
National Enterprise Towns: Letterkenny

We are profiling all the towns to enter this year's [National Enterprise Town Awards](#). Today we are looking at Letterkenny in Co Donegal.

Letterkenny, the commercial centre of County Donegal, is a modern vibrant town with a rich cultural heritage. Originally a market town, Letterkenny has evolved to become an enterprising, modern, lively urban area.

Always an entrepreneurial town Letterkenny has a high percentage of locally-owned and home-grown businesses but it is also proud of the employment created by global Fintech companies. Recently an increasing number of hi-tech companies exporting goods and services across the world have been established and are creating an innovation cluster and centre of excellence and attracting a highly skilled and increasingly diverse population who are making Letterkenny their home.

Letterkenny is also the retail capital of Donegal, providing a mix of independent shops and national chains. The traditional Main Street with a high number of independent outlets co-exists alongside retail parks and shopping centres giving the consumer all the choice they could get in a regional city.

There are also a great variety of hotels, restaurants, cafes and a pulsating night time economy. The arts are well catered for by An Grianan Theatre, the Regional Cultural Centre and the Museum.

Business and community spirit

Letterkenny has gained recognition for the co-operative spirit between the community, business and public sectors. Letterkenny was the overall winner of the [2018 Bank of Ireland National Enterprise Town Awards](#) while Donegal town was announced as a regional runner-up. In 2015 Letterkenny won the title of Ireland's Tidiest Town.

This community spirit in Letterkenny is evident throughout the town with annual events lead by the Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce such as the St. Patrick's Day parade, NW10k, the Half Marathon, Street Food Festival, Halloween festival and Christmas lights as examples of everyone working together. It has a very active Tidy Towns organisation, Lions Club, Rotary and a well-developed community sector all of which deliver services that make Letterkenny the town it is today.

This year also saw the inaugural Letterkenny Jazz & Blues Festival, again being facilitated by ShopLK and Letterkenny Chamber and being run by a dynamic group of individuals. It is very much business-led and will add to the summer's events calendar.

Letterkenny Chamber offers networking opportunities through its business events and communications activities. These include the annual gala ball, golf classic, regular business lunches, workshops and seminars. Some of the current ongoing projects of the Letterkenny Chamber are Shop LK (Love Shopping Letterkenny), Business Awards, Letterkenny Local Area Plan and Letterkenny CCTV upgrade.

Letterkenny is the largest urban centre in Donegal with a population of 19,588 having grown by 28pc from 2002-2011. It is the 22nd largest town in the State and is projected to grow to 25,700 by 2022. Donegal has a significant cross border dimension with 84pc of its border adjoining Northern Ireland and 16pc adjoining County Leitrim. The border area has developed as a unique region within the North West and evidences many unique challenges and opportunities for both economic collaboration and community development. The unique border region has particular characteristics as regards trade, currency fluctuation, shared history, culture and heritage as well as the shared legacy and impact of the troubles.

Because of its location in the border region, the town has had to work collaboratively to encourage and enhance people to shop local in Letterkenny and for this collaborative work ShopLK was born as explained here and so Love Shopping Letterkenny (ShopLK) was born. ShopLK is the brand synonymous with retail in Letterkenny and has become a fantastic example of private, public and the community working together.

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Published: 11 October, 2019