, lectures and museums and galleries that are provided in Oxford make it a real basket of goodies - not to mention well over a hundred restaurants offering a very wide range of different cuisines.

"The Purple Flag shows that we are recognised nationally as a place to visit and enjoy.

"I hope it will encourage more tourists and residents to visit the city centre in the evenings."

Martin Blackwell, Chief Executive, Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM), says: "Congratulations to Oxford on their retention of Purple Flag status, the city has worked hard over the past 12 months to ensure that the programme standards have been maintained and improved - it is a pleasure to reward their efforts & commitment."

Sarah Mayhew, Events and Marketing Manager at Oxford Castle, says: "All businesses at Oxford Castle are thrilled to hear that Oxford has retained Purple Flag status after being awarded it last year.

"It's reassuring for people of all ages to know that Oxford is regarded as one of the safest cities in the country to go out in at night, and it's excellent that the city's diverse cultural offer is being recognised and celebrated."

Inspector Katy Barrow-Grint, Oxford City Centre Inspector, Thames Valley Police, says: "I am very pleased that Oxford has once again won the Purple Flag award.

“Thames Valley Police work hard, together with our partners, to ensure that people who visit and work in our night time economies are kept safe and the purple flag award is testament to the fact that Oxford is a pleasant place to visit.”

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.

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

A strong sense of wellbeing is maintained by active street management and policing in the context of the successful ‘Nightsafe’ initiative.

The Assessors and Panel were impressed by specific actions, including:

- The Licensing and Street Trading policies, with particular reference to the Special Saturation Policy.
- The Micro-Policing Team which provided on-the-ground coverage ensuring a visible police presence from early evening, throughout the night and into the early hours.
- The zero tolerance attitude and approach towards littering and anti-social behaviour.
- The Transform Oxford partnership and notably the “Cleaner, Greener” Campaign, which displayed Oxford’s commitment to a clean public realm.

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/MORE

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.

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